Student voice and classroom practice in Ireland's post-primary schools

An exploration of exercises, experiences, and emotions at the coalface

A thesis presented to Dublin City University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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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 Philosophy 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.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEAPS	Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ISSU	Irish Second-Level Students' Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SEN	Special educational needs
SSE	School self-evaluation
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

ABSTRACT

Student voice and classroom practice in Ireland's post-primary schools: An exploration of exercises, experiences, and emotions at the coalface by Craig Skerritt

The purpose of this mixed-methods research is to investigate how student voice takes place in relation to classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools, and the views of both school staff and students on this student voice. In doing this, particular attention is paid to the patronage and socio-economic context of schools.

Several contributions to knowledge are made: a heuristic device as a starting point for future research in the Irish context is developed and presented; how student voice is likely to be enacted differently in different types of schools and schools in different settings is explored for the first time; and stakeholders' views on student voice being used in relation to classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools are explicitly explored. This research is the first research of its kind in Ireland, providing unprecedented knowledge and insights, and will be of interest and of use to those involved in teaching, leadership and governance in schools, research in higher education, and policy and advocacy in the public and voluntary sectors.

Through interviews with 101 participants in seven case study schools and a subsequent survey of principals that yielded 95 responses, this research highlights how, inter alia, students are consulted to different extents in different schools; student voice can be used to monitor teachers; and most stakeholders in Irish post-primary schools are against the idea of students being consulted on teacher performance.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background

The range of student voice work that has developed around the world in recent decades has been described as being 'quite remarkable' (Fielding, 2012). Indeed, student voice has become very topical in recent years (Butler et al., 2017; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Cook-Sather, 2018; Mayes, 2020a; Parr and Hawe, 2020). According to Graham et al. (2018), there is now a considerable consensus in policy, practice and research that student participation, both at an individual and at a system level, benefits both students and schools, and many schools are seeking to engage with discourses around 'student-centredness', 'personalised learning', 'student voice' and so on. Student voice can involve listening to and valuing students' views on their learning experiences, communicating these views to decision-makers, and ultimately empowering students to be more active in shaping or changing their learning and treating them as equal partners in the evaluation of teaching and learning processes (Blau and Shamir-Inbal, 2018), or at the simplest level it can involve students sharing their opinions of or addressing school problems (Mitra et al., 2012). An important point, however, is that all types of student voice, ranging from students having limited input to students having substantial leadership are considerably different from the types of roles that students have traditionally performed in schools such as planning school dances and events (Mitra, 2018).

The rise of student voice in recent years has seen student voice discourses not only emerge but consolidated in Ireland, the country of focus in this doctoral research. The purpose of this mixed-methods research is to investigate how student voice takes place in relation to classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools, and the views of both school staff and students on this student voice. In doing this, particular attention is paid to the patronage and socio-economic context of schools. The gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data in this research allows for an overall interpretation of how student voice plays out at a wide level and a deeper understanding of how it takes place in more localised contexts. The research questions guiding this doctoral research are as follows:

1. In what ways are students consulted on classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools?
2. Are students consulted differently in different types of Irish post-primary schools?
3. Are students consulted differently in Irish post-primary schools in different socio-economic contexts?
4. Is student voice being used to monitor teachers in Irish post-primary schools?

5. Do staff and students in Irish post-primary schools feel that students can be a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools?
6. How do staff and students in Irish post-primary schools feel about the prospect of management consulting students on teacher performance?

1.2 Rationale for the study

Over the last two decades 'Ireland has been at the forefront of developing policies which incorporate the perspective of children' (Coyne and McCoy, 2020, p.350). There has been, for example, the establishment of the Ombudsman for Children and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), and the publication of national strategies and a policy framework, both of which will be discussed in more detail in the proceeding chapter. The following chapter will also take a closer look at developments in Irish education and the research literature but in line with the move towards including the voice of children in matters that concern them, Ireland's Department of Education and Skills (DES) now positions students as key stakeholders in Irish schools with important and valuable contributions to make (see for example DES, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). While the progress that has been made in recent years has been mixed, student voice discourses are strong and carry with them a lot of weight, and particularly in relation to school self-evaluation (SSE), the internal mode of school review that forms the focal point of school evaluation in Ireland.

In the *Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020*, the DES (2015, p.22) states that SSE 'provides teachers with a means of systematically looking at how they teach and how pupils learn', helping schools and teachers to improve learner outcomes. According to the official SSE guidelines for post-primary schools, the process of SSE enables schools to gather and use evidence 'to identify meaningful and specific targets and actions for improvement that focus on teaching and learning practices' (DES, 2016b, p.6). These official guidelines are aimed at a range of stakeholders, incluing students, 'to enable their fullest participation in school self-evaluation processes' (DES, 2016b, p.7). As part of SSE, the guidelines state that both quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered from a number of sources including students, and that information should be collected from stakeholders such as students to ensure that schools 'have sufficient knowledge to make accurate judgements' (DES, 2016b, p.13).

It is significant, therefore, that the recent rise of SSE in Ireland has coincided with concerns expressed in the literature by teachers in relation to student (and often parent) voice (see for example Harvey, 2015; Mooney Simmie et al., 2019; Salokangas et al., 2020). While the student council has never been an adequate means of student voice in Irish schools, as the following chapter will show, as the main and perhaps only previous form of student voice in most Irish schools it did mean that discussions or consultations with students in relation to teacher performance were previously prohibited. The student council guidelines state the following:

> A Student Council should not through its activities interfere with, or detract from, the authority of school management or the teaching staff of the school. It is therefore not a function of a Student Council to discuss or comment on matters relating to the employment or professional affairs of the Principal, teachers and other staff of the school, or to become involved in any issues that fall within their professional competence (DES, 2002, p.9).

Now, however, student voice is, for the first time in Ireland, located in the context of classroom practice, underscoring the pedagogical importance of engagement and consultation, and encouraging teachers to evaluate student voice in their classrooms based on descriptors focusing on the views, questions, and contributions of students (Fleming, 2013, 2015, 2016). This is significant not only because teachers are to use student voice at the classroom level but because student voice is to be used at the wider level of the school too. Kyriakides and Campbell (2004, p.28) acknowledge that the data collected through SSE is often sensitive in that it can relate to individuals in terms of, for example, teacher performance, but it is also pointed out that 'the main focus of SSE is to help the improvement of the organisation rather than identifying the performance of individuals' in that 'SSE aims at outlining general tendencies in the school and is not directed to measuring the effectiveness of individual teachers'. Indeed, SSE tends to take place at the school as opposed to the classroom level in Ireland (O'Brien et al., 2020) and consultations with students focus on whole-school practices rather than the evaluation of individual teachers (Brown et al., 2020a) but in moving away from the student council as a representative student voice and instead looking to 'students' in a wider sense 'an instrumentalist voice is arguably being encouraged and directed primarily towards the gathering data to inform and measure school performance and school improvement' while 'the growing association between student voice, school improvement and performance, through various forms of evaluation, and reference to reporting on these initiatives, suggests some…performativity and accountability' (Fleming, 2013, p.72). For Fleming (2013), there are some parallels between these developments in Ireland and the

performativity and accountability found in schools England. As will be later detailed, student voice in accountabilty-driven education systems such as England's is often used as a form of surveillance (see Skerritt, 2020a). Recent and ongoing developments in Ireland are rather unnerving in this regard and a key concern of this research, as will be theorised and conceptualised in Chapter 3, is that student voice will be experienced by some teachers in Irish post-primary schools as surveillance when used by others in relation to their classroom practice.

The DES' Chief Inspector, Dr Harold Hislop, has referred to 'informal evidence' available to the DES from inspection visits that suggests that 'principals have welcomed the opportunity SSE has given them to focus the conversations of teachers on the quality of students' learning and its relationship with teachers' practice (Hislop, 2015, p.6), Furthermore, while it has been reported in other countries that principals can use the Inspectorate to pursue unpopular policies by positioning it as the external enemy (see Perryman et al., 2018) a remarkable recent finding in the Irish context has been that this now also appears to be the case in many Irish schools. McNamara et al. (2020, p.175) refer to forthcoming data that 'strongly confirms' the 'indirect influence of the quality assurance regime in Ireland today', where inspections are 'perceived by principals as a tool or leverage to force changes which otherwise might be resisted'. Given the current landscape, one does suspect that the direction of student voice will become increasingly unpopular with many of the country's teachers. We should be mindful that, as others have previously pointed out in other jurisdictions, if student voice is so compatible with government and management objectives it can cause disquiet and even concerns that it might be cynical and manipulative and possibly even masking the 'real' interests of those in power (Bragg, 2007a) while top-down approaches that attempt to enforce change through external pressure can lead to teachers overlooking student voice's real rationale of students and their learning (Flutter, 2007). However, we should not expect student voice to quieten.

The arrival of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 is indicative of the emergence of a new era in Irish schools. A webpage on the DES website (www.education.ie) entitled 'Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill, 2019' reads that the 'overall approach is to shift away from concentrating on reacting to problems in schools after they have given rise to grievances to an approach which aims to improve the day-to-day experience students and their parents can expect from schools'. The press

release published on the DES website in September 2019 includes coments from the then Minister for Education and Skills who stated that 'The overall aim is to improve the level of engagement between schools and students and their parents by inviting feedback, comment and observations from students and parents and by developing a listening culture in the school'. The Minister for Education and Skills also asserted that the charter 'will be similar to a customer service charter', representing 'a radical shift in how our schools engage with the community'. A charter briefing note published on the DES website also refers to the 'close connection' that will exist betweent the charter and SSE:

> School Self-evaluation (SSE) and the existence of a parent and student charter will complement each other in the life of the school. SSE is vital for school improvement and the parent and student charter will be critical to securing the legitimate interest of parents and students in relation to the quality of student learning (DES, n.d., p.7)

SSE has become the dominant mode of school evaluation in Ireland, and students, through consultations, are afforded a key role in the process. Most notable, however, is how this now locates student voice as an integral part of teaching and learning and is further supplemented with a student and parent charter. Through the latter in particular it can be expected that arrangements will not only involve schools becoming 'more proactive in establishing the views of students and parents' (DES, n.d., p.14) and 'Providing students and parents with information, including accountability for provision and information on school performance' (DES, n.d., p.9), but identifying at the classroom level how to 'enable student feedback to be integrated into day-to-day classroom activity' (DES, n.d., p.14). This is a largely unexplored area of Irish education, however, with no existing research specifically investigating how student voice is currently used and experienced in Ireland in relation to classroom practice, and particularly how it fares between different types of schools and schools in different socio-economic settings. Thus, it is an opportune and appropriate time to conduct research in this area and gather the views of those involved—both school staff, from school leaders to classroom teachers, and students. Understanding how student voice plays out in Irish post-primary schools in relation to classroom practice and how it is experienced by the involved parties is paramount if student voice is to be genuinely accepted and secure longevity in Irish schools. Moreover, understanding the perspectives of those involved can play a role in contributing to positive experiences, morale, and climates.

1.3 The contribution of this study

Research on student voice in the classroom is scarce (Parr and Hawe, 2020) and this research therefore makes an immediate important contribution to knowledge—both in Ireland and in terms of knowledge globally. While this research is unique in the Irish context, it can also be of use to others elsewhere in that it is demonstrated that student voice is becoming more active around the world. It is likely that this research will be of particular interest to scholars in countries that do not have a strong tradition or history of student voice, such as the post-Soviet nations (Khokhotva and Albizuri, 2020a), but even for those in countries where student voice is far more pronounced and embedded this research raises questions about how voice might differ between different school types and schools in different socio-economic settings.

While relatively little is known about student voice and classroom practice, the broader literature on student voice generally sits, as pointed out by Czerniawski (2012), uncomfortably between two competing narratives; one narrative relates to discourses of empowerment and democracy while the other relates to neoliberal discourses of market efficiency. The first narrative, however, I contend, dominates and in much research, policy and practice gives rise to somewhat of a 'bandwagon effect' (Wisby in Bourke and Loveridge, 2018). According to Lodge (2005), it has become increasingly fashionable to find researchers, policymakers and teachers making claims for the value of student involvement and student voice, while Lewis (2010) refers to the 'pro voice' climate as producing 'a moral crusade' for student voice. Indicative of how student voice is often positioned in research, policy, and discourse, a review of empirical research on the effects of student participation in school decision-making processes by Mager and Nowak (2012, p.49) suggests that 'negative experiences with student participation are not researched and that these results thus reflect publication bias'. The paucity of existing research exploring teachers' views on student voice might reflect this to a degree. As Warwick et al. (2019, p.437) highlight,

> pupil voice studies tend to examine pupils' views without pursuing whether these views are being considered by teachers, how they are being considered and whether they make a difference to teacher learning and subsequently practice.

Similarly, Black and Mayes (2020) have recently argued that the professional uncertainty of teachers who do not feel uncomfortable with student voice practices has been

particularly underexplored and few accounts consider that in some instances teacher voice becomes marginalised. Black and Mayes (2020, p.1077) 'suggest that further work is needed to take account of and appraise how student voice feels for all involved', and this doctoral research does this by gathering the views of both students and school staff, from classroom teachers to principals. While I do believe that there are many positives to student voice it must also be viewed critically (Keddie, 2015). In collecting data from a variety of school-based stakeholders involved in student voice work and in going beyond popular discourse a significant contribution of this doctoral research is that, especially via its concern with surveillance, it challenges the status quo and provides new ways of thinking about, understanding, and explaining how student voice plays out and is experienced by both students and staff in schools, and how they feel about it moving forward. Particularly in the Irish context, in drawing attention to negative aspects of and views on student voice this research is rather unique, while more broadly this research adds to, supports and strengthens the relatively recent and emerging body of research that highlights similar issues in countries such as England and New Zealand. Not only does this doctoral research make a new contribution to knowledge, but it offers the beginning of a whole new sub-field of student voice research in Ireland. It is therefore envisaged that this doctoral research will inspire more critical thinking in the area of student voice and will be of interest and of use to researchers and policymakers both in Ireland and beyond.

In terms of the theoretical and conceptual thinking underpinning this thesis, this doctoral research makes three important contributions in particular. First, through policy enactment theory it shows how this approach to policy, underpinned by a focus on context, is applicable and useful in contexts outside of which it was formulated. Not only does this doctoral research add to the existing literature on policy enactment but it highlights how this theory does not lose value by travelling across borders and how it holds international applicability. While first developed in the context of the English school system, this doctoral research accentuates how policy enactment theory provides the theoretical tools to approach, explore, and map out how different schools and different stakeholders interpret and translate policies in various ways. Specifically, this research uses policy enactment theory to show how student voice plays out differently in different schools even in the same education system and in this regard, it will be of interest to researchers and policymakers both in Ireland and elsewhere. Second, in theorising and conceptualising that student voice can be experienced by some teachers as surveillance,

this doctoral research makes an important contribution to the new field of surveillance studies (Lyon et al., 2012). While scholars have been 'particularly good at studying the watchers', they have not been so good at the 'absolutely crucial job of studying the watched' (Gilliom in McCahill and Finn, 2010, p.273), and particularly teachers. Subscribing to Hope's (2013) view that those researching surveillance in schools should resist the temptation to focus exclusively on students, this study makes an important addition to the scholarship and again, will arouse the interest of not only Irish-based readers and those with an interest in Irish education but researchers in various international contexts too. A third important contribution, and perhaps the most important contribution that this doctoral research makes in terms of theoretical and conceptual thinking is that it develops and presents a heuristic device for researching student voice in Ireland, providing direction and impetus for others. No other research has ever sketched out how student voice is likely to be enacted differently in different schools and experienced differently by different people but this doctoral research does this, taking account of both school patronage and school socio-economic context, as well as the career stages of teachers. In doing so, this doctoral research offers a heuristic device as a starting point for future research in the Irish context and has the potential to serve as an invaluable tool for guiding the research of others— both exploring student voice, and other similar and/or related initiatives.

Finally, and overall and most importantly, the major contribution to knowledge that this doctoral research makes is that it explicitly explores, for the first time, stakeholders' views on student voice being used in relation to classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools. No other piece of research in Ireland, doctoral or otherwise, exists in this area and until now this has remained an unexplored zone in Irish education. There are indications that student voice is now being used in Irish schools in relation to classroom practice and that it is also being potentially used to monitor teachers but no research in Ireland has ever documented how student voice is being used or specifically investigated the controversial domain of surveillance. Significantly, this doctoral research draws on the views of all involved parties: school staff including senior leaders, middle leaders, and classroom teachers; and students. This doctoral research is the first research of its kind in Ireland and will provide unprecedented knowledge and insights as well as encourage and instigate future and further research and will be of interest and of use to those involved in teaching, leadership and governance in schools, research in higher education, and policy and advocacy in the public and voluntary sectors.

1.4 The interest behind this study

After outlining the rationale for this study, I now want to 'place' myself in relation to it (Vincent and Ball, 2007) by acknowledging who I am, my background and my connection to this research (Ball, 2020). The interest I have taken in student voice and researching it in the Irish context, and particularly in relation to classroom practice, stems from my own professional trajectory to date. My interest in researching student voice comes first from my student voice experiences as a post-primary school teacher and school leader in England and is compounded by my experiences as a researcher in higher education reading and writing and interviewing school stakeholders about student voice in Ireland, and working on international projects concerned with student voice (see Brown et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2021). Thus, I feel it is important that my position in relation to this research is made explicit (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

1.4.1 Experiences of student voice at the coalface

My time as a post-primary school teacher and school leader was spent in England's highly-marketised neoliberal education system where schools are legally required to engage in consultation with students (Hall, 2017) and where student voice efforts are, arguably, most widely institutionalised (Cook-Sather, 2006). Here, I found the students to be vocal, demanding, and aware of the discourse of performance and the templates of accepted 'good practice' (Fielding, 2001). Students would let it be known, both to classroom teachers and to school leaders, what they liked and what they did not like in their lessons. They were used to engaging in conversation with school leaders about their learning (Page, 2015) and I was aware that they would be giving their evaluations of me to management (Page, 2017a). This left me feeling stripped of power and my professionalism, and as if I was on a constant tightrope where pleasing students was the only way of maintaining balance. As a teacher I interviewed as part of another study explains:

> You see, in Ireland a teacher basically can't be sacked. So, the students know you're there, you're there for life. But in the UK, I think the kids knew that if you're not doing a good job, the principal will get rid of you, and they can influence that. But they do have a lot of power and they do misuse it. Blackmailing nearly, in a subtle way (Skerritt, 2020a, p.13).

There are many channels, both formal and informal, for students in England to express their views both to teachers and on teachers, but their views are actively sought too. Two

common practices in the school where I spent my first two years as a teacher were for selections of students to be brought for lunch with the principal in the principal's office to discuss their lessons and their academic progress, and for students to be consulted when school leaders frequently entered classrooms to observe teaching and learning. Both of these practices gave rise to a great deal of uneasiness.

It is not uncommon in English schools for students to sit on interview panels for the appointment or promotion of teachers (MacBeath et al., 2001; Taylor and Robinson, 2009; Czerniawski, 2012; Morgan, 2011; Keddie, 2015; Keddie and Mills, 2019). While I have no experience of being interviewed by students per se, when I moved to a new school for my third year of teaching, I did have significant experiences during the interview process. Interviewing for a teaching position in England generally involves spending several hours in the given school. In no particular order, you meet the principal and other school leaders; you are given a guided tour of the school; you are brought into classrooms to observe teaching and learning; you are observed teaching a lesson, requested of you well in advance to give you adequate time to prepare; and you are formally interviewed, in the traditional sense, by management. I arrived for my interview at what would become my new school very conscious that students would play a key role in the interview. With two years of professional experience and one year of a MA in policy studies in education behind me I had become rather astute and I was now more effectively, to use the oft-quoted colloquialism in English schools, 'playing the game'. The day began with me and the two other candidates, both interviewing for their first teaching positions, being left in a room together and then being brought to have a group meeting with the principal. We, the candidates, were then collected by a group of students who gave us a tour of the school and its grounds. While the two pre-service teachers were perhaps somewhat naïve, or even embarrassed by what could be described as some type of strange social experiment, I recognised that the students would be feeding back on how the tour went and their impressions of us. Thus, I ensured that of the three candidates, I was the one that students became most familiar with, laughed with the most, liked the most and so on. Then, when it came to performing my pre-planned lesson that would be observed by some school leaders, I turned to the trusted template I used for internal and external inspections—an extraordinarily progressive, student-centred, and interactive assemblage of highly-differentiated group activities that had students moving around the room to different stations, and using props such as scissors and glue sticks. At the end of the lesson, with everyone impressed, including the important observers, I issued each

student with a post-it note and requested that they assign me, the teacher, a WWW (what went well) and an EBI (even better if) so that I would know what they enjoyed and how I could improve my teaching moving forward. This in particular was the part where I stressed to the observers that I was a reflective practitioner continuously striving for improvement and valuing and using student voice to inform my practice. When I was later interviewed by management, I waited for the right moment when we were discussing the lesson I had taught before producing, from my blazer, the bundle of post-it notes that I knew, because I had also checked them beforehand, lauded my performance. As I did so, the interview panel humorously showed me their own bundle, although much smaller in size. At some stage in between my lesson and the formal interview a handful of students, apparently worried, had come looking for the school leaders to ask them to pass me on the post-it notes that they did not have time to return to me.

Within a few minutes of leaving the interview I was stood on the platform of a nearby train station when I received a phone call from the principal offering me the position, while the formal offer of employment came via email as my train departed. The fabrication (Ball, 2000, 2003a, 2004) I created and presented that day no doubt impressed and signified that I had the required skills for success in contemporary neoliberal organisations; the skills of presentation and of inflation, making the most of myself and making a spectacle of myself (Ball, 2010, 2012, 2016). I had utilised student voice, which had previously terrorised me, to my advantage and was looking forward to starting my new position in my new school. I had, however, at this stage become empty and unrecognisable to myself (Ball, 2012, 2015a, 2016). To borrow the words of a teacher in Holloway and Brass' (2018, p.372) research, I had 'become the teacher I did not want to be'.

On my first day in my new school, the result of an external inspection that took place at the end of the previous academic year was announced to staff, and a key recommendation of the Inspectorate was for the school to make better use of student voice as part of the school improvement process. Perhaps not too coincidentally, I was soon promoted to a newly established school leadership position with responsibility for the academic attainment of the school's most vulnerable students and significantly, leading on developing a culture of student voice in the school. While for the two years in my previous school I was on the receiving end of student voice, in my new school I was now the one producing student voice: conducting surveys, interviewing students, chatting to students,

reporting back to senior management and the board of governors, report writing etc. From my new leadership position, I saw that there was merit in the fears teachers on the ground had of student voice. The management meetings, and particularly the data I gathered and the informal discussions I had with students supported the adage 'Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you'. Ironically, the most distressing student voice experience I ever had came in this very school, despite my leadership position. I am very familiar with the challenging and sometimes chaotic teaching and learning environments schools in England present (see for example Evans, 2006; Axup and Gersch, 2008; Woods, 2008; Klassen and Anderson, 2009; Hanley, 2016; Demie, 2021) but one particular group of students stand out for me as being more difficult than others, and this is certainly the group that I struggled with the most in my three years working in England. In the eyes of these students, I felt, their previous teacher could do no wrong while I could do no right, and this in itself was somewhat demoralising as I was positioned as the 'problem' and even incompetent (Bragg, 2007b). When I turned to my 'line manager' for support- and I am aware of how this terminology can make it 'difficult some of the time to hold onto the belief' that I am still 'talking about schools' (Sugrue and Mertkan, 2017, p.180)—my superior's solution was to use student voice to improve the classroom conditions. In front of me, my line manager came to one of my weekly double-period lessons with this group of students and delivered the usual pep talk to students about their conduct, the bigger picture, their future etc. Students were then all handed A4 pieces of paper from my desk and asked to write down their thoughts on our weekly lessons and what the problems were and how they could be rectified. The following day I met with my line manager where we went through what I can only describe as the unfiltered abuse the students gave me, penned on paper, and apparently anonymous. Of course, as their teacher, I could recognise each student's handwriting (Morgan, 2009) but in any case, nobody was ever recovering or improving from this. I have often wondered how my successor experienced and was received by this group in what would have been by then their final year of school. I struggled with them from our first encounter and a student voice activity was the final nail in the coffin—in a strange twist of events, the school leader responsible for student voice had fallen victim to student voice! Or to draw on another adage, 'live by the sword, die by the sword'.

1.4.2 Researching student voice from an ivory tower

At the end of the academic year I spent as a school leader in England I returned to Ireland and commenced research in higher education at my current university. For over 12 months before enrolling in a doctoral programme I was working as a researcher on an Erasmus+ funded project entitled 'Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools' (DEAPS), a position I maintained throughout this doctorate until its completion (for more information on this project see Brown et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Skerritt et al., 2021a). The DEAPS project looked at both student voice and parent voice in schools and for the first time, brought literature on student voice into my life. For a full year before starting a doctorate I was immersed in student voice literature and drafting and revising literature reviews and reports on both student voice and parent voice, both in terms of the broader scholarship and in relation to the Irish context. As well as both broadening and filling in gaps in my knowledge, much of this literature resonated deeply with me and helped me to better understand and explain my experiences in England. I also paid close(r) attention to policy documents and discourses in Ireland and how student voice was and is becoming more prominent here. Given my previous professional experiences, coupled with my newfound interest in and knowledge of the student voice literature, when it came to choosing an area of focus for doctoral research, student voice in Ireland was an ideal topic.

In terms of specifically focusing on classroom practice, an unexplored area in Irish education to begin with, I was conscious that although the data gathered as part of the DEAPS project showed that students were mainly consulted on non-academic topics as part of SSE in Irish schools (see Brown et al., 2020b), as previous studies have also found (see Keogh and Whyte, 2005; Fleming, 2013; Smyth, 2016), students were still being consulted on teaching and learning matters, and thus, this was an issue that I wanted to return to. Moreover, my past experiences and my knowledge of the literature have meant that I do not necessarily take student voice at face value or as an unquestionably positive initiative when it is used in relation to classroom practice. Instead, I tend to think more critically about student voice and approach it more cautiously. During the DEAPS project I spent time visiting schools and interviewing school staff, students and parents about the role of both students and parents in school decision-making and in terms of student voice I was very conscious that, although subtle, on some level many school staff and students, at times even subconsciously, often implied that student voice was being used, or could be used, as a way of monitoring teachers. Conscious and concerned that there is an

element of student voice as surveillance seeping into schools in Ireland, as has been commonplace in more neoliberal and business-like education systems such as in England, this was an area that I strongly felt, warranted, needed, and deserved to be researched. For this reason, the qualitative data I gathered in five schools during the DEAPS project is used in the first phase of this mixed-methods research via a secondary analysis, and supplemented by interview data I then gathered in two additional schools so as to include in my analysis Ireland's main models of schools, both in disadvantaged and in more privileged contexts.

1.4.3 Recognising the I(nterest) behind this research

Since qualifying as a teacher in 2014, student voice has featured heavily in my professional life. I have been a newly qualified and junior teacher intimidated by and fearful of student voice, and I have been a classroom teacher who has embraced student voice and used it to create a narrative around my professional persona— student voice helped me to find new employment, earn more money, and advance professionally. I have been a school leader producing student voice, transitioning from being intimidated and fearful to no doubt being, to some extent, intimidating and feared myself, but not remaining immune from the potential terrors of student voice— I still at times found myself demoralised by it. Most recently I have been working in higher education where I have been consistently engaged in desk research consuming student voice literature, generating primary data on student voice, and producing student voice data in the literature. Throughout these years I have seen some benefits to student voice, but I have also seen it, experienced it, and been victimised by it at its very worst. The experiences I have had with student voice are important and need to be recognised here because it means that I bring with me particular knowledge, understandings, and perspectives but also that I must work towards reflexivity in this research. The key point here is that throughout this thesis, 'these Is are imbricated in the text and implicated in my interpretive work' (Ball, 2003b, p.12).

1.5 Some clarifications

Before this doctoral thesis progresses, it is necessary to offer some clarifications on both some concepts and terms referred to throughout this research, as well as the organisation of Irish post-primary schools.

1.5.1 Concepts and terms

The term 'neoliberal' has been used several times already in this opening chapter and will be used at various points throughout the thesis. Neoliberalism is a problematic concept used variously (Fuller, 2019) but it has come to often be depicted as the 'bad guy' in education (Printer, 2020) and 'used and understood within some parts of academia and in the media as a catch-all explanation for anything negative' (Rowlands and Rawolle, 2013, p.261). It is 'so widely and loosely used that it is in danger of becoming a detached signifier' (Ball, 2012, p.18). While I do not view neoliberal policies or discourses in the public sector favourably, and in Ireland's case I am concerned of the potential 'Anglo neoliberalisation' or Anglicisation of Irish education (Skerritt, 2019a), making it more business-like (Skerritt, 2019b) and English-like (Skerritt, 2021), I am also of the view that to 'disrupt the neoliberal doxa' (Rowlands and Rawolle, 2013, p.270) this term must be defined when used. For me, neoliberalism involves schools becoming more corporate, competitive and concerned with consumers, both in their thinking and in their actions as this way of being and doing, through increased monitoring and accountability, supposedly enhances efficiency and productivity. Performativity is a key part of this. Performativity is a 'regime of accountability that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of control, attrition and change' (Ball, 2017, p.57).

Neoliberalism can infiltrate student voice work with teachers being policed from the ground up as well as from the top down (Nelson and Charteris, 2020). It positions students as consumers meaning teachers are surveilled and school leaders are wedged between government and community accountability (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a). As Page (2017b, p.999) explains,

> Student voice activities work to evidence practice for all: head teachers may solicit feedback from students as part of improvement; students may complain about individual teachers to that teacher's peers; children will tell their parents about their day; teachers may ask for student evaluations of their teaching efficacy.

Despite critiques in the field that chastise student voice being used for quality control, the political currents of neoliberalism continue to influence how voice is enacted in schools (Charteris and Smardon, 2019b). When referring to student voice being used in relation to classroom practice in schools, I distinguish between two forms of student voice. The first, what I call 'classroom-level consultations', is where teachers liaise with their students about classroom practice. Here, student voice can be initiated by teachers, with

student feedback invited on specific practices (Mayes et al., 2021). Examples of classroom-level consultations include teachers issuing their students with feedback sheets or discussing teaching and learning matters with them orally. The key point here is that this form of consultation on classroom practice occurs at the classroom level with classroom-level actors and without the involvement of management. On the other hand, 'management-level consultations', the second practice, involve school leaders either gathering data from students on classroom practice, or having this data collected for them, through questionnaires, interviews, informal conversations and so on. Here, classroom teachers are removed from the process. Both forms of consultation are predominantly instigated by school staff, although they can also be initiated by students. Of these two forms of student voice, it is the management-level consultations that have the strong tendency to be imbued with neoliberal motivations. For example, the reviewed criticisms of student evaluations of teachers in the literature highlight how student perception surveys are embedded in neoliberal discourses and correspond to various practices that can demoralise teachers (Perry-Hazan, 2019).

At this early stage of the thesis, readers might have already noted that the terms 'management and 'leaders' are being used in conjunction with one another. When referring to school management and leadership, it is specifically principals and deputy principals being referred to. Distinctions between management and leadership, or managers and leaders, are often drawn but classifying actions as purely managerial or purely leadership is not straightforward (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Management might be considered to involve maintenance and leadership might be thought of as being transformative but both terms can be used to refer to work of those in the upper echelons of schools (Spillane et al., 2007; Spillane, 2013; Diamond and Spillane, 2016). As Spillane (2017, p.52) has recently explained:

> Though often portrayed as different and sometimes even as opposites, management and leadership are close relatives…management and leadership work in tandem in day-to-day practice in organisations. School leaders are expected not only to lead improvement in instruction in their schools but also maintain the quality of instruction over time.

Thus, terms such as management and leadership are used interchangeably throughout this research.

Particular care is taken throughout this doctoral research when referring to the different types of schools in Ireland as the terminology is not quite in line with international practice (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Like Sugrue (2002, p.317), I use 'post-primary' schools as the collective term for all second-level schools in Ireland because in Ireland 'secondary schools' are a particular school type i.e voluntary secondary schools. From an international vantage point, Grant (2000, p.312) explains how the terminology used in Ireland does not necessarily have the same meaning in other countries:

> the term 'secondary school' may mean the entire stage from pre-adolescence onwards (as in the systems of the British Isles or the USA), or it may be only the stage entered after compulsory school, as in Scandinavia. But this does not apply everywhere. In some countries, only certain post-compulsory schools—generally those leading to higher education—are designated as 'secondary', thus distinguishing them from vocational or trade schools. The Irish Republic offers an example of what used to be a common Western European practice. Further, structural changes may take place but old titles may remain in use.

To use the term 'secondary' school when referring to other types of schools in the Irish context, such as community schools, would be incorrect and misleading. Therefore, when I write about secondary schools it is a specific type of school, voluntary secondary schools, being referred to and not all types of post-primary schools. The different types of post-primary schools in Ireland, from community schools to voluntary secondary schools, are outlined below but in terms of terminology it is worth pointing out here that every type of post-primary school in Ireland can also have what is known as 'DEIS' (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) status i.e. DEIS schools are recognised as serving students from deprived areas and receive extra funding, resources, and staffing allocations.

1.5.2 Organisation of the Irish school system

The Irish school system is rather complex. At post-primary level, Coolahan et al. (2017) describe it as being divided into a hierarchy of four main strata: fee-paying voluntary schools, followed by non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools, then community and comprehensive schools and lastly the schools in the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector, which were previously known as vocational schools and are now referred to as ETB schools. Some ETB schools are also known as community colleges (Drudy and Lynch, 1993; Lynch and Lodge, 2002; McManus, 2014; Coolahan, 2017). The voluntary secondary schools are denominational and although state aided are privately owned and managed, typically by the Catholic Church, while community schools operate under the

joint trusteeship of the ETB, a religious order and/or the Bishop or another nominated person, and comprehensive schools operate under the trusteeship of religious denominations (Skerritt and Salokangas, 2020), usually the Catholic Church. While some ETB schools do also have a religious representative on their management board (Liddy et al., 2019), these schools are publicly managed and are therefore 'a distinctive segment of the Irish schooling system' (O'Flaherty et al., 2018a, p.318). Essentially, the different types of schools can be clustered into three traditions: voluntary secondary schools, ETB schools/community colleges, and community/comprehensive schools (Coolahan, 1995; Smyth, 2016).

For the 2019/2020 school year there were 723 post-primary schools in Ireland, of which 381 were voluntary secondary schools, 96 were community and comprehensive schools, and 246 were ETB schools. While approximately half of Ireland's post-primary schools are 'Catholic' schools, the ethos, values, and practices of Catholicism appear to be prevalent in a far larger portion of schools. For example, while ETB schools are publicly managed and were intended to be secular, they are mainly managed by people who belong to the Catholic faith and cater to a predominantly Catholic student population, meaning in many ways they are schools with a Catholic ethos and Catholic practices (Stapleton, 2018). Indeed, a recent study by McCormack et al. (2019a, p.176) found 'bar a few exceptions, the largely normalised and unquestioned position of Catholic practices within the life of ETB' post-primary schools regardless of whether they had religious co-trustees or not. Furthermore, all comprehensive schools are denominationally managed (Lodge and Lynch, 2004) while denominational bodies form part of management structures of community schools (Drudy and Lynch, 1993) meaning both are effectively denominational schools (Lynch and Lodge, 2002). The Catholic Church, as Stapleton (2018, p.11) remarks, has secured a role in most post-primary schools in Ireland:

> Post-Primary schooling in Ireland could be described as a Church/State co-operative with the Church, or Church representatives, having a dominant role in the day to day management of the vast majority of schools.

All of these schools can also, as mentioned above, be identified as serving disadvantaged areas and assigned DEIS status. Of Ireland's 723 post-primary schools in 2019/20, 198 had DEIS status: 50 voluntary secondary schools, 120 ETB schools, and 28 community schools and comprehensive schools. A breakdown of the number of Irish post-primary schools, including those with DEIS status is available below in Table 1.

School Type		*Number of Schools*	*Number of schools with DEIS status*
Voluntary secondary schools	*Count*	381	50
ETB Schools	*Count*	246	120
Community and comprehensive schools	*Count*	96	28

Table 1: Irish post-primary schools (by School type) 2019/2020

1.6 Chapter overview

After this introductory chapter, this thesis comprises an additional six chapters. Here, I provide an overview of these chapters.

Chapter 2

The second chapter is the literature review. This chapter is divided into two parts which both have two sections. Part I introduces SSE and its democratic stakeholder model before proceeding to outline its rise in popularity, and the purpose(s) it serves. Then, attention is paid to SSE specifically in the Irish context. Some important background information is first detailed to set some context and understanding of the previous evaluation climate for the reader. Then, by drawing on official documentation the current policy context, including the role of students in SSE, is laid out. Finally, the rise of SSE in Ireland is explained, and is followed by a discussion surrounding its purpose(s). Part II of the literature review also has two sections, both specifically relating to student voice. The first section describes the most prominent models of student voice and charts its early development and recent rise in popularity before discussing the advantages and disadvantages of student voice, with the additional challenges it faces wedged in between. The second section of Part II is strictly about student voice in the Ireland. In discussing student voice in Ireland, context is first set by outlining the subordinate position children have traditionally occupied in Ireland. Drawing on official documentation from contemporary Ireland, the current policy context is then mapped out. Attention is then paid to student voice in Irish schools, in terms of student involvement in school decision-making, the student council, and the role students play in school evaluation.

Chapter 3

The third chapter of this thesis outlines the two predominant theories that guide this project. The first theory is that schools enact policies in different ways, dependent on school context: history, location, teacher characteristics. Thus, it is theorised that student voice is likely play out differently in different types of schools and schools in different socio-economic settings. The second theory is that student voice will be experienced by some teachers as a form of surveillance. In this chapter I ultimately develop and present a heuristic device (Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2013), or conceptual framework, that facilitates the process of investigation (Braun et al., 2010) and that will also stimulate interest and encourage further investigation and questioning (Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012).

Chapter 4

This thesis' fourth chapter outlines the methodology. It begins with a discussion of worldviews and research paradigms and my stance as a pragmatic researcher. As mixed-methods research is undertaken in this doctoral research I discuss the rise of mixed-methods research, definitions of mixed-methods research, and my rationale for using it. I then give a detailed outline of the research design. The chapter is brought to a close with a discussion of this doctoral research's important ethical considerations and an outline of the limitations of the research.

Chapter 5

The different phases of data analysis are presented in Chapter 5 in a sequential manner. The chapter begins by presenting the qualitative data and then proceeds to present the quantitative data.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 is a summary and discussion of the key findings from Chapter 5. The findings are considered in light of the literature and the theories guiding this research, and in particular the framework presented in Chapter 3. I also then discuss some additional findings and concerns that, although not the main focus, are worthy of further attention. Suggestions for future research, policy and practice to consider are then put forward.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Part I

2.1 Introduction

Recent decades have seen an increased interest in and demand for school evaluation where the work of teachers and schools become the subject of critique (Ottesen and Stephens, 2019). The use of quality assurance mechanisms such as auditing, inspection, performance management, and evaluation have successfully opened up the education sector to ever greater scrutiny and heightened levels of surveillance and regulation (Murphy, 2019) and most education systems in the world now have some form of external school inspection (Penninckx et al., 2016). School inspections are defined as a process of periodic, targeted scrutiny conducted to provide independent verification, and to report on the quality of schools in relation to required standards (Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008). According to Baxter (2019), the rise of school inspections can be afforded to the rise of neoliberal ideas in education emanating from the Chicago School of Economics, the rise of cross-national comparisons of student performance, and the rise of media interest in the performance of students, schools, and systems. This type of evaluation has traditionally been associated with external school inspectors intruding on schools to pass judgement but the exponential growth in popularity of inspections has seen inspectorates across Europe develop new inspection methods and modalities that respond to increasing levels of decentralised governance (Baxter, 2017). Thus, quality assurance has changed considerably in recent decades from being perceived as being the responsibility of governments to schools implementing their own school policies (Vanhoof and Van Petegem 2010) and engaging in internal school evaluation.

Divided into two key sections, Part I of this literature review focuses on internal school evaluation, and Part II then concentrates on student voice. According to Nelson et al. (2015, p.3), internal evaluation is 'variously termed' and can be referred to as some of the following: '(school) self-evaluation, self-review, data use, data-based decision making, inquiry, internal accountability'. In this research, the term school self-evaluation, or SSE, is used. The first section of the literature begins by discussing SSE, introducing what it is and the democratic stakeholder model it entails, before proceeding to outline the purpose(s) it serves. Then, attention is paid to SSE specifically in the Irish context. Drawing on official documentation the current policy context, including the role of students in SSE, is laid out, followed by a discussion surrounding its purpose(s) to give

readers a sense of the current place of student voice in Irish schools, as SSE is the main form of evaluation in Irish schools and students are now recognised as key stakeholders in it by the DES.

2.2 School self-evaluation

To improve the quality of education many systems are now expecting schools to monitor and improve the quality of what they deliver themselves (Faddar et al., 2017a). As Vanhoof et al. (2009, p.21) point out, schools 'are increasingly being asked to shoulder a greater proportion of the responsibility for developing and guaranteeing educational quality, which involves, among other things' engaging in self-evaluation. According to the European Foundation for Quality Management, self-evaluation is a comprehensive, systematic, and orderly review of an institutions activities and helps institutions realise its strengths and points for improvements (Senol and Dagli, 2016). In education, its inclusion into the process of inspecting and evaluating schools suggests a more evaluative stance than the more rigid model of inspection (Mac Ruairc, 2019). It is arguagbly a lighter and softer approach to evaluation than traditional forms of inspection in that it is a process largely initiated by schools to describe and assess their own functioning (Devos and Verhoeven, 2003; Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2011; Vanhoof et al., 2011) and to identify improvement measures (Devos and Verhoeven, 2003; Hofman et al., 2009; Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2011). As clearly stated by Swaffield and MacBeath (2005, p.239), it is 'something that schools do to themselves, by themselves and for themselves'.

2.2.1 Stakeholder involvement in school self-evaluation

SSE is commonly seen as a process that is performed by at least part of the school's stakeholders- staff, students, and parents (Meuret and Morlaix, 2003). According to Saunders (1999), SSE should be democratic and involve stakeholders such as students and parents. However, this has not always been enacted in practice and many older definitions of SSE make no reference to these stakeholders. Instead, much of this literature refers to SSE as being a duty undertaken and performed by the school, implying, that the 'school' relates to its paid employees (see for example Nevo, 2002, p.3; Scheerens and Hendriks, 2002, p.119).

While principals are still designated as the formal leaders of schools, other organisational members and stakeholders are now coming to play a significant role in influencing school

decisions (Ni et al., 2018). Thus, how SSE is understood, facilitated, and enacted is changing. As explained by Chapman and Sammons (2013, p.22), SSE is shifting from being solely the responsibility of principals and senior leadership teams to being a more democratic process that includes students and parents:

> school self-evaluation was carried out with little or no consultation of the school community. This is changing: recent developments across many systems have included the participation of a wider range of stakeholders. This is a positive shift, as a wider range of perspectives is likely to offer more detailed and complex insights into the depths of the organisation.

Reflective of this shift, scholars have started to place more of an emphasis on including other stakeholders in their definitions of SSE. According to Faddar et al. (2017a), for example, effective communication and distributed leadership are within the scope of SSE. A good example of the shift towards the inclusion of others in the SSE literature is how elsewhere the exact same authors previously pointed out that 'SSE tends to rely on staff members to describe the school in which they are working with regard to well considered aspects of the school's functioning' (Faddar et al., 2017b, p.398), while their more recent work presents a slightly revised depiction as they state that 'SSE often relies on collecting data from teachers or other stakeholders' (Faddar et al., 2018, p.660). Thus, we have now approached an age where stakeholder voice has become increasingly important in SSE, and education more broadly. The European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and Eurydice (2015, p.41) contend that internal school evaluation 'is performed primarily by members of school staff, and in some cases in collaboration with other school stakeholders, such as students, parents, or members of the local community', while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013, p.384) suggests that SSE/internal review 'may draw on input from school leadership, teachers, other staff, students, parents and the school community'. In this regard, Plowright's (2008, p.104) definition of SSE is the most comprehensive and suitable for this thesis in that SSE is defined as:

> a systematically structured, evidence-based approach undertaken by all stakeholder groups to continually monitor and regularly review both a school's progress and its demonstrable outcomes and which is aimed at contributing to the strategic efforts of the school to raise standards and contribute to school improvement.

2.2.2 The purpose of school self-evaluation

SSE is predominantly presented in the literature as being used for the purpose of school improvement. It differs from traditional inspections in that they tend to be associated with accountability enforced through a low-trust, judgemental lens while SSE is promoted as a less-threatening and less-intimidating, non-judgemental, collaborative practice that allows teachers to retain autonomy and remain trusted. The goal of SSE is to make decisions that provide recommendations (Devos and Verhoeven, 2003) and facilitate a process of school development (Simons, 2002) that improves the performances of both students (Saunders, 1999) and schools (Schildkamp et al., 2009). As Kyriakides and Campbell (2004, p.24) say, there are two overarching goals of SSE: 'to improve the quality of the organisation and to improve teaching and learning'.

An appropriate question however, as posed by Chapman and Sammons (2013), is: are the purposes of SSE to generate personal and professional development and school improvement, or to regulate and monitor practice and standards? Drawing on John MacBeath's work, Chapman and Sammons (2013, p.11) outline three drivers that help to bring some clarity to the possible purposes of SSE:

1. Economic logic: Self-evaluation is cheaper than expensive external inspection frameworks particularly where money is devolved directly to schools.
2. Accountability logic: Schools must provide proof to key stakeholders (i.e. parents and the local community) as well as to the government that they are providing value for money.
3. Improvement logic: It is seen as obvious that in order to know how to improve, a school must be able to evaluate where it is, what it needs to improve, and what indicators will suggest that it has achieved its aims.

2.3 School evaluation in Ireland

2.3.1 School self-evaluation in Ireland

School evaluation in Ireland is based on a dual model of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate (e.g. incidental inspections, subject inspections, and whole-school evaluations) and internal evaluation carried out by schools. According to the Department of Education and Skills' (DES), SSE and external evaluations are 'complementary processes' (DES, 2016a, p.4). Since 2012, SSE has been compulsory in Ireland and has

moved to the centre of the school evaluation process with external evaluation being used to assure the quality of SSE activities (Brown et al., 2017). A 'collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review', under the current SSE guidelines, the DES (2016b, p.10) states that SSE requires schools to address the following key questions about an aspect or aspects of their work:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How can we find out more?
- What are our strengths?
- What are the areas for improvement?
- How can we improve?

To do so, schools engage in an iterative six-step process whereby they identify a focus, gather evidence, analyse and make judgements, write and share a report and improvement plan, implement the improvement plan, and monitor the actions and evaluate impact (DES, 2016b). A new quality framework also now assists schools to embed SSE through a unified and coherent set of standards (DES, 2016c).

2.3.2 Stakeholder involvement in school self-evaluation in Ireland

While in the past, students and parents were largely excluded from school evaluation in Ireland (McNamara and O'Hara, 2005, 2006; O'Hara et al., 2007; McNamara et al., 2009; Dillon, 2011), in line with international trends, they are now assigned a greater role. At an external level, inspections now include questionnaires administered to samples of students and parents, and further meetings are held with them (DES, 2016a). Furthermore, the latest quality framework was written following extensive consultation with stakeholders such as students and parents (DES, 2016c). While this quality framework is used to inform the work of inspectors, notably, it will also

> help parents and others to understand the evaluative judgements in inspection reports. The common language provided by the framework will facilitate meaningful dialogue between teachers, educational professionals, parents, students, school communities and the wider community about quality in our schools (DES 2016c, P.6).

Similarly, a greater role is now afforded to students and parents in SSE. The SSE guidelines for post-primary schools, for example, help to 'enable their fullest participation in school self-evaluation processes' (DES, 2016b, p.7). It is stated that SSE is undertaken in 'consultation with parents and students' (DES, 2016b, p.10) and can include gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from them. By gathering data from sources such as students and parents, schools 'ensure that they have sufficient knowledge to make accurate judgements' (DES, 2016b, p.13).

2.3.3 The purpose of SSE in Ireland

Officially, improvement is the main purpose of SSE in Ireland. This is quite understandable in an education system where teachers traditionally enjoyed high levels of autonomy, and where as a result, there can be 'immense sensitivity to anything smacking of evaluation in any form' (McNamara et al., 2011; McNamara and O'Hara, 2012) and sometimes a reluctance to engage in initiatives associated with 'appraisal, planning, target-setting, benchmarking and so on' (O'Hara and McNamara in McNamara et al., 2002, p.201).

While there is also an accountability function to school evaluation in Ireland, and SSE discourse in Ireland has appeared to become imbued with tones of managerialism in recent years, the emphasis in official discourse is still largely on improvement as opposed to accountability (Skerritt et al., 2021a), as reflected in how the Chief Inspector speaks of evaluations (see Hislop, 2013, p.15; 2015, p.5; 2017, p.7). In a recent interview with Brown et al. (2018, p. 83), for example, the Chief Inspector again talked about how the Irish inspectorate is not overly critical of schools and how the focus is largely on improvement:

> we've put an emphasis on the improvement function within the school and we've said there is an accountability function of course, there is a public function that we perform as well, much of that through publication of inspection reports. There are things that are not in our inspection reports because we think that would go too much towards the accountability emphasis so there are no standardised test results for instance.

For example, the DES' (2016a, p.4) inspection guide for post-primary schools places a strong emphasis on improvement:

> The school self-evaluation process gives schools a means of identifying and addressing priorities, and of ensuring a whole-school focus on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning. External evaluations take note of schools' identified priorities and assess their teaching and learning practices. Given this common focus on improvement, the Inspectorate will take account of schools' engagement with, and the outcomes of, self-evaluation in the course of its evaluations while remaining sensitive to the individual context factors of schools at varying stages of SSE development.

However, in a recent paper with colleagues, we have put forward that SSE in Ireland is not underpinned by any single logic, but an assemblage of overlapping logics interwoven by complements and contradictions and that while the improvement logic is predominantly promoted in official discourse, it is the accountability and economic logics that actually dominate (McNamara et al., 2021).

While SSE is at present officially focused more on improvement than accountability, the arrival of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 could significantly alter this arrangement in terms of both discourse and practice. Given that this development 'reflects the Government's commitment to introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter as it includes a requirement for schools to follow standardised procedures in dealing with grievances of students and their parents' (www.education.ie), it is plausible that the threatening nature of both student and parent voice (Brown et al., 2020a) could be augmented in the Irish context if they become a form of surveillance like elsewhere (see Skerritt, 2020a). A briefing note by the DES states that 'The focus of SSE is on what happens in a school and its classrooms and not on paperwork' (n.d., p.8) and that the focus of the charter 'will be on identifying improvements or changes needed to enhance the learning of the students, and their general experience in the school' which can 'inform school self-evaluation and future planning' (n.d., p.14). Ultimately, the charters schools operate 'will give a statutory underpinning to the role of parents and students not only in relation to the aspects of school life covered by SSE in a school at any one time, but on any matter of interest and concern to students and parents at any time' (DES, n.d., p.8). All things considered, it is unsurprising that the teacher unions have been quick to express concerns. The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI) wants the title and other provisions of the Bill to be amended. In a statement published on the ASTI website (www.asti.ie), concerns were expressed about, inter alia, 'How the school will be accountable to students and parents', 'How specific information on school performance in teaching and learning will be provided', and 'How feedback will be invited and how

student and parent concerns will be identified'. The ASTI's statement proceeds to criticise the way the Charter has been presented:

> The overall thrust of the Charter, and particularly the material the Department of Education and Skills chose to put forward to the media at the time of announcement of the proposed legislation, is redolent of policies which aim to commodify education as primarily a relationship between providers and consumers. The language and tone of the Departmental documentation does not make explicit that education as a common good is a fundamental principle of educational discourse in the Irish context.

There has also been opposition to the introduction of the Charter from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), which is of the view that the push was not coming from the 'ground up' and that many schools will see the proposals as seeking to address 'no known problem' (Timoney, 2019). Interestingly, the Joint Managerial Board which represents Ireland's voluntary secondary schools also expressed concerns about the nature of the charter which was felt to be adversarial and could polarise schools and families (Timoney, 2019). The Bill has currently been passed by the upper house of the Irish Parliament and is now before the lower house. The impact of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 on SSE in Ireland remains to be seen but with the next iteration of SSE expected to be rolled during the 2022/23 school year, a clearer picture should develop soon. One does suspect, however, that of improvement and accountability, it will lean more towards the latter.

Part II

Part II of this literature review has two sections, both specifically relating to student voice. The first section describes the most prominent models of student voice and charts its early development and recent rise in popularity. This section then features a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of student voice, with the additional challenges it faces wedged in between, before moving on to the final section which related to student voice in the Ireland. In discussing student voice in Ireland, context is first set by outlining the subordinate position children have traditionally tended to occupy in Ireland. Drawing on official documentation from contemporary Ireland, the current policy context is then mapped out. Attention is then paid to student voice in Irish schools, in terms of student involvement in school decision-making, the student council, and the role students play in school evaluation.

2.4 Student Voice

2.4.1 Models and levels of student voice

According to Shier (2001), one model in particular has been influential in the literature and has been reproduced many times. Shier (2001) promotes Roger Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' as being the most influential model in the field. Hart's (1992, p.8) ladder 'is designed to serve as a beginning typology for thinking about children's participation in projects' and is borrowed from a previous article on adult participation upon which it expands on. The 'ladder' has eight rungs that outline levels of children's participation in projects, starting with 'Manipulation' at the bottom:

1. Manipulation: children have no understanding of the issues and do not understand their actions. They may not receive feedback on how their ideas were used.
2. Decoration: children may dance at an event and/or be given clothing to wear but they do not understand what the occasion is about, and they have no say in its organisation.
3. Tokenism: children are given a voice but have little or no choice about the subject and no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.

4. Assigned but informed: children volunteer on a project organised by adults but they understand the intentions of the project and they are assigned meaningful roles on the project.
5. Consulted and informed: children are consulted on a project organised by adults but they fully understand the process and are able to feed into the project with their views.
6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children: decision-making is initiated by adults but the process is shared with young people.
7. Child-initiated and directed: children initiate and lead on projects, supported by adults.
8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults: children initiate ideas and projects, and invite adults to join them if necessary.

According to this diagram, the first three levels involve ‘Non-participation’ while rungs 4-8 can be classed as the ‘Degrees of participation’ (Hart, 1992).

Holdsworth (2000) suggests that there are two major arenas in which student participation is seen as developing —school governance and the curriculum. In the first arena, school governance, student participation involves students partaking in decision-making about educational issues, either directly or through representatives. Here, students are regarded as having valuable perspectives and information and the skills to contribute to school decision-making. Their views are taken seriously, and they are supported in developing democratic structures that ensure the views of all students are represented (Holdsworth, 2000). In terms of the curriculum, student participation involves them making decisions and taking actions through classroom learning partnerships, and through specific 'student participation' projects or approaches (Holdsworth, 2000). Holdsworth (2000, p.358) also refers to the concept of a community 'participation ladder’ which distinguishes 'consultation' and 'involvement' as more limited than 'participation' and 'action', and a ‘Student participation ladder’:

1. youth/student voice: 'speaking out'
2. being heard
3. being listened to
4. being listened to seriously and with respect (including a willingness to argue with students with logic and evidence)

5. incorporating youth/student views into action taken by others
6. sharing decision-making, implementation of action and reflection on the action with young people

While Shier (2001), is very complementary to Hart's 'Ladder of Participation', he offers an alternative model, not as a replacement but as an additional tool for practitioners. This alternative model, Shier (2001, p.109) says, 'owes a great debt to Hart's work'. A key difference between these two specific models is that the alternative model does not include the three levels of 'Non-participation': manipulation, decoration, and tokenism. Instead, Shier's (2001) model is based on five levels of participation:

1. Children are listened to
2. Children are supported in expressing their views
3. Children's views are taken into account
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making

Each level has three stages of commitment to determine the current level of participation and to identify the steps to be taken to further enhance participation:

- Openings: when somebody makes a commitment or a statement of intent to work in a certain way
- Opportunities: when the needs are met that enable people to operate at this level in practice. Needs might involve resources (e.g. staff time), skills, and knowledge (e.g. training)
- Obligations: when an agreed policy is established

According to Lodge (2005), an approach to student voice can be analysed along two dimensions: the role of the student, and the purposes for which participation is sought. Thus, Lodge (2005) suggests four categories of student involvement:

1. Quality control: student voice is used to gather information for quality control. Students are regarded as passive and as a source of information, or as the consumer providing feedback. The purposes are for institutional gains.

2. Students as a source of information: student voice is used as a source of information but for the purpose of school improvement. Students are still passive and are not involved in dialogue or given feedback.
3. Compliance and control: student voice serves institutional ends. Adults can manipulate the student voice to carry their own messages and deny/disguise their own involvement.
4. Dialogue: student voice plays an active role and is part of a shared narrative. An important value is placed on relationships to produce engagement, openness and honesty.

Elsewhere, Lodge (2008) says that 'dialogue is the only form of student voice that allows for the presence and participation of young people'.

Lundy (2007) proposes a new model for conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 is often referred to and has two key elements: the right to express a view, and the right to have the view given due weight. According to Lundy (2007), there is a need for a new means of communicating the legal and human rights imperative in this article and its successful implementation requires consideration of the implications of four separate factors:

- Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view
- Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views
- Audience: The view must be listened to
- Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate

This model reflects the fact that that these four factors are interrelated. In particular, there is a significant degree of overlap between space and voice, and between audience and influence (Lundy, 2007). In addition, it depicts the fact that Article 12 has an explicit chronology and represents the fact that it can only be fully understood when it is considered in the light of other relevant articles in the convention. Lundy (2007, p.941) concludes that this model offers 'a potential model for informing understanding, developing policy and auditing existing practice'.

Fielding (2012) sets out a typology entitled 'Patterns of partnership: how adults listen to and learn with students in schools' which suggests six forms of interaction between adults

and young people in schools and other educational contexts. Fielding (2012, pp.49-50) outlines the six forms of interaction as:

- Students as data source – in which staff utilise information about student progress and well-being.
- Students as active respondents – in which staff invite student dialogue and discussion to deepen learning/professional decisions.
- Students as co-enquirers - in which staff take a lead role with high-profile active student support.
- Students as knowledge creators – in which students take lead roles with active staff support.
- Students as joint authors – in which students and staff decide on a joint course of action together.
- Intergenerational learning as lived democracy – in which there is a shared commitment to/responsibility for the common good.

A 'pyramid of student voice', a typology of three levels of student voice activities, is put forward by Mitra (2018). Mitra (2018, p.474)'s pyramid consists of three-tiers and the higher a group moves on it, the greater the leadership of students and the greater the benefit for students:

1. Listening: adults seek students' perspectives and then interpret the meaning of the data
2. Collaboration: adults and students work together. Adults initiate the relationship and ultimately bear responsibility and the final say on decisions.
3. Leadership: students assume most of the decision-making authority and adults provide assistance.

An evaluative framework to guide student voice in schools was developed by Pearce and Wood (2019). While Pearce and Wood (2019, p.114) acknowledge that other frameworks have been put forward in the past, this framework 'moves away from a continuum approach and proposes a set of building blocks or conditions which together are required for student voice work to be transformative'. This framework consists of four overlapping and predominantly inseparable themes but that when taken together 'reflect the ways in

which student voice initiatives should be configured to create the conditions for students to empower themselves' (Pearce and Wood, 2019, p.118). The four themes are:

- Dialogic: relationships must be established that are free from or that resist domination.
- Intergenerational: adults have an important role to play but it must be acknowledged that young people are more than capable of voicing their opinions.
- Collective and inclusive: all students must be provided with an opportunity to empower themselves
- Transgressive: initiatives must be willing to cross or transgress traditional borders and power relations.

Most recently, Graham et al. (2019) developed an analysis tool that focused on the language used to depict student participation in the Australian state of New South Wales. This typology 'was based upon existing literature and developed from a synthesis of prominent models of young people's participation' (Graham et al., 2019, p.795), and particularly the work of Hart, Holdsworth, Lundy, and Shier. The typology developed by Graham et al. (2019) comprises five categories:

1. Meaningful: students are presented as actors in the educational process and overall school experience.
2. Partial: students are referred to as both actors and as objects to be acted upon and/or student participation is framed in fragmented or contradictory terms.
3. Superficial/tokenistic- students as objects or beneficiaries of policy: students are presented as objects to be acted upon and student participation is largely instrumental and/or future-orientated.
4. Articulated but not developed.
5. Students are not the focus of the policy: policies are intended for stakeholders other than students but may hold potential for addressing student participation.

2.4.2 The development and rise of student voice

According to Cook-Sather (2002), historical images of and attitudes towards young people have helped to ensure students' exclusion from policymaking and practice-shaping

conversations since the Industrial Revolution. The development of the student voice movement, however, has progressively done much to alleviate this exclusion. Rudduck and Fielding (2006, pp.222-223) refer to three schools, established in the 1890s, 1920s, and 1940s respectively, where the commitment to participation and voice was central, enabling students to explore and express their views, both as individuals and as representatives of the student group. Then, there was the 'student power' movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, where students were asserting, and others accepting, that students had a right to participate in decisions about their own education (Levin, 2000). Some, such as Mitra (2005, p.520), subscribe to the view that student voice has 'experienced a renaissance in recent years' in that the role of students in school decision-making and culture largely vanished from the mid-1970s until the new millennium (Levin in Mitra, 2005). In making this point, Mitra (2005, pp.20-21) recalls how reflective of the lack of student voice in schools, students' role in educational change had been largely absent from the literature:

> Consider, for example, that when writing his third edition of The New Meaning of Educational Change, Michael Fullan (2001) updated chapters on the roles of teachers, administrators, districts, and parents because of the vast changes in reform in the past 20 years. Yet he hardly made any changes to the chapter on students because, he explained, students have not had a role in educational change.

Others, however, are of the view that since the late 1980s and the codification and adoption of the UNCRC, the concept of student voice has been the focus of much interest in the field of education (Simovska, 2007; Pearce and Wood, 2019; Mayes et al., 2021). According to Lundy (2012, pp.393-394), considering the Convention 'contains the most comprehensive international statement of rights to and in education and is also the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in the world, it might be expected that it will have engendered positive changes in the experience of children's lives at school in the signatory nations'. Indeed, the current student voice movement has arisen in reaction against the traditional exclusion of young people from dialogue and decision-making about issues of schooling (Cook-Sather, 2007), and it has intensified due to calls for greater inclusion whereby education systems serve all learners, with a particular focus on those who have traditionally been excluded (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018), and the emergence of the notion of the 'agentic' child in the children's rights literature (Drew, 2019). However, Levin (2000, p.156) also distinguishes between the justifications of the student power movement which were largely on the grounds of rights, attempting to

extend political participation and democracy, and the proceeding literature which tended to be based more on school effectiveness:

> The recent literature…although it still includes some appeals to political participation, rests primarily on grounds of efficacy- that reform will be more successful if students are more involved or, even more strongly, that education reform cannot be successful unless students are more involved.

Mitra (2005, p.521) too contends that the re-emergence of student voice in recent years:

> has not been geared to rights and empowerment as it had in the past. Instead, it focuses on the benefits of student participation for schools by suggesting that school reform will be more successful if students participate.

Students are now seen as 'authorised voices' for school improvement (Saiz-Linares et al., 2019), acting as 'expert witnesses' with something to tell us about their school experiences (Lodge, 2005). Mitra (2006, p.315) similarly argues that students 'possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate'. It is perhaps a fair comment therefore, to say that the increase in student voice in schools has come from the need to address the alienation of young people and to strengthen school improvement efforts (Mitra, 2018).

2.4.3 The advantages of student voice

The literature puts forward many benefits of student voice and it is often championed as being the root of endless positive possibilities, improving instruction, curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and teacher-student relationships (Mitra, 2005). Student voice advocates, as acknowledged by Mayes (2020b, p.380),

> argue that student voice practices foster dialogue between students and teachers (Cook-Sather, 2002) and lived experiences of active citizenship (Holdsworth, 2000). Such initiatives have been associated with feelings of 'trust' (Cook-Sather, 2002) and 'respect' (Baroutsis, Mills, McGregor, Te Riele, & Hayes, 2016, p. 132).

Cook-Sather (2006, pp.359-360) also adds:

> this way of thinking is premised on the following convictions: that young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling; that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education.

Empirical evidence shows that allowing students to have a voice results in the development of civic habits essential to democracy (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2018) and international evidence connects student voice to a range of benefits that include student learning, engagement, citizenship, well-being, and overall school improvement (Graham et al., 2019). Mager and Nowak (2012) reviewed empirical research on the effects of student participation in school decision-making processes and found moderate evidence of positive effects of student participation on life skills, self-esteem and social status, democratic skills and citizenship, student-adult relationships and school ethos. For example, 'the development of life skills' was reported in more than half of the cases and both the 'positive effects related to the concepts of citizenship and democracy' and 'the development of or improvements in self-confidence or self-esteem' were reported in more than one-third of cases (Mager and Nowak, 2012, p.44). Similarly, 'various kinds of improvements in interactions between students and adults' were reported in over one-third of cases, but significantly, in over three-quarters of the cases 'positive outcomes for the school or classroom' were reported (Mager and Nowak, 2012, p.47). While Mager and Nowak (2012) found limited evidence of positive effects of student participation on academic achievement, with under one-third of cases indicating positive effects of participation on academic outcomes, a more recent literature review by Mitra (2018) emphasises the potential for student voice to improve academic performances:

> A large body of research documents the value of student voice initiatives improving classroom practice (including Cushman, 2000; Daniels et al., 2001; Mitra and Serriere, 2012; Kincheloe, 2007; Niemi et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014)…Research has found that students can improve academically when teachers construct their classrooms in ways that value student voice (Mitra 2018, pp.475-476).

According to Mitra (2018, p.477), student voice 'is directly related to academic performance'. Mitra's (2018) review of the literature also points to benefits of student voice such as improvements in student agency, the quality of implementation, school culture, and teacher learning.

2.4.4 The challenges for student voice

One of the greatest struggles when developing student voice initiatives is the role of adults in these interactions (Mitra et al., 2012). For many teachers, student voice is peripheral or irrelevant, and not something that they believe in or consider to be important (Fielding,

2001). While student voice is being strongly emphasised in many systems, it is by no means commonly accepted or approved of by teachers. Student voice involves changing fundamental norms, values and practices as stakeholders assume new roles, often for the first time (Beattie, 2012), and this is something that regularly proves problematic for teachers as there is not only a shift in power to children, but concerns about the reliability and validity of student input. As Rudduck and Fielding (2006) point out, the development of student participation in schools requires teachers being prepared to 'see' young people differently. A common problem is that students are not considered to be sensible or mature enough (Lodge, 2005; Gunter and Thomson, 2007; Glover, 2015). Reporting on research conducted with teachers who participated in a student voice initiative in an English primary school, Bragg (2007b), for example, offers various examples of teachers being faced with overcoming such obstacles, and obstacles that can perhaps reinforce any existing negativity towards student voice. One example is Bragg (2007b, p.510) recounting the Deputy Headteacher, Alison, attempting to draw on the input of students:

> Alison gave teachers some handouts about Giving Children a Voice to discuss in circle time and to feed into the pupil voice assemblies. They were designed to offer a structure for teachers in their own classrooms, and contained questions she had written, such as: 'If you could change something about the school, what would it be?', 'How would you let someone know if you were being bullied?' and 'Do you think teachers should ask children what they think about school? Why?'. She found she got unsatisfactory answers, in that they seemed too superficial or unconstructive: 'things like, "It's too noisy in our class because the radiator makes a noise", and, "We don't like always having to do English and Maths in the mornings, why can't we do it in the afternoon?"'. Teachers may have been disappointed by such responses, and, lacking the skills to develop them further, have been reaffirmed in their doubts about this process.

Furthermore, during the recruitment process for a new teacher, the unrealistic requests or judgements students can make is evident. Here, Bragg (2007b, p.512) recalls the Deputy Headteacher explaining what happened when she talked to the children (aged 7-8) about the kind of teacher they wanted:

> Initially I get all the standard answers, "somebody with a sense of humour, kind and pretty", it's like they want a Mary Poppins!

Although schools in England do increasingly use student interviewers as part of the process of appointing teachers, some adults' reservations about student voice have to do with getting precisely these kinds of responses. They fear that students will make unrealistic requests or judgements, without giving thought to their consequences or

meaning (Bragg, 2007b). Indeed, while teachers may often perceive student voice as being imbued with superficial and unrealistic requests and suggestions, the reality is that they are often presented with these types of comments. Of note, however, is Keddie's (2015) work with post-primary students in England where some students were actually aware of the limitations of student voice and maintained the traditional teacher-student power relations. As one student explained,

> at the end of the day the teachers have the last say…we have to be realistic about it. We can suggest things but we can't be too drastic with changes (Keddie, 2015, p.238).

For some teachers, the lack of credibility of student voice could be compounded not just by unrealistic and superficial comments, but by students not making honest contributions. In research conducted in Mexico City by Pérez-Expósito (2015), for example, a discussion about the Student Society (SS), a formal and legally regulated organisation required by all post-primary schools in Mexico, is a good illustration of how students can undermine the student voice process, to teachers' frustration. It is noted that in Mexico 'students tend to discredit both the SS and the process for electing the student representatives who chair it' (Pérez-Expósito, 2015, p.361) and the quote from this teacher is indicative of how teachers can lose faith in student voice:

> no matter how much you explain to them that it (the elections for the student representatives) has to be an electoral process, and what generates the votes are the proposals, they (the student candidates) do the same (as in politics): they give a candy (to the students), promises that are unrealistic (…), illogical things. Then, the exercise can be good (…) if they understand (…) the power they have to pick up someone who represents them (…) it is a good exercise. But we always fall in the absurd. At the end, this (thing) they do here is what happens outside, isn't it? (…) a (political) party convince us but it give us proposals that sometimes are unrealistic (Pérez-Expósito 2015, p.363).

Research in Australia by Quinn and Owen (2016, p.68) also shows how voting can often turn into popularity contests, as can be seen in the comments by these students:

> This year it was a little bit weird, it was a little bit hard. Because some people had their friend looking over their shoulder, saying ''Oh, pick that person, pick that person.'' And people were like ''Oh, pick me because I'm your best friend''

> It's rigged...only the people who ever get in are the popular kids. Me and (another student) would have no chance...it's only the popular kids who get in which is unfair.

It is therefore unsurprising that teachers can be reluctant to engage with student voice if they are presented with unrealistic and trivial requests and suggestions, and from students that they may consider to not be taking the democratic process seriously. Furthermore, student voice can sometimes be understood to mean consulting students on what Lodge (2005) refers to as 'comfort issues' (i.e. lockers, food, uniforms, and toilets). While Leren (2006) makes the valid point that if the main concern of a student council is with a drinks machine in the school canteen, for example, a lack of motivation among staff is understandable, but it is also important to understand that this can often be quite a conundrum for students as they are often confined to focusing on these comfort issues. As Biddle (2019, pp.1-2) maintains,

> Extracurricular activities and student councils have historically been sites of student leadership development; nevertheless, these activities are often treated as peripheral extras or, in the case of student councils, have been circumscribed to working primarily on social activities such as dances, bake sales and fundraisers (Fielding 2001; McFarland and Starmanns 2009).

It is unlikely that all staff in a school will be in favour of increasing the opportunities for students to have a 'voice' (Robinson and Taylor, 2007). The literature puts forward many reasons why teachers can be opposed to student voice, with many raising concerns about the practicalities. Lundy (2007 pp.929-930), for example, outlines three groups of adult concerns:

> Adult concerns tend to fall into one of three groups: scepticism about children's capacity (or a belief that they lack capacity) to have a meaningful input into decision making; a worry that giving children more control will undermine authority and destabilise the school environment; and finally, concern that compliance will require too much effort which would be better spent on education itself.

Time constraints are regularly cited as preventing teachers from engaging in student voice- as Ainscow and Messiou (2018, p.15) point out, time is 'always a challenge during the busy day of a school'— but other reasons may include teachers feeling inhibited from involving students in decision-making about management issues when there are too many of them (Lewis and Burman, 2008), teachers being constrained from using student voice in the classroom due to a lack of resources and issues of space, architecture and timetabling (McIntyre et al., 2005), and teachers being concerned about the validity, bias, and reliability of student evaluations of them (Burr, 2015). While student voice can certainly present challenges for teachers, the literature also throws up some examples of some teachers being particularly defensive against it (see for example Bragg, 2007b,

p.509; Burr, 2015, p.31; Pérez-Expósito, 2015, p.361). It is important to bear in mind, however, that student voice can be emotionally challenging for some teachers and that parallels can be drawn between the construction of some teachers as reluctant and the analyses of marginalised student voices in schools (Black and Mayes, 2020) outlined below.

Further challenges for student voice relate to the actual voice being spoken, or no spoken. Student voice initiatives can often overlook quieter students or seemingly forgotten students (Finneran et al., 2021) while the more self-assured and articulate students may dominate consultative conversations and be more readily 'heard' (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). According to McIntyre et al. (2005), student voice could therefore inadvertently serve as a 'dividing practice' rather than as a way of involving and eliciting those pupils whose voices are silenced because they feel somehow that they don't fit the dominant discourse and academic aspirations of their schools. Perry-Hazan (2019) also points out that shy children might find participatory activities intimidating and might not want to take part in class discussions or share their private opinions and thoughts, while others might want to avoid participatory activities that undermine their social popularity. What therefore tends to happen is that the voices 'we wish to hear' are the palatable voices of 'good' students who can speak a 'sanctioned' school language and who are already best served by the current school set-up (Keddie, 2015) while those considered to be lacking the sociocultural capital which is valued by schools are silenced (Allan and Duckworth, 2018). Thus, synthesising students' voices into one voice that represents the student body tends to amplify the voices of the most audible and privileged and overlook nuances (Charteris and Smardon, 2019b).

Even in research, Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (in Bourke and Loveridge, 2018) claim that participating students (i.e. the ones to have their voices heard and documented) are often those in some form of advantaged position (i.e. they are the ones to put their hands up to be selected and are typically confident and articulate students thriving in the system) and therefore, are not actually representative of the student body. A common form of 'selective listening' (Keddie, 2015) is clearly evident in Robinson and Taylor's (2012) research where it was found that certain groups of students are sometimes invited and/or selected to participate in projects that seek student input. Robinson and Taylor (2012, p.38) report that power held by members of staff in hierarchical authoritative positions manifested itself in their freedom to choose specific students to be involved, as

is reflected in the following comments from first, a post-primary school teacher, and second, from a student involved in the project:

> It just came naturally to chose (sic) who to be involved, it's what we do, we use our judgment to chose (sic) who we think is the most suited.
>
> I suppose we didn't really question the fact that staff chose us to be involved, that's just what we're used to in school.

Robinson and Taylor (2012) point out that the fact that nobody, staff nor students, questioned such a selection process is reflective of the 'taken-for-granted' nature of cultural norms relating to modes of authority which infuse the power relations between teachers and students. Indeed, students as well as teachers can work to maintain the traditional teacher-student power relations (see Keddie, 2015) but the literature would suggest that the unequal power relations are primarily instigated by staff. Ladkin (2017), for example, contends that whether or not students volunteer their voice or are selected to offer their voice, they are very often asked to do so in a room that already holds some sort of hidden power. According to Ladkin (2017, p.38),

> The rooms chosen typically encourage a transactional process, which ensures the teacher is the most powerful individual in the room (Sellman, 2009). The selection of these rooms by teachers and school leaders ensures that students only question those ideas that they know teachers will approve of (Nelson, 2017). This implicit regulation by adults within school environments to actively regulate social interactions between more powerful students ensures that these students resist questioning the unstated values, norms and beliefs of the school, and adhere to the school culture enforced upon them (Robinson, 2011).

In addition to the selective nature of student voice in some settings that actually works to silence others, concerns have also started to be expressed in the literature about the authenticity of consultations that do take place. Ainscow and Messiou (2018), for example, give an account of a meeting they had with a school's leadership team where the general consensus was that the students' views were simply wrong:

> comments from students about what they saw as the rather tokenistic approach to consultation that had taken place about a new school uniform were described as being untrue. Indeed, the senior team saw student involvement in decision making as a strength in the way they were running the school. Many of the group also dismissed the views of students about bullying and the tendency of some staff to stereotype some students (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018, p.11).

It can be difficult for adults to digest views that seem to contradict their own assumptions about what happens in their school (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018) and this might explain why providing students with choice can be a coercive strategy to reinforce teacher power by showing students *why* they should comply with pre-existing rules (Drew, 2019). Drew (2019) interviewed 15 primary school teachers in England about their approaches to 'choice' in the classroom and one of the most common ways in which the participants described choice-making in their classrooms was to discuss how they subtly go about influencing children's choices. Choice, thus, was 'operationalised in a way that reinforces teacher authority, and that closes down potential challenges to adult-child inequalities' (Drew, 2019, p.548). Consequently, when these power relations are at play student voice work is

> either ineffective because it lacks the support of those in positions of power within a school, or is simply an intervention done to students and therefore not really a form of student participation; in both cases students are disempowered, either practically in their ability to achieve their goals, or at the outset in having their goals decided for them (Pearce and Wood, 2019, p.125).

2.4.5 The disadvantages of student voice

While there has been much 'injudicious enthusiasm' for student voice (Howell, 2018), listening to students' views and accepting what it is they have to say is not always a straight-forward process (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018), and along with the potential benefits there are also potential drawbacks (Flutter, 2007). While not uniform, much of the literature advocates student voice and overlooks potential disadvantages of its use. Thus, the disadvantages of student voice are often not documented in the literature, and while anecdotal evidence would suggest that there are indeed many negatives, the literature is largely confined to a smaller number of references to the negative consequences of student voice.

Mager and Nowak's (2012) aforementioned review of the empirical research found eleven cases that report diverse negative effects of student participation. In some studies, there are reports of student disillusionment, disappointment and frustration, and one study reported stress experienced by students participating in temporary school working groups as part of the school improvement process, while another reported that as a result of student participation, students expected the right to have something without earning it (Mager and Nowak, 2012). Only six cases indicated the effects of student participation

on teachers and while the majority of these were positive, one study did indicate teacher difficulty with being challenged and questioned by students (Mager and Nowak, 2012).

More recently, Charteris and Smardon (2019c) draw our attention to influential schooling discourses inherent in school leaders' comments to consider the contribution of student voice. The research suggests that 'despite the plethora of literature that highlights the value of democratic participation in schooling, there remains a strong focus on the use of student voice for systemic improvement' (Charteris and Smardon, 2019c, p.103). Three discourses in particular were prominent in this research conducted in New Zealand:

1. Governmentality: student voice is positioned as a triangulation device to monitor individuals, including teachers.

2. Accountability: student voice is used as a mechanism for quality assurance but not necessarily with students as participant stakeholders.

3. Institutional transformation and reform: student voice is used as part of school decision-making and as the primary focus is on raising student attainment, this discourse overlaps both governmentality and accountability discourses.

Here, the nature of governance is not orientated towards partnership and students are consulted for the purposes of improvement, surveillance, and social control (Charteris and Smardon, 2019c). While it is uncertain whether using students to report on effectiveness influences their educational experience for the better, it can result in fear and distrust among teachers (Charteris and Smardon, 2019c). Similarly, Perry-Hazan's (2019) research focuses on the ways participatory practices may hinder children's participatory rights and it is pointed out that demoralised teachers do not serve children's best interests and might actually do more harm than good. While not questioning or underestimating 'the tremendous benefits of participation rights' (Perry-Hazan, 2019, p.11) possible conflicts between children's participation rights in education and other rights and interests are highlighted. While various rights constitute prerequisites for the fulfilment of children's participation rights, participation rights may foster the fulfilment of other rights, but they may also conflict with other rights. Perry-Hazan (2019, pp.10) highlights that

> children's participation rights in education may constrain various other children's rights: the right not to participate (UNCRC, Article 12), not to be discriminated against (UNCRC, Article 2), to be protected from violence and

> abuse (UNCRC, Article 19), and to receive education that is adapted to their circles of cultural affiliations (UNCRC, Articles 29(1)(c), 30). In addition, children are entitled to receive the direction and guidance of their parents in the exercise of their rights (UNCRC, Article 5). This right is also a parental right….children's participation rights in education may constrain parental rights to autonomy and culture (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966, Article 13(3)-(4); UNCRC, Article 3(2)), teachers' rights to protection from defamation and harassment, and the social interest to empower teachers. This social interest is intertwined with children's best interest (UNCRC, Article 3(1)) as it corresponds to children's right to acceptable education (UNCRC, Articles 28, 29(1)(a)).

Thus, while the disadvantages of student voice are not yet as documented as the advantages, it has been established that student voice can impact society and the nature of work in schools in far from ideal ways.

2.5 Student voice in Ireland

Student voice has traditionally been limited, and even non-existent in Irish schools— and in society too. Drawing on scholarship stretching from the 1940s through to the early 2000s, Jeffers (2011, p.69) says that there is 'extensive evidence from literature and memoirs that document how Irish children's views were ignored in schools and in the wider society'. Shevlin and Rose (2008, p.426) similarly remark that it 'is generally agreed that children occupy an ambivalent position within Irish society', and specifically in relation to school life, they say that the 'traditionally hierarchical nature of Irish schools tends to militate against the active participation of all children in decision-making processes' (2008, p.427). In a report on youth participation in Ireland, for example, Leahy and Burgess (2011, p.8) contend that

> Irish young people 'learn' how to participate as an age-related integration of personal agency with social structure.

Reflecting on the early 1970s, Roche (2011, p.328) refers to a culture of children being 'seen and not heard'. This culture is one that secured longevity. As Fleming (2011) contended at the beginning of the previous decade, a culture of asking, consulting, or discussing students' views was notably absent from Irish schools. Lodge and Lynch's

(2000, p.47) assertion about power-based relations in schools is one which has tended to be quite fitting in the Irish context:

> The institutional relationship between teacher and student is a power-based one. Teachers are invested with power over students, not only by virtue of their adult status in society, but also because of their institutional position as knowledge providers who are deemed to have a special responsibility for the young people in their care.

In their research with over 1,500 post-primary school students in Ireland, over 1,200 students completed essays about how they experience inequality in Irish schools (Lodge and Lynch, 2000). It was found that within education students had a keen level of awareness of their subordinate position vis-à-vis adults:

> From the perspective of the young people, the most significant equality issues were those relating to the practice, negotiation and management of authority and power within their schools. The inequality which arose from differences in age and status between students and teachers, and the resultant perceived misuse of power or privilege was the dominant theme in students' essays (Lodge and Lynch 2000, p.50).

According to Lodge and Lynch (2000, p.52), the schools involved in the research were 'generally hierarchical organisations with power being vested centrally in the principal and, sometimes, other senior staff', while in classrooms teachers had 'authority by virtue of her/his position', with it 'generally assumed that the students would accept that authority without challenge'. Despite the time since this research, it still holds much relevance today, as the recent research literature shows.

2.5.1 Policy context

It is now widely acknowledged in the literature that like in other countries student voice has emerged in policy discourse in Ireland following the UNCRC (see for example Keogh and Whyte, 2005; Fleming, 2015; Forde et al., 2018). Despite Ireland being 'criticised for how it has facilitated the Convention (Lodge and Lynch, 2000) and advised to improve (Forde et al. 2018) at times in the past by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Ireland has committed to including the voice of the child and children's views in policy-

making processes since its ratification in 1992 (Forde et al., 2017). A key policy strategy was *The National Children's Strategy* published in 2000. This was the first policy document to set out children's rights in Ireland and it made an explicit commitment to giving children a voice in matters that impact them (Forde et al., 2017). Three specific 'National Goals for Children' were outlined: children having a voice in matters which affect them with their views given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, their lives being better understood through evaluation, research, and information on their needs and rights and on the effectiveness of services, and children receiving quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development (The National Children's Strategy, 2000, p.11). Since 2000, a series of initiatives have been undertaken to support children and young people's participation such as the establishment of an office of an Ombudsman for Children, a series of national consultations on issues concerning children and young people, the development of the first full ministerial post and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), a national advisory panel of children and young people, and a national youth council and thirty-four local child and youth councils aimed at children and young people aged 12 to 18 years (Forde et al., 2017). In 2012 there was also an amendment to the Irish Constitution to provide for the right of the child to have their views considered in judicial proceedings (D. Fleming, 2016). Building on this strategy in 2014 the DCYA then published *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020*, a new policy framework stating that the vision is to have an Ireland

> where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future (DCYA, 2014, p.2).

The aim of the policy framework is to

> move policy development and service delivery beyond the present scenario- where children and young people are viewed primarily within narrow organisational responsibilities- to a whole of Government response and a clear picture of overall need and the progress required to achieve improved outcomes (DCYA, 2014, p.12).

Six transformational goals for achieving better outcomes are outlined. Distinctively, one of the goals is to 'Listen to and involve children and young people':

> Children and young people have a right to have a voice in decisions that affect them, both individually and collectively. Failure to listen to children and young people in the past resulted in a failure to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect. The Government is committed to strengthening efforts to ensure that children and young people have this right and that they are supported to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have those views given their due weight, including those of 'seldom-heard' children (DCYA, 2014, p.8).

The DCYA, then, in 2015 published the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020*, becoming the first country in Europe to develop such a procedure. The goal of this strategy is to ensure that children and young people (up to the age of 24) are given a voice in their individual and collective lives across the national outcomes outlined in the aforementioned *national policy framework for children & young people.* The four key objectives and priority areas for action identified by the DCYA (2015a, p.3) are that children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities, have a voice in decision-making in formal and non-formal education, have a voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, and have a voice in the Courts and legal system. Some of the key fundamentals that underlines the objectives in the strategy are the 'recognition that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives' and 'improving and establishing mechanisms to ensure the participation of seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people in decision-making' (DCYA, 2015a, p.4). Furthermore, the *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020*, was also published in 2015, the aim of which is to 'enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood' (DCYA, 2015b, p.2).

Specifically in education, students are now recognised as key stakeholders in schools and are coming to play an important role in the evaluation of schools. The DES' (2016c, p.6) quality framework provides a common language which 'will facilitate meaningful dialogue between teachers, educational professionals, parents, students, school communities and the wider community about quality in our schools'. In terms of external inspections, the DES (2016a, p.5) in the guidelines for school inspections contends that the input of stakeholders such as students 'is an important and integral part of the work of the Inspectorate in schools'. As part of these inspections, students might be surveyed, interviewed, and engaged with during their lessons by inspectors (DES, 2016a). In terms of internal evaluations, the SSE guidelines are aimed at a range of stakeholders such as

'school communities including students and parents, to enable their fullest participation in school self-evaluation processes' (DES, 2016b, p.7). As part of SSE, the guidelines state that both quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered from a number of sources including students, and that information should be collected from stakeholders such as students to ensure that schools 'have sufficient knowledge to make accurate judgements' (DES, 2016b, p.13). As found in the DEAPS project, however, it continues to be the case that students are consulted on mainly non-academic matters (Brown et al., 2020b). The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 might be expected, for better or for worse, to bring about more student voice in relation to academic matters, and with the next iteration of SSE due to be rolled out during the 2022/23 academic year, what will be the third version of compulsory SSE in Ireland, student voice is likely to be enhanced further in official policy and discourse. Similar to SSE, we might expect new and updated national strategies and policy frameworks for children and young people in the near future too.

2.5.2 Student voice in Irish schools

Despite the advancement of the student voice movement at a societal level, student participation in school decision-making in Irish schools remains underdeveloped, as is evident by the research literature. Coyne and McCoy (2020, p.349), for example, introduce the 'student perspective' as lacking in Irish education despite greater awareness of and emphasis on student voice:

> A prime area for input is the school experience, a key pillar of their formative years. Progress on this in Ireland has been mixed, as students display an appetite for change in their education system, yet are often frustrated at their perceived lack of voice (Ahern, 2017).

Previous research has reported that less than a quarter of students in Irish schools feel that they participate in making the rules in their school (de Róiste et al., 2012), that one-quarter of students in Ireland had never voted for student council representatives while one-third had never taken part in a class or school debate, and that between three-fifths and three-quarters had never taken part in decision-making about how the school is run, taken part in discussions at a student assembly or become a candidate to represent their class on the student council (Gilleece and Cosgrove, 2012). Data from the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) Ireland participated in also found that

> students in Ireland had very low perceived levels of influence on decision-making processes in schools. In contrast, Irish students had higher than average perceptions of the value of participation at school and a mean score on the participation at school scale that was the same as the international average (Cosgrove and Gilleece, 2012, p.391).

The disjoint between students' perceptions of their influence on decision-making in school and their perceptions of the value of participation in school is notable. It would appear that 'students in Ireland value participation, yet the opportunity to get involved in decision-making processes in school is well below the international average' (Cosgrove and Gilleece, 2012, p.392).

Small-scale research also shows the low levels of participation of students in Ireland. In research carried out in a single post-primary school in rural Ireland, Harrison et al. (2020, p.114) found that 'almost 40% of the students felt they were involved in decision-making at the school level *sometimes*, with a quarter each responding *rarely* or *often'*. Thus, there was an eagerness among students to have greater involvement and more of a voice. They felt that they would like to be consulted, and not just on trivial matters and after decisions have already been made (Harrison et al., 2020). Through focus group interviews, individual interviews, a teacher-researcher reflection journal, and student written reflections as part of a comparative case-study centring on a small cluster of three practicing Physical Education (PE) teachers (including the researcher) in three different post-primary schools, Howley's (2018) Masters research looked at how teachers in Ireland evaluate and create conditions for student voice in PE in particular. Howley (2018) found that while teachers initially felt that students were listened to in their schools and were allowed to take on equal roles in both PE and the school, the reality in which this played out was more limited and tokenistic. Some also observed a reluctance among teachers to engage with students. The teacher-researcher, for example, felt that while his school was gradually shifting towards a more collaborative approach between teachers and students, student voice was not prevalent and it was felt that teachers and management were 'uncertain about the idea of having pupils as informants towards school planning, teaching and learning' (Howley, 2018, p.57).

More recently, in much larger research that involved interviews with 74 children and young people, Forde et al. (2018) report that most participants felt that there was little focus on reaching shared decisions in schools and that they were not recognised as partners in the school environment. Similarly, in focus group interviews conducted in 18

post-primary schools, McCormack et al. (2019b), found that students' participation in aspects of school life was rather passive. While a larger sample of students indicated a 'a strong level of agreement towards their participation in aspects of school life' during the collection of quantitative data, when discussing their 'opportunities to be responsible during the school day' during interviews, it was found that responsibility here related to engaging with the student council and 'suggesting new extra-curricular clubs, photocopying materials, going to their locker, going to the restroom, being responsible for the materials they need for class, signing out resources (i.e. footballs) during the lunch break or being allowed to keep their mobile phone in their possession' (McCormack et al., 2019b, p.6).

While it appears that students, as children, have yet to gain acceptance as partners in school decision-making in Ireland, the age, and consequent maturity, of students seems to also play an important role. A frequent issue, often found, is that senior students tend to have precedence over junior students (Keogh and Whyte, 2005). Children and younger post-primary school students felt that they had less of a voice in school while older students reported a movement towards more independence, autonomy, and voice with increased age in Forde et al.'s (2018) research. This was also evident in these three comments from students in Horgan et al.'s (2017, p.281) research:

> In first year we have no say or way of getting our opinion across.
>
> Older students have more of a say, the teachers know you better, they normally go to the 6th years for everything, they give them more responsibility.
>
> Age is important in having a say. And the way you talk- the more mature you sound, the more they (adults) will listen.

However, there are also some studies that might challenge this to a certain degree. While senior students assume increasingly adult lives outside school, a significant proportion of students in Smyth's (2016) research pointed to a mismatch in the standards expected of them within and outside school, seeing their teachers as stricter than their parents. According to Smyth (2016, p.125), it 'is clear that they report having much less say over dimensions of school life than over their social lives'. Perhaps more notably, de Róiste et al. (2012) draw on data collected data from 10,334 10-17 year old students in 215 schools via self-completion questionnaires and found that students are not experiencing more participation as they get older—but quite the contrary:

> Chassin et al. (1989) noted that the need for involvement in decision-making increases as children get older. Yet, our data suggest that young children are more likely to report participation compared to older students. We found that older students are less likely to report participation in school, irrespective of gender or type of participation (de Róiste et al., 2012, p.97).

2.5.3 Student voice via the student council in Irish schools

According to Fleming (2015), the period of partnership in Irish education in the 1990s led to the drafting of the White Paper on Education in 1995 that informed the 1998 Education Act. The 1995 White Paper was first to mention a student council in policy as a mechanism for student participation in schools by stating that school policies 'should be developed in close consultation with parents, and with students where appropriate', while the Education Act that followed stated that 'under the direction of the board and, in consultation with the teachers, the parents and, to the extent appropriate to their age and experience, the students, set objectives for the school and monitor the achievement of those objectives' (Fleming, 2015, p.229). To 'promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school', the Education Act also stated that post-primary school students 'may establish' a student council (Fleming, 2015, p.229). From there, the student council became the central and only construct for providing students with a platform to be included and to participate in decision-making in schools (Fleming, 2015).

There can be diverging views between staff and students as to the role and functions of students councils, however, as well as a perceived low and tokenistic status assigned to them, and sometimes there is an absence of junior students in their running (Cosgrove and Gilleece, 2012). These issues are consistently acknowledged in the student council literature in Ireland. A report on post-primary school student councils in Ireland by Keogh and Whyte (2005) highlighted how staff and students can often perceive the role of the council differently. Student council members saw themselves as having a role of action by representing students' views, changing school uniform, changing canteen food, fixing things, dealing with issues, solving problems, helping students, organising events etc. In contrast however, school staff and Board of Management members saw the student council as a consultative group and as a resource that could be used to provide information (Keogh and Whyte, 2005). Some resistance to student councils was also reported. The view that the student council should not 'get out of their box' was expressed by a number of teachers and there was a fear that the student council would be disruptive and acquire

too much power (Keogh and Whyte, 2005, p.40). Some teachers were worried that the student council might become a 'kind of thing against teachers' (Keogh and Whyte 2005, p.43). Significantly, such was the lack of genuine student participation in Irish schools at this time, that many adults were often unaware or uninformed of the student councils operating in their schools:

> One of the most important findings emerging from meeting with Boards of Management was that members had very little knowledge or awareness of the student council in their school. This was reflected in focus groups with Boards of Management and also survey responses. One parent said that she had never heard of a student council and wondered what it was. In fact, it was not surprising given that in most schools student issues were never on the agenda for Board of Management meetings. The one exception was the school with a student representative on the Board. Similarly, in quite a number of schools, staff did not seem to be aware of the student council at all. Informal conversations with many teachers in staff rooms revealed that many did not realise there even was a student council in their school (Keogh and Whyte, 2005, p.38).

Very comparable findings were also found by Lodge and Lynch (2000). They found that students wanted greater democratic involvement because as it stood 'it is what the teacher says goes', as one student said (Lodge and Lynch, 2000, p54). Students wanted student councils to have a genuine input into the way in which school rules were drawn up as opposed to simply carrying out activities such as running discos, which they felt were unimportant. However, when these views were put to teachers, Lodge and Lynch (2000) found that in schools where no council existed some staff were scared that such a development would lead to 'anarchy'. While these negative perceptions and fears were not expressed in schools with already established councils, it was found that in general 'there appeared to be a communication gap between students and teachers about the nature and purpose of democratic structures… teachers seemed to lack a clear understanding about how such participatory democracy would work in schools' (Lodge and Lynch, 2000, p.55).

Smyth's (2016) longitudinal research on students' experiences of post-primary education in Ireland with students who commenced post-primary school in 2002 bears many similarities to the previous work done on student councils. To begin with, Smyth (2016) found that not all of the case-study schools had a student council at the time of the research and newly established councils were found in some schools. Overall, students felt that they had little input into school decision-making. They expressed a desire to have a much greater input into decision-making than they were currently afforded but in contrast, staff

accounts of the role of the council were very different. Staff were more likely to see the student councils as active and as having an input into school policy, although some did acknowledge that the student council tended to focus on the 'little things' such as the food in the canteen (Smyth, 2016). In further contrast to students, while the power disparity between teachers and students was not explicitly mentioned by staff, one teacher did acknowledge the potential implications for staff 'control' in taking student voice seriously:

> We're always afraid of letting students tell us what we do…and it's like parents associations, we don't want to let parents into the school in case they take over from us, I think as teachers (they are) afraid of losing their authority (Smyth, 2016, p.133).

For Fleming (2013, p.74), a survey by the Inspectorate is very telling:

> Responses to questionnaires provided to students in schools by inspectors during whole-school evaluations in Ireland from 2010 provide an indication of the penetration and visibility of the student council in these schools. The responses to one particular question pointed toward a limited visibility for the student council as a representative and participatory construct. From over 9,000 responses to student questionnaires used in WSE-MLL in seventy post-primary schools, just 41% of students responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I have a say in how to make my school a better place', a further 36% either disagreed or strongly disagreed while the remaining 23% of students stated that they 'didn't know' (Inspectorate, 2012b).

As are the responses to a national audit of SCs conducted by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in 2011:

> Just 208 councils from a total of over 720 post-primary schools responded. The 29% response rate, in itself, was indicative of a weak visibility for student councils in Irish post-primary schools. Of those that did respond to the audit, the majority of responses pointed towards tokenistic and very limited involvements for the student council in decision-making with just 50% of councils feeling that their views were taken seriously by school management (OMCYA, 2011). While the majority of councils felt that they were consulted on issues relating to school rules and policy formation, a majority of council members also identified their limited impact on decisions (sic) making (Fleming, 2013, p.76).

Fleming's (2013) doctoral research is perhaps the most insightful into the area of student councils in Ireland and shows how these bodies can be interpreted as being largely tokenistic and without agency in relation to a voice in decision-making. In research with three post-primary schools, Fleming (2013) was able to, inter alia, examine the operation

of the council in each school through the voices of its members, liaison teacher, and school principal. All three participating schools had active and operational student councils that had a term of office of one school year, and in addition to analysing interview data and reflection sheets, Fleming (2013) observed a number of student council meetings. Fleming (2013) found that the councils in these schools were a largely tokenistic representation of students' rights, their participation in consultation and dialogue in school affairs, and their democratic experiences. While students articulated an idealised and visionary role for the student council as a representative forum for discussion, an expression of student voice, and a platform to address concerns with management, the liaison teachers' views, while reflecting that of the students, mainly centred around either improvement to services, changes to the physical environment, or the organisation of events and fundraising—voice was largely considered as a form of communication with the principal or student body and not as having a say in school decision-making (Fleming, 2013). Principals' views, and their engagements with the student councils, were unified around a discourse of power and control thinly disguised in a rhetoric relating to the construct as representing the voice of students— they spoke of representative voice and the student council as a forum for voice but did not identify a role as either reflecting a form of democracy or active citizenship or events or projects as a central expression of that role (Fleming, 2013). To sum up, despite the rhetoric of voice and participation, the reality for the councils was one of a controlled and limited voice managed by liaison teachers through the direction of school principals. Nonetheless, while evidence of a partnership role with management in decision-making was difficult to find, students seemed to accept and internalise a discourse relating to the student council that visualised a forum for student voice:

> The students appeared to believe the rhetoric of voice and representation without the lived experience of that role. The rhetoric, arguably embedded by the power and authority of school management and the liaison teacher, reflected inclusion, democratic practice and openness within school culture. Such expressions made students feel that they have the power through the council to effect change (Fleming, 2013, p.210).

Ultimately, strategic school-based decisions had established student councils for the purpose of compliance due to the widespread expectation that schools should provide student councils, and through tokenistic involvements, they were able to maintain power and authority in key areas of decision-making in the hands of teachers and management (Fleming, 2013, p.225).

More recent research continues to dovetail with previous studies and shows the slow pace of change taking place in this area in Irish schools. In Forde et al.'s (2018, p.500) research, while feedback from the young people was 'less-than-positive', principals and teachers 'consistently referred to the student council as a means of facilitating the participation of children and young people in the school'. It was found that the perspective of students 'is at odds with that of many of the teachers and principals, most of whom argued that their schools had an atmosphere that supports student participation', as is reflected in this comment, for example:

> We have a student council and they (pupils) are very involved in the student council, in the development of all the plans and policies of the school. So they are very involved and would have a huge input in policy, decision-making and, of course, via the Guidance Counsellor in the guidance plan and policies (Forde et al., 2018, p.499).

It was clear, however, that the more serious the level of decision to be made in schools, the less likely it was that students would be consulted (Forde et al., 2018, p.500). The comments made by post-primary school principals 'strongly suggest that the real power within these schools lies with the principals, who have the final say in decision-making, and that traditional or paternalistic attitudes towards the young people are still held by some principals and teachers' (Forde et al., 2018, p.501). Like previous research, Forde et al.'s (2018, p.502) research also found that parents are not always fully familiar with student councils. As one parent said:

> My daughter was elected onto the school council…They meet with teachers and principal on a regular basis. She is happy to be on it…but (I'm) not very sure what she does on it.

In McCormack et al.'s (2019b) research the student council 'was, in theory, a common vehicle for involving students in school life and for students to exercise some responsibility in school decision-making', but this did not exactly translate in practice. It was found, for example, that in many instances students were not aware of the work done by student councils while there were also some concerns raised about how active and effective student councils were in schools:

> during meetings with school management, student council members "gave their opinion on things" (FG, School 16) or organised events such as sports days (FG, School 18) or Mental Health Week (FG, School 8). The main example of work completed by the student council, in School 16, involved

> fixing a broken clock in the student's classroom: "we said it to the captain and then the clock was fixed" (McCormack et al., 2019b, p.6).

The students interviewed about student councils are often dissatisfied with the current arrangements and it would appear they do often have ample reason to be aggrieved in this area. However, what is also apparent in the literature is that students can often be critical of the student council itself, and demotivated due to lack of confidence in it as a mechanism. Keogh and Whyte (2005) reported that a key concern of council members was how they were viewed by the student body, and this had an impact on their self-esteem. It was found that members of the student body did not have high opinions of the student councils in their schools and acknowledged that they were not very supportive of it. They felt that they were too segregated from the council, and there was a perception among some that its members were more loyal to the staff than to them, particularly when they see the student council carrying out agendas set by management or completing tasks for teachers (Keogh and Whyte, 2005). For those on a student council, members felt that sometimes they were not taken seriously by the student body, even during successful times—it could be seen as being tokenistic or as a 'photo-op' (Keogh and Whyte, 2005). In other cases, such as in Fleming's (2013) research, while student council members may not be too critical of the student council as a mechanism for student voice, they still feel that the council is not taken seriously by the wider student body. Fleming (2013, p.221) provides the following quotes from student council members to demonstrate this feeling:

> Most students are aware of it but not all take it seriously.
>
> I think it is not so much that we don't communicate with the student body, I think it's the student body don't really want to be communicated with. I don't think the student council is seen as a very cool club to be in so people really associate with it.

Smyth (2016, p.130) also reported that 'many students felt that members of the student council were not proactive and had little say in decision-making in the school', as can be seen by this selection of comments from students in a range of different schools:

> They don't really have much power really, they're sort of there as a figure, they don't really do much really like.
>
> They don't really do anything, like they don't have much power or that you know.
>
> The students' council does nothing.

> if you come forward with an idea then they just say no, that they can't do it or something.
>
> They say they're going to do everything but they never do.
>
> The people who are on the student council are just a waste of time.

However, some students on the student council also acknowledge, and accept, that they are in a subordinate position:

> The council seems to know its place and functions well, we would like to have a greater voice but we are still only the students (Fleming, 2013, p.220).
>
> We have a certain level of authority but you cannot place too much power on the students (Fleming, 2013, p.220).
>
> If the council had the power to act straight away it would be great but unfortunately this is a delicate area - we are neither adults nor do we run the school so we cannot be completely trusted (Fleming, 2013, p.221).

Recent research has also seen a rise in students expressing frustration with the lack of communication concerning decisions made by student councils and the inadequate power the councils have to make any real changes, while the representativeness of the student councils can also get also brought into question, as can be seen in the following quotes made by students:

> The Student Council tries to improve student life, small things, for example, having the water fountain fixed, but not big things (Horgan et al., 2017, p.282).
>
> They don't really do much and we don't really talk to them (Horgan et al., 2017, p.282).
>
> Only two people talking for 100 people- 2 reps per year. We never really get told about what decisions are being made. We don't get told much about it, only in some classes. They (student council reps) don't feed back. People don't ask. They don't always go to the meetings anyway, even though they're voted in. But sometimes nobody votes, so they go straight in (Forde et al., 2018, p.500).
>
> sometimes they don't do the job you ask them. You can't really have feedback from them that is clear. They aren't the most reliable source. You would need to probably go to the Student Council and go to somebody else as well (McCormack et al., 2019b, p7).

However, while many students appear to become frustrated with those on the student council, there are also some reports of a lack of interest from students in joining it—which could also be a consequence of students losing confidence in it as a mechanism for student

voice based on previous experiences. In Keogh and Whyte's (2005) research, the main challenge for one school was recruiting interested students. The deputy principal explained:

> What I couldn't get over is, when we actually put it out to the kids…no one was interested, very few (Keogh and Whyte, 2005, p.58).

Similarly, a teacher in Smyth's (2016, p.133) research characterised students as not wishing to assume the responsibility involved in decision-making:

> The thing is, what I would find is they have great suggestions, oh we should have this and we should have that, when they set it up they lose interest after and expect a teacher or somebody else to take over…I would find that is the case of oh we have all these ideas but don't ask me to do anything. Or I don't want the responsibility.

2.5.4 Student voice via school evaluations in Ireland

It was the introduction of both external school evaluation and internal SSE in Ireland that really extended the policy discourses on student voice in Irish schools (Fleming, 2013, 2015). While students may now be involved in external evaluations of schools in Ireland, the literature would suggest that their involvement and input might be minimal. Surveying students via questionnaires with closed questions will not enable students to comment on issues or on their experiences (Fleming, 2013, 2015) and there are also immediate flaws with inspectors meeting with samples of students for focus group interviews. While the attendance of a non-participating teacher, as sometimes happens, can, as Dillon (2011) suggests, inhibit free conversation, the feedback given by students might not be conducive to the school improvement process due to their loyalty to the school. The Chief Inspector has in the past admitted that there can be a tendency 'for parents' associations or councils to be protective of their schools when external inspection occurs' (Hislop, 2012, p.24), as have support service personnel who provide support to school leaders (see Matthews, 2010), and while Dillon (2011, p.92) also found that the parents 'who met the inspectors, while aware that they represented the general parent body, were more conscious of representing the school', students can also be protective of the school when evaluated by external sources. Fleming (2020, p.99) has recently contended that students 'will often behave better than they might otherwise do' during inspections due to their 'loyalty to the teacher', and indeed all five principals in Dillon's (2011) research acknowledged the loyalty of students who met with inspectors, as can be seen in the following comment:

> But the loyalty that they showed to us was absolutely, something that was really…the students really were very good…they played a blinder during the WSE (Dillon, 2011, p.92).

Furthermore, the sample of students chosen to meet with inspectors can often be students from the student council which, as outlined above, brings with it many limitations. Listening to a selection of students, and particularly to a group of students who have been hand-selected is rather dubious and it is very plausible that this happens in Irish schools. While the student council can often serve as a bank of students for schools to nominate to participate in external projects, the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU) has previously expressed concerns about how active student councils actually are in schools, and the role they come to play during external evaluations:

> Although it is not a legal requirement for student councils to be in existence in schools…schools are generally viewed more favourably when it comes to a whole school evaluation if there is a student council in place. Therefore, a student council can sometimes be set up in a school shortly before a whole school evaluation is due to take place and so for the wrong reasons thus it is unsurprising that many of these student councils become inactive after a short amount of time or are merely tokenistic in existence (ISSU, 2010, p.12).

While most schools in Ireland do now have student councils, although their level and meaning of activity might be questionable, the limited research on the role students play in WSE highlights what could be assumed—that students are not active participants in the WSE process. In Dillon's (2011) research, ten of the 19 students interviewed had previously participated in formal interviews with the inspectors, as representatives of their student councils, while on the other hand four students had had no direct encounters with the inspection team. Dillon (2011, p.99) gives the following example and subsequent quote from a student to highlight how insignificant WSE can be for some students:

> none of SQ's classes had been visited by an inspector and she was not on the school's student council, which met with the inspectors. She felt it had been a 'non-event' which did not involve her in any way- WSE had 'happened' to others in the school. This perception was shared by the other three students, one of whom articulated it as follows:
>
> > It's like as if it just passed me by and lots of my friends too. The fact that we'd been told about it and some of our teachers were all, the subject ones where the inspectors might've come into the room, they were a bit uptight, I suppose, otherwise you wouldn't really know it was going on.

Overall, however, the comments from students suggested that 'WSE was experienced and understood as a number of discrete events, each of them an inspection in themselves, and that they had little understanding of WSE as a coherent, singular experience' (Dillon 2011, p.101). Students wanted more consultation and more meaningful opportunities to contribute their knowledge of the school, while they also felt a responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in schools, as this student remarks:

> Students should be part of the changes because like we…even if there are messers most students, well older ones anyway, want a good education and would probably get better at learning and that if they were part of what has to be done, like asked their opinions. I'd say even the messers could cop on, well a bit anyway (Dillon, 2011, p.111).

What Dillon (2011) found was that, like parents, students are acknowledged as key stakeholders in the work of schools, but the WSE process values the voices of principals and teachers over theirs- they are assigned the role of passive observers located on the margins. On a similar note, participants in Matthews' (2010) research, namely those who provide support for school leadership, were also dissatisfied with the level of consultation afforded to students in the WSE process. While it was felt that students can make worthwhile contributions as 'they are the people who will absolutely give you the clearest picture of what school is like' (Matthews, 2010, p.114), the current arrangements meant that 'they were ignored' (Matthews, 2010, p.115).

A collaborative and reflective process of internal review whereby school staff consult with the board of management, parents and students on the work of the school to make informed decisions and reach a consensus towards school improvement (Mangan, 2014), SSE and its 2012 introduction represents the most significant and visible advance for student voice in Irish schools (Fleming, 2013, 2015). In terms of how students are involved, it is very much up to individual schools, as pointed out by Brown et al. (2020a). An analysis of 20 post-primary school websites found a great deal of inconsistency in terms of the inclusion of student, as well as parent, voice:

> As a general trend, approximately half of schools referred to the importance of student and parent voice as a value or guiding principle. A slightly higher percentage of schools involved parents and students in SSE processes but even where this occurred, fewer schools involved parents in policy development and very few schools involved students in policy development. While this analysis may provide some indication of the reality of student and parent voice in schools, it is likely that some of the schools may not have included information on all such processes (Brown et al., 2020a, p.97).

Nonetheless, it is clear that many schools in Ireland are now making considerable efforts to involve stakeholders such as students in SSE and school development planning (Brown et al., 2020a), and becoming reflected in the research literature is openness from school staff towards their involvement (see for example Harvey, 2015; Young et al., 2018; O'Brien et al., 2019). It is worth pointing out however, that based on the literature, the greatest advocates of student voice appear to be principals (and school websites) and those part of designated SSE teams in their schools. Indeed, there is evidence that while principals might be supportive of including stakeholders such as students in SSE, cultures and climates of, and commitments to, stakeholder voice have not been wholly created in Irish post-primary schools (Brown et al., 2020b). To quote one member of staff interviewed as part of the DEAPS project:

> There's no way that there's staff members thinking 'how could we involve parents and students?' There would be no way they would be thinking along those lines (Brown et al., 2020b, p.524).

Nonetheless, SSE in Ireland does now locate student voice in the context of classroom practice and rather than revolving around the student council, it focuses on the wider concept of student voice (Fleming, 2013, 2015). While the focus of student voice in Irish schools continues to be non-academic issues, students are still, to some extent, being consulted on the core work of teaching and learning, and before even considering how a student and parent charter might advance this further, there is a risk that a student 'voice' that is used for low-level participation in the provision of data, with an emphasis being placed on accountability as opposed to any form of meaningful dialogic consultation will be produced (Fleming, 2013, 2015). In this regard, due caution should be afforded to Fleming's (2015, p.237) concerns about how student voice has developed through SSE:

> In moving away from the student council as a representative student voice, arguably, an instrumentalist voice is being encouraged and directed primarily towards the gathering of data to inform and measure school performance and school improvement. Consequently, there is a risk that the opportunity to develop and embed deep student voice, as meaningful consultation, co-construction and the creation of rights-based, dialogic, person-centred democratic and inclusive schools, will be diminished or even lost. Equally, the growing association between student voice, school improvement and performativity, through various forms of evaluation presents a further risk as these imperatives could lose any interactive potential for change at school and classrooms level based on right, trust, relationship and learning.

2.6 Concluding comments on student voice in Ireland

With students recognised as key stakeholders in SSE, the main form of school evaluation in Ireland, this chapter began by looking at SSE and highlighted how despite recent advancements students were traditionally excluded from evaluations in Ireland and how in addition to SSE becoming a more democratic process in recent years, and with the official discourse being one of improvement, accountability and economic logics appear to dominate in Ireland. A key development spotlighted is the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019, which will have a close connection to SSE, and will be somewhat of a customer service charter—unsurprisingly, it has generated grave concerns from teacher unions at both primary and post-primary level.

This chapter then proceeded to look specifically at student voice, beginning with a variety of different models of voice that indicate how student voice can occur along spectrums and is not always meaningful. In looking at its development and rise, it was put forward that student voice has not only come about due to democratic commitments but due to school improvement efforts, which can also be seen in Ireland. After discussing a wide range of advantages, challenges, and disadvantages of student voice, before student voice exclusively in Ireland was zoomed in on to detail how, despite recent policies both in and beyond education, children and young people have traditionally been subordinate citizens in Irish schools, and indeed Irish society more broadly. For example, the student council as the main and often only mechanism for student voice in Irish schools has left a lot to be desired and this is indicative of the position of young people in Irish society today. It appears that progress is being made in schools and society in Ireland, but that student voice is often tokenistic.

A study commissioned under the Irish Research Council's Research Development Initiative in conjunction with the DCYA was published in 2015 by a team of researchers in University College Cork. The research, by Martin et al. (2015), explored the experiences of, and outcomes for, children and young people who had been involved in the DCYA's participation initiatives over the previous decade. Martin et al. (2015) reported positive findings relating to the personal, social, and skills development, and career direction, of those with experience of partaking in DCYA participation initiatives. The youth participants were very positive about being listened to by other youths, being able to bring ideas and problems from young people in their area to forums and being respected and listened to by adults involved in the participation activities (Martin et al.,

2015). However, policy change was the area identified by the youth participants as being least impacted by their participation and some youths, and some adults too, expressed a desire for legislative change to give young people greater power in decision-making, and new formal guidelines and directives that would require local authorities to consult children and young people on a wider range of policy implementation (Martin et al., 2015). Thus, it would still appear that further work remains to be done at a societal level if the DCYA is to achieve the level of participation it aspires to. As an example, in Forde et al.'s (2017) research on children and young people's experiences of participating in their communities in Ireland, they found that while children and young people are active participants in their communities, aware and concerned about what is happening, they would like greater voice and influence. According to Forde et al. (2017), while those involved in youth clubs or projects are extremely positive about their experience of voice in those specific settings, children and young people are generally dissatisfied with decision-making processes in their local communities. It was concluded that:

> There is a need for more everyday spaces and places in communities where children and young people can benefit from the experience of participation and active citizenship and gradually take on more responsibilities and active roles… cultural change in adults' attitudes towards children and young people is required but before this can happen, there is a need for training in participation of adults working with children and young people in home, school and community settings (Forde et al., 2017, p.14).

Similarly, in the foreword to the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020*, the then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs noted that 'there is evidence of Ireland failing to give an adequate voice to children on certain aspects of their lives' and that cultural change was needed:

> We often think of children only in their capacity as future adults, with less regard for the contribution they can make to our world during childhood. One of the key fundamentals of this strategy is recognition that children and young people are not 'beings in becoming', but rather are 'citizens of today' with the right to be respected and heard during childhood, their teenage years and in their transition to adulthood (DCYA, 2015a, p.v).

While Ireland has in the past, as previously mentioned, been criticised by the United Nations for how it has facilitated, or not facilitated, the voice of children, the situation has appeared to have been improving, at least at a surface level. In reality, a gap still exists between the official rhetoric and actual practice. As Martin et al. (2015) point out, the Constitutional change made in 2012 is unlikely to have an impact on the majority of

children in Ireland as it is primarily focused on child protection and family law and has no impact on decision-making in areas such as education. Nonetheless, Martin et al. (2015) acknowledge that there has been a noticeable shift towards the inclusion of children and young people's views in some decision-making processes, with, inter alia, government departments and services seeking advice and support from the DCYA Participation Unit on consulting with children and young people. Worrying, however, and somewhat symbolic of the age-old treatment of young people in Ireland, were widespread media reports in 2020 that the DCYA was potentially facing abolishment (Irish Legal News, 2020; Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2020a; The Irish Times, 2020a). Speaking in the media, one Irish politician criticised the speculations, and while acknowledging that the DCYA had room for improvement, contended that abolishing it was not just:

> the Department has been integral in furthering the rights and welfare of children at the cabinet table over the last number of years. Any process that sees it subsumed into another portfolio with competing resources and time would be a retrograde step (Kilkenny People, 2020).

As the proposals developed further, The Irish Times (2020b) quoted a retired Supreme Court judge as saying that 'If there isn't a Minister for Children at the Cabinet table, there is less of a strong voice for children', while the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs suggested that such a move 'would bring Ireland back to an era where children are seen and not heard' (The Irish Times, 2020b). Furthermore, the Ombudsman for Children wrote to the leaders of major political parties over the potential abolition of the DCYA, warning that it 'would have a damaging effect on children's rights and welfare' (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2020b).

In education, D. Fleming (2016, p.40) contends that the 'volume of student voice across the education system in Ireland is being raised'. However, opportunities for children's participation appear to be far more limited in schools than in other public spheres as the traditional approach towards decision-making remains very strong in schools, with decisions largely imposed on children (Horgan et al., 2017). To take the language used in the 1995 White Paper and 1998 Education Act, consulting with students 'where appropriate' and on the basis of 'their age and experience' means that there is no guarantee that students are involved in decision-making in schools, especially considering that student councils are not made obligatory- they 'may' rather than 'should' or 'shall' be established (Fleming, 2015). It is therefore difficult to disagree with Cosgrove and

Gilleece (2012) who argue that as the establishment of a student council is not technically mandatory, it is unsurprising that there are problems relating to its status and conduct. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in Ireland has been working on including student voice in education discourse in Ireland and embedding a culture of listening with a strategy for supporting and sustaining student voice (See Flynn, 2017) and has the potential to make a real difference in Irish education. However, it is rather unsettling to see that media reports of the potential abolishment of the DCYA during the global pandemic of 2020 coincided with disputes between students and the DES over the status of the annual state examinations. While it might be said that student voice prevailed in the end, or more so that health and safety could not be risked, after a somewhat short-lived but long-winded quarrel the state examinations were cancelled. The nature of these disputes, however, which saw students become increasingly frustrated with their lack of voice, is where the concern lies. While there might be some merit in contentions that a survey carried out by ISSU indicating student support for the cancelation of examinations 'was not conducted scientifically' (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2020c) and that students were operating in an echo chamber, the Ombudsman for Children did have to intervene and meet with the Minister for Education and Skills (Irish Independent, 2020). As one politician said at the time, the uncertain situation was 'causing untold psychological damage to these students' (The University Times, 2020). Once a final decision was made, the ISSU said that the announcement came as a 'great relief to many students' whose well-being, anxiety and stress levels had been at 'an all-time high' (The Irish Times, 2020c).

SSE does have the potential to improve how students participate in school decision-making but it would appear that student participation and voice have only been allowed to take a limited number of steps in Irish society and in Irish education so far. As the DEAPS project found, many age-old obstacles in the Irish context still exist and continue to dominate and policy changes will not necessarily produce changes in practice (Brown et al., 2020b). The potential is there for SSE to raise the status of students, in schools at least, but there is also a danger that the ongoing emphasis on student voice in teaching and learning, in a country where children do not yet appear to be viewed as citizens with meaningful and worthwhile contributions to make, will have a negative impact on the morale and wellbeing of teachers if student voice in their classrooms becomes a box-ticking exercise or an initiative that reduces them to the role of a technician who needs to fill their 'toolbox' and find 'what works' (Mayes et al., 2021). Outside of teachers'

control, there is equally the risk that the drive towards using student voice in not just SSE but the Student and Parent Charter will position students as sources of and for data as opposed to sophisticated, authentic, and genuine partners. The potential risk of simply appeasing students via classroom-level consultations and using them as informants through management-level consultations will not only be disruptive to the work of schools, staff and students, but to the decades of work done so far on raising the rights and voice of students at a societal level.

In the following chapter, it is explicitly the novel and unexplored area of student voice and classroom practice that is focused on. A heuristic device for researching student voice and classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools that pays close attention to context is developed and presented. While student voice is underdeveloped in Irish schools, and particularly in relation to classroom practice, as it instead intends to be concerned with non-academic matters, the proceeding chapter will tease out who consultations with students on classroom practice can be shaped and influenced by context.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCHING HOW STUDENT VOICE PLAYS OUT IN RELATION TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN IRISH POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A HEURISTIC DEVICE

3.1 Introduction and background

Informed by the literature, there are two predominant theories that guide this project. The first, policy enactment theory, is that schools enact policies in different ways based on a variety of contextual factors such as school history, student intake, teacher characteristics, and external pressures. Here, I draw on the well-established and respected work of Professor Stephen Ball. With over forty years of involvement in education policy research (Ball, 2018), Stephen Ball has for some time been acknowledged as making a more than significant contribution to what has been called 'policy sociology' in education (Ozga in Lingard, 1996). He is acknowledged as being highly influential in educational theorising (Wang, 2011) and has been described as 'one of today's most renowned researchers in the field of education policy' (Mainardes, 2015 p.183), with his work resonating with people from many countries and becoming increasingly global (Carpentier, 2013). According to Serpieri and Grimaldi (2014, p.88), for example, he is 'one of the most distinguished and influential' scholars

> in the fields of sociology of education and education policy sociology and has published an impressive amount of books and edited collections, together with journal articles and other publications. His works are well known worldwide and provide educational researchers with a vast array of theoretical tools and empirical insights for a critical analysis of the educational present.

In the United States, another esteemed academic Professor Michael Apple has given Stephen Ball 'the ultimate compliment' by acknowledging that Ball has influenced and continues to influence his thinking in important ways (Apple, 2013, p.206). Elaborating further, Apple (2013, p.215) says:

> This talented bricoleur deserves his place in the very top rank of critical sociologists of education. And, like many other critical scholar/activists, I shall certainly continue to learn from him.

Ball's work has had 'extraordinary academic impact' as evidenced by citation counts (Clarke, 2013, p.230), the publication of his 'selected works' (see Ball, 2006) and the devotion of an issue of *London Review of Education* to him in 2013 entitled 'Inquiring into Educational Policies: The contribution of Stephen Ball'. Ball's work is somewhat responsible for the number of British-based sociologists of education turning their research focus to policy (Lingard and Sellar, 2013), while elsewhere it has been translated from English into several different languages. Furthermore, many international scholars have published interviews that they have conducted with him (see Mainardes and

Marcondes, 2009; Serpieri and Grimaldi, 2014; Mainardes, 2015; Avelar, 2016). Ball's vast scholarship has been providing theoretical and methodological elements that have proven strong enough to support analyses and research in different areas of education (Mainardes and Gandin, 2013). Gunter (2013, p.219), for example, refers to his 'impressive body of work' that is methodological, empirical, conceptual, and discursive, and that has focused on policy processes in relation to the curriculum, the workforce, the school system, the school as an organisation, and the impact of markets and social class.

I was first introduced to Ball's work in 2015 when I enrolled in a MA in policy studies in education at University College London where he was serving as Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology of Education. Ball's work was assigned to us as required and suggested readings and he delivered lectures on education policy and sociology of education modules. While much of the academic writings and lectures at this early time were difficult to consume, process and understand, to take meaning from, to relate to, to see the applicability of, it was through Stephen Ball's work that things simply just clicked for me. Reading his texts about the school system, the nature of teachers' work, the influence of markets, and the various influential actors involved in education provided me with the tools to make sense of what was happening in my professional life, how it was happening, and why it was happening; it was all so relevant to me and the disillusioned professional state that I found myself in at the time. While Stephen Ball's work was so influential on my MA and subsequent studies, it seems only natural that it continues with me on my professional trajectory and plays a key role in this doctoral research.

Ball's work on how policy is enacted in schools, specifically, is utilised in this project and is used as a 'toolbox' for the analysis of policy (Miranda in Mainardes and Gandin, 2013). It is important to note however, as van Zanten and Kosunen (2013, p.241) point out, that Ball's 'exceptional record is not only the result of his own individual work but also of his collaborative work with other researchers who are also extremely productive'. Ball (2003c, 2006, 2015) has often acknowledged the influence of his collaborators in shaping his work and this project not only draws on his work, but that of Professor Meg Maguire and Dr Annette Braun too. Over the course of the previous decade, these three scholars, sometimes with Dr Kate Hoskins, have produced a large volume of work, mainly emanating from an Economic and Social Research Council funded project entitled 'Policy enactments in the secondary school: theory and practice'. This collection of work

is particularly useful in guiding this doctoral research. However, subscribing to the view that 'two theories are better than one' (Ball, 2003c, p.1), I will proceed to further theorise that student voice can be used in schools to monitor teachers' classroom practice and that some teachers will experience this as surveillance. I will draw on the work of several scholars here, but as this is a new and emerging area the emphasis is largely on the work of Professor Damien Page who has published widely on the surveillance of teachers in England, including student voice as surveillance, and Dr Jennifer Charteris and Dr Dianne Smardon who together have been actively publishing on neoliberal usages of student voice in New Zealand. Damien Page's research resonates deeply with me and my student voice experiences in England, which I recounted in the introduction to this thesis, and I vividly recall when I was first introduced to this work and how it spoke to me. To use Stephen Ball's words, these texts 'were written, so it seemed to me, about me, my own school career and educational experience' (Ball, 2003c, p.6); 'my successes and failures, my struggles' (Ball, 2015a, p.820). This work, I feel, and along with the recent additions to the literature from New Zealand, provides me with the necessary tools to explore, discover, and make sense of student voice and how it is used in relation to classroom practice.

Based on the literature discussed in this chapter, a conceptual framework that will hold a central and important place in this doctoral thesis (Trafford and Leshem, 2008) is developed and presented at the end of the chapter. As Crawford (2019) explains, the conceptual framework presents the study's overall structure, with a theoretical framework within it explaining the relationships to be explored. This framework is derived not only from the literature, however, but my own experiences and observations too (Leshem and Trafford, 2007; Oliver et al., 2008; Crawford, 2019) and is the first of its kind. As Maxwell (2013, p.41) points out:

> a conceptual framework for your research is something that is constructed, not found. It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure, the overall coherence, is something that you build, not something that exists ready-made.

This framework then acts as a heuristic device, and has recently been published as such in a peer-reviewed article in *Irish Educational Studies* (see Skerritt et al., 2021b).

3.2 Theory 1: different schools 'do' policies in different ways

Policy is a term that is used differently and loosely (Ball, 2017). Its meaning is something that tends to be taken for granted and/or seen as an attempt to solve a problem (Braun et al., 2010, 2011; Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015). Such an understanding of policy, however, is problematic because if policy is seen only in these terms, then all of the other moments in the policy processes and policy enactments such as the jumbled, sometimes ambiguous, messy processes that are experienced on the ground by policy actors become marginalised or go unrecognised (Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015).Thus, in this project policy is understood as being an ongoing process that is interactional and unstable (Ball, 2017) and that can be conceptualised both as text and as discourse (Ball, 1993); what is written and said, and how such statements are formed and made possible (Ball, 2015b). Policies can be written in texts and in legislation and national strategies and policies can also be discursive in that they can be 'complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally rendered' (Ball et al., 2012, p.3). Discourses can

> enable us to think about whether we are 'good' teachers or 'effective' teachers, to think about what learning is and how we recognise it, and to know what a 'good' lesson looks like (Ball, 2015b, p.307).

A key point, however, is that policy is subject to different 'interpretations' as it is enacted, rather than implemented, in original and creative ways within institutions (Ball et al., 2012).

Policy texts are rarely the work of single authors or a single process of production but the product of compromises at various stages such as at initial points of influence, in the micropolitics of legislative formulation, in the parliamentary process, and in the politics and micropolitics of interest group articulation (Ball, 1993). However, the meaning and momentum of policies can shift and change and the purposes and intentions of policy can be re-worked and re-orientated (Ball, 1993). Ball (2017, p.10) explains that:

> we need to remain aware that policies are made and remade in many sites, and there are many little-p policies that are formed and enacted within localities and institutions. Furthermore, policy that is 'announced' through legislation is also reproduced and reworked over time through reports, speeches, 'moves', 'agendas' and so on. Policy cannot be treated simply as an object, a product or an outcome but, rather, it is a process, something ongoing, interactional and unstable.

The policies that are 'done' in schools are very often 'written' by governments, their agencies or other influential stakeholders, with school staff excluded from the policy process and instead positioned as implementers (Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015) but as policies do not usually tell us what to do (Ball, 1993, 1997, 2006; Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire et al., 2015) room is left for manoeuvre. In the words of Ball et al. (2012, p.3):

> policy texts are typically written in relation to the best of all possible schools, schools that only exist in the fevered imaginations of politicians, civil servants and advisers and in relation to fantastical contexts. These texts cannot simply be implemented! They have to be translated from text to action – put 'into' practice – in relation to history and to context, with the resources available.

In contrast to policy science, where it was believed that standards would rise once policies were clear and were 'correctly' put into practice in schools, policy sociology suggests that what happens inside a school in terms of how policies are interpreted and enacted is complex and will be mediated by institutionally determined factors (Maguire et al., 2010; Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012). Here, I subscribe to the view that schools sometimes generate their own policies that elaborate on and embed aspects of national policymaking into their own cultures and working practices (Braun et al., 2010) i.e. policies are enacted rather than implemented (Braun et al., 2010). Policy enactment involves creative processes of interpretation and translation, the recontextualisation of the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices through reading, writing, and talking (Braun et al., 2010, 2011; Ball et al., 2012). Interpretations are the 'meaning-making' processes where schools ask themselves 'what does this mean for us?', 'do we have to do this?', 'does this fit with what we do already?' (Maguire et al., 2013), 'who will enact it?', 'what does it mean in practical terms?' (Maguire et al., 2015). Translation, then, is the process of putting policies into action through the use of tactics which include talk, meetings, events, and ultimately assigning them symbolic value (Ball et al., 2012).

3.2.1 The significance of context

While it can look from the 'outside' that a school is straightforwardly adopting a number of policies, schools have different capacities for 'coping' with policy and assembling school-based policy responses (Braun et al., 2011); they produce their own 'take' on policy, drawing on aspects of their culture or ethos (Braun et al., 2010). Policies are shaped and influenced by school-specific and institutionally determined factors (Braun et

al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012). Schools have individual histories, staffing profiles, leadership experiences, and teaching and learning challenges (Maguire et al., 2010; Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012), as well as different local social 'problems' and intakes (Ball et al., 2011a, 2012). Concentrating on school context, Braun et al. (2011) and Ball et al. (2012) provide a framework that outlines a variety of factors that influence differences in policy enactments between schools. This framework is made up of four contextual dimensions:

- Situated contexts (e.g. location, school history, school intake, and school setting)
- Professional contexts (e.g. teacher commitments, values, experiences, and policy management in schools)
- Material contexts (e.g. staffing, budget, building, technology, infrastructure)
- External contexts (e.g. degree and quality of external support, pressures and expectations, legal requirements and responsibilities)

These aspects are interconnected however and can overlap. School intake, for example, can shape professional factors such as values, teacher commitments and experiences (Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012)

3.2.2 The significance of external pressures and priorities

It can often be overlooked that policies are not all the same, do not all carry the same degree of importance, direction, commitment or cost (in the sense of the costs involved in non-implementation), and that they can vary in their degree of clarity, specificity, and coherence (Maguire et al., 2013). Thus, despite assumptions that schools will respond quickly to demands and policy requirements, the complex setting of school life means that schools that are charged with enacting a wide range of policies may have to prioritise what they do (Maguire et al., 2015). Contemporary schools are often inundated with policies, some statutory and some school-specific, and staff are expected to be familiar with and able to implement multiple policies that are planned for them by others (Maguire et al., 2010). The sheer range of policies that teachers are now faced with make it literally impossible for them to be familiar with the 'ins and outs' of each policy (Braun et al., 2010). Rituals and rites of passages, such as the start and end of the academic year, the examination period, and the annual arrival and departure of both staff and students all play an important role in enactment (Maguire et al., 2015). For example, policies might

be enacted stronger at the beginning of the school year or with younger students, and then relaxed as school holidays approach, while if a particular policy becomes associated with a certain staff member and that person leaves the school, it can be the case that so too does their policy portfolio and approach (Maguire et al., 2015). Thus, some policies that previously held centre stage can fade into the background and/or become low profile (Braun et al., 2010).

Policies also carry with them different imperatives for practice in that some are mandated and statutory while others are merely 'good ideas' that are encouraged and can come to be taken less seriously by schools (Maguire et al., 2013). A key factor in enactment relates to whether a policy is mandated or merely recommended (Maguire et al., 2015). Even when a policy is in fact centrally mandated, however, it can be translated, adjusted and worked on differently by diverse sets of policy actors (Maguire et al., 2010). Policies are processes and, even when mandated, policy texts can be differently worked on, worked with (Braun et al., 2010), and worked out (Maguire et al., 2013). Three propositions for thinking about teachers and policy work in schools put forward by Ball et al. (2011b) are important to make note of here:

- Proposition 1: Not all policies are the same. Some policies are imperative, come from the outside, and leave little or no space for alternative interpretations, while others are exhortative and allow for more creativity— they can also be ignored, underplayed or sidelined.
- Proposition 2: With the intensification of teachers' work, teachers are often left 'coping' and 'keeping up', tired and overwhelmed, and can be defined more in terms of their responsiveness, pragmatism, and actions towards policies than their principles, reflections and judgements.
- Proposition 3: Subtle discontents are more common than outright resistance. Policies work to exclude statements which they characterise as false and circulate statements which they characterise as true, providing a language for thinking and talking about teaching and students, and denying alternative ways of articulating practice.

3.2.3 The significance of diverse policy actors

Policy practices are specific and contextualised and are not only framed by the ethos and history of schools however, but also by the positioning and personalities of the key policy actors within schools (Braun et al., 2010). Teachers in a given school can be at different points in their careers and have different amounts of accumulated experiences, bringing with them different amounts and kinds of responsibility, aspirations and competences (Ball et al., 2011c) and some policy actors are more dominant than others, while other actors are less influenced by particular policy shifts than others (Maguire et al., 2015). Policies come to be interpreted and enacted differently, in part, because of the meanings and commitments that teachers and other staff members hold, as well as their position in the hierarchy and their relative power (Maguire et al., 2010). To take behaviour for learning policies as an example, the various staff members in a school from classroom teachers to teaching assistants may well have different interpretations of what constitutes 'disruption' and different views on how to discipline students— this can be the case both between different subjects and within different groups of professionals (Maguire et al., 2010). Compared to school leadership teams responsible for ensuring that the school is compliant with policy requirements, classroom teachers have more day-to-day contact with students and are likely to have more time/space to negotiate and co-generate behaviour and conduct policy with students, while aspects of behaviour management that some teachers do not agree with can be enforced differently in particular classrooms (Maguire et al., 2015). Therefore, how policies are enacted, or the extent to which they are enacted, if at all, are influenced by teachers' own traits and characteristics, but also by various other variables that are beyond their control:

> In reality, teachers' approaches towards classroom control do not necessarily always conform to formal policy statements, in spite of their detail and regulative capacity. Classrooms are organic social settings and factors such as the time of the day, the day of the week and the point in the term can influence what goes on in practice. The nature of the subject, the age of the students, the teacher's level of experience all play a part in what becomes enacted as 'behaviour for learning'. Despite the clamour of any specific behaviour policy, what frequently happens in classrooms is concocted out of what is known to work, advice from others in the department, older pedagogies and even what teachers experienced themselves when they were at school. To this rich mix, aspects of new policies are picked up and worked in- what emerges, then to be enacted in practice at the classroom level, is a bricolage of disciplinary policies and practices, beliefs and values (Maguire et al., 2010, p.166).

Particularly for policy actors on the ground, enactment practices will be constructed in line with their professional commitments, values, and pedagogical beliefs (Maguire et al.,

2015). Teachers are positioned differently in relation to policy —they are at different points in their careers, with different levels of experience, different kinds of responsibilities, and different aspirations and competences (Ball et al., 2011c, 2012).

3.3 Theory 2: student voice can be experienced by teachers as a form of surveillance

3.3.1 How teachers experience consultations on classroom practice

One way of enacting student voice in schools is to allow students the opportunity to give feedback on the performances of their teachers (Burr, 2015). As others have argued, without 'the involvement of the students it is not possible to enquire effectively either into the learning and teaching processes' (Bragg and Fielding, 2005, p.105) and students are 'powerful determiners of the learning that occurs in their classrooms' and understanding 'why they learn well or poorly is predicated upon clearly understanding their perspectives on learning' (Gentilucci, 2004, p.133). Student voice in the classroom has become a more frequent topic of research in recent years, and many studies have reported student voice being used at the classroom level in positive and well received ways (see for example Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Flutter, 2007; Graham et al., 2018). In particular, many qualitative studies have found that teachers are often surprised and impressed by students' insightful and meaningful contributions (see for example Bragg, 2007a; Demetriou and Wilson, 2010; Ferguson et al., 2011; Messiou and Ainscow, 2020). Examples of students being consulted on teaching and learning matters in the literature include, for example, students researching questions such as 'what makes a good teacher?' and 'what makes a good lesson?', using research methods such as interviews and questionnaires, and reporting their findings to classroom teachers and/or senior staff (Bragg, 2007a), students being trained to be 'lesson observers' and providing feedback to teachers on their practice (Keddie, 2015), students serving as 'experts' on their classroom experience by providing teachers with feedback on how students might receive new pedagogical strategies (Mitra, 2006), and students being positioned as teacher educators (Cook-Sather, 2009) and pedagogical consultants (Cook-Sather, 2010) to undergraduate students on Initial Teacher Education programmes.

As positive as the literature often reports student voice to be in relation to classroom practice, there are still instances of teachers being defensive, unimpressed and suspicious (McIntyre et al., 2005) and taken back by negative feedback (Ferguson et al., 2011). As

can be seen from the following comment from a teacher, certain feedback can be difficult to digest:

> I don't know, when (feedback) is specifically about the teacher, then I start to feel under pressure. I know there is good stuff in there too, don't get me wrong but when it is black and white and in your face that this is what you don't do, you sit there thinking, 'well who else think that?' 'Are there thirty kids that think that about me?' (Nelson, 2018, p.207).

It is only a natural reaction to be affected by feedback—positive feedback will more likely provoke positive reactions and negative feedback will more likely provoke negative reactions, and naturally, students often exhibit awareness of the impact feedback can potentially have on their teachers (see for example Rudduck and Fielding, 2006; Morgan, 2009; Keddie, 2015; Graham et al., 2018; Messiou and Ainscow, 2020). In this regard, student voice can be highly problematic in undermining teacher professionalism if it is used as a way of disciplining teachers (Keddie, 2015). Student voice advocates such as MacBeath et al. (2008, p.34) have explained how student voice initiatives can challenge teacher professionalism:

> The account of pupils carrying out lesson observations, for example, strikes some teachers as a step too far. Feedback to teachers and lesson observation by pupils also engender anxiety unless there are clear ground rules entered into in a spirit of genuine inquiry. There was some anxiety among teachers that pupils would come to the class with their own preconceptions and see what they wanted to see, then reflecting this in his/her feedback. They expressed a desire for evidence-based feedback rather than personal judgement, underpinned by a worry that pupils' judgements would fail to take account of the background and developmental sequence of the lesson and fail to perceive the expertise and teachers' time invested in planning objectives and activities.

It should be noted that the studies referred to here tend to involve teachers liaising with their students on teaching and learning issues with university-based researchers facilitating the consultations, and not principals and/or members of school management asking students about classroom practice. While student voice can be beneficial and worthwhile in the classroom, it can be experienced very differently, depending on how it is used and who is using it. As Fielding (2001) has previously warned, the dangers are that students are being interviewed and surveyed and consulted in a variety of ways on behalf of others (adults) and in the interests of others (adults). This doctoral research is of the view that if principals and/or members of school management teams consult

students on classroom practice, teachers' anxieties, fears, concerns, and reactions are likely to heighten.

3.3.2 How teachers experience consultations on classroom practice differently to senior leaders

To convey how student voice can be enacted and experienced in schools in different ways by different people, I use the pioneering work of Morgan (2011) which highlights how commitment to student consultation at the whole-school level does not necessarily translate into teachers' classroom practices and how this consultation can be marginal and low in priority for classroom teachers. Morgan's (2011, p.445-446) research explores 'the consultation practices and responses of teachers who would not be relying on external support or collaboration, in the context of a school committed to consulting pupils as part of its policy of school development'. Morgan's (2011, p.451) research was conducted in a school where the senior management team 'affirmed a strong commitment to pupil consultation' and talked of it as being 'embedded' in classrooms through the establishment of a whole-school culture that placed importance and value on listening to students. However, it was found that despite these claims, with the exception of school consultation questionnaires which could be used as part of their performance reviews, teachers made no reference to school structures which specifically supported them in carrying out consultations with students in their classrooms- they did not seem to view what was happening at the whole-school level as providing a model for classroom practice in any way (Morgan, 2011, p.456). In practice student consultations were marginal for most teachers as it had to compete with their many other important and demanding responsibilities, notably curriculum delivery and external examinations- which was 'surprising in this particular school, given the espoused enthusiasm for, and commitment to' student consultation by the senior management team (Morgan, 2011, p.455). Morgan (2011, p.458) explains that the image of a senior management team that listens to students came across strongly, suggesting a cycle of consultation involving students (e.g. via department reviews, students panels, questionnaires on whole-school issues) and management taking account of students' views and feeding them back to the staff body. Absent however, appeared to be a cycle involving students to teachers and teachers to students, perhaps indicating that school management drives and owns student consultation to the extent that classroom teachers do not see the need to consult students in their classrooms. Here, teachers receive information gathered from the perspectives of

students and by default, they do not need to consult students themselves because it is already being done on their behalf by management (Morgan, 2011, p.458). Figure 1 illustrates how student voice initiatives can be enacted in schools, reducing the role of teachers to receivers of information as school management become the key players in that it is they who consult students and then relay the information back to the teachers.

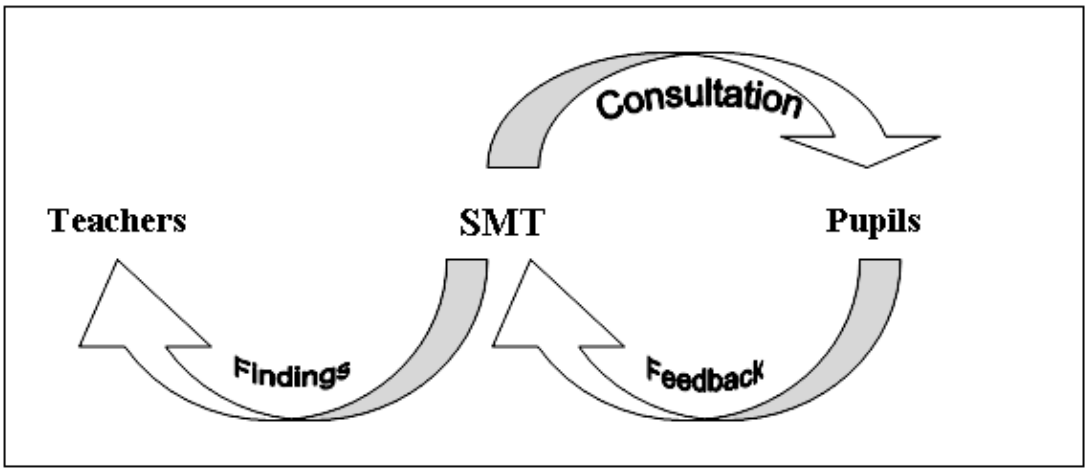


Figure 1: Model of student consultation – senior management team consults students and relays findings to teachers (Morgan, 2011). Source: Consulting pupils about classroom teaching and learning: policy, practice and response in one school. *Research Papers in Education*, 26(4), 445-467.

3.3.3 How student voice can be used to monitor teachers

The work of Page (2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b) in England provides clear illustrations of how student voice can be used as one of many ways of monitoring teachers in contemporary schools. Surveillance can be 'elicited by senior leaders in the guise of student voice activities' (Page, 2018, p.379) 'couched within notions of student empowerment' (Page, 2017b, p.1000). Here, top-down and bottom-up vertical surveillance converge with students providing feedback on their learning and their teachers to school leaders (Page, 2017a). A frequent and not so subtle method of doing this is through what are commonly referred to in England as 'learning walks'. Page (2015) explains that a learning walk is where school leaders enter classrooms unannounced to observe lessons and chat to students about what is happening in the lesson. In the words of one primary school principal:

> I do walk round the school quite a lot, mainly because I like to be involved with the children so I'll sit and talk to the children and you do pick up- the

> children here are very vocal (laughs) and we do encourage that (Page, 2015, p.1041).

Page (2016) found that learning walks were being used to evaluate teachers and that students were involved in the process of evaluation during these 'drop-ins' as their feedback would informally inform principals' judgements. Other informal ways schools were found to be using student voice as a technique and tool for monitoring teachers was through principals holding meetings, such as lunches or interviews, with students to discuss their progress and any concerns that they might have (Page, 2015). As this post-primary school principal explains, however, such meetings might be intended to motivate students but they also involve discussing teachers:

> I don't ask (about teachers) but they will tell me- I say I don't ask, I would go through the subjects and say "ok, English: your target is C, currently you're on a D, are we going to do it?" Sometimes they say "no" and I say "why is that" and they say "I need some help". Sometimes they say "I'm going to do it" or "I'm going to get a B" then I say "who's your teacher" and that's when they will tell me things and most of the time they will praise the staff (Page, 2016, pp.172-173).

Positive or negative, remarks are inevitably made about teachers when students are consulted on their learning. By asking students for feedback on their learning, school leaders are implicitly asking students for feedback on teacher performance (Page, 2015). While Page (2015, p.1042) did find that principals claimed that student voice did not inform their judgments in terms of teacher evaluations, it must be noted that 'it would be difficult for anyone not to be influenced by pupil reports of poor teaching'.

Another common way student voice can be used to monitor the performances of teachers is through the use of questionnaires. Finefter-Rosenbluh (2020), for example, refers to the burgeoning of student perception surveys which are spreading across America and notes that similar initiatives can be found in the United Kingdom and Australia. To take the case of the latter, in Sullivan et al.'s (2020, p.9) recent research teachers were aware of the different strategies used to monitor them, which included student voice initiatives, as one teacher explained:

> My boss…does surveys of our classes and then my students' feedback is always really good

Charteris and Smardon (2019a) highlight how student voice work can be used for a variety of purposes in schools. Voice work, especially where it is gathered by external evaluators or at an internal level by school leaders, as with the model presented in Figure 1 and in Damien Page's research, can become well removed from students' contexts and instead become a key tool deployed in quality control, used to support performativity and leverage accountability (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a). Here, student voice serves as information to ensure that there is the provision of quality teaching (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a). Drawing on interview data with principals in New Zealand, Charteris and Smardon (2019a) demonstrate how student voice can be used for quality control. One primary school principal, for example, explains how school management do not make appointments to visit classrooms in order to collect student voice, preferring instead to 'just arrive'. This principal explains that there is 'a problem' with the teaching if students are unwilling or unable to articulate their progress and the teachers are held to account for their students explaining their progress. Elaborating further, this principal also explains that students are surveyed and interviewed:

> Sometimes, it could be a survey. We use Google Forms and Google Docs a lot... Sometimes, it can be us (senior management team) sitting down and talking with the children and asking them about their learning (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a, p.310).

Similarly, at post-primary level, the notion of quality control is also apparent. One principal explains how this is a way of 'flipping the coin' from 'I am the teacher and this is what I teach' to 'I am the learner, how is the learning going for me':

> We also do it as part of our eight faculties or learning areas and we review them on a cyclical basis. Part of that review is how that learning is going for them in a particular learning area…We have a group – a committee, the Principal, the Deputy Principal and one of the Heads of Learning (who gather it). So we do it that way (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a, p.311).

In these examples, Charteris and Smardon (2019a) show how student voice can be gathered for the purpose of evaluation by those holding school leadership positions. In bypassing teacher participation, student voice has an audit aspect to it that is associated with quality assurance. Similarly, students can be used as informants, often for reform purposes which they might not know about such as appraisals, the targeting of professional development, the purchasing of resources, the redevelopment of curricula, or the development of school policy (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a). Elsewhere,

Charteris and Smardon (2019c) present six discourses from the student voice literature. It is pointed out that 'these student voice related discourses offer possibilities for schooling enhancement at the systemic level and are taken up by principals (in different ways and sometimes grudgingly) in the interests of improving education provision in their schools' (Charteris and Smardon, 2019c, p.104). As previously outlined in the literature review, discourses associated with governmentality, accountability and institutional transformation and reform were most prominent in interviews with principals, with students consulted for improvement, surveillance and social control purposes (Charteris and Smardon, 2019c). These three discourses are all 'interconnected, overlapping elements that are inherent to the neoliberal tide propelling education policy and practice' (Charteris and Smardon, 2019b, p.6).

3.4 Combining theories: consultations on classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools

SSE arguably represents the most significant and visible policy-driven and mandated advance for the voice of students in pedagogy and in consultation in school decision-making in Ireland to date (Fleming, 2013, 2016) but it is important to note that while SSE is now mandatory in Irish schools, it remains low stakes and has no consequences, in terms of punishments and rewards, for schools or school staff. As schools attempt to normalise the now compulsory SSE, it is plausible that student voice, relative to other initiatives, tasks, and pressures is of low priority. Schools are not technically required to have student councils (although most do) and while SSE now focuses on a wider understanding of students, hegemonic traditions of students being excluded from consultations in schools must be overcome, while there are also external pressures such as the overbearing state examinations that are likely to curtail student voice work in many schools. This doctoral research contends that the external pressures schools and teachers in Ireland now face to engage with and in student voice work are not as great as the external pressures schools and teachers face to engage with and in examination preparation. As Mc Keon (2020) points out, a long-standing culture of promoting an 'academic' ethos is integral in Irish schools and more so at post-primary level and particularly in the case of voluntary secondary schools. Similarly, increasing demands placed on schools vis-à-vis inspections, accountability and workload also inevitably mean that some initiatives will drop down the priority list (Fleming, 2020). To this end, student

voice as part of SSE is likely to be a low priority for schools and school staff, but especially in schools constructed as academic, high performing and so on.

I am of the view that 'school factors can shape student experiences' (Smyth, 2016, p.201), but also the experiences of teachers. To reiterate a key point stressed in this chapter, context matters, and context can determine how student voice plays out and is received in schools (see for example Bragg, 2007b; Keddie, 2015; Pearce and Wood, 2019). Schools are not coherent entities but precarious networks of different and overlapping groups of people and practices (Ball et al., 2012). As the first theory outlined above stresses, schools have their own individual histories, staffing profiles, leadership experiences, and teaching and learning challenges (Maguire et al., 2010; Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012), and they also deal with different local social 'problems' and intake demographies (Ball et al., 2011a, 2012). In terms of how student voice is enacted and experienced in Irish schools I theorise that student voice via classroom-level consultations (i.e. teachers liaising with their students about classroom practice) and management-level consultations (i.e. school leaders gathering data from students on classroom practice) plays out differently in different schools, with both school patronage and school socio-economic context being key factors:

> what happens inside a school in terms of how policies are interpreted and enacted will be mediated by institutional factors…Enactments will also depend to some extent on the degree to which particular policies will 'fit' or can be fitted within the existing ethos and culture of the school or can change ethos and culture (Ball et al., 2012, p.10).

Furthermore, I theorise that student voice will be experienced and perceived differently by different stakeholders, depending on the position they hold in schools and in the school hierarchy, their career stage, and their length of experience. The overarching hegemonic professional culture in Irish post-primary schools means that while classroom-level consultations are likely to be considerably daunting, management-level consultations will be perceived by many teachers as being an act of surveillance. In what follows, I present my thinking through a series of questions posed to readers.

3.4.1 Are classroom-level consultations infrequent?

There has been an increase in recent years in research reporting that there is a desire among students in Irish post-primary schools for discussions, opinion sharing, and more of a say in their lessons (Smyth et al., 2011; Smyth and Banks, 2012; Harrison et al.,

2020), and while this is happening to some extent, are classroom-level consultations still infrequent? As the following comments from teachers in Fleming's (2013, p.164-165) doctoral research show, consulting students on classroom practice can be daunting for teachers in Irish post-primary schools, as well as being unique for all involved parties:

> When you hand them a questionnaire you are a bit apprehensive as to what they are actually going to put down.
>
> I suppose it was the first time I ever would have (consulted), I don't think the students knew it but in essence they were judging my classes without really knowing that, and I didn't put it across that way.
>
> The idea of choosing how to learn in the class was daunting as they see the teacher with that power. They thought I was carrying out an April fools joke last Friday.
>
> I was apprehensive that they would see this as some sort of joke and that they wouldn't take it seriously because a teacher asking them their opinions wouldn't happen very much. And I was also a bit apprehensive that they would see this as a weakness in me, asking them something about my teaching that they might see it that there was something wrong with it.

While the nine teachers involved in Fleming's (2013) doctoral research did ultimately have positive experiences of student voice once actually experienced, only two of these teachers indicated that they continued with and committed to student voice in their classrooms in the school year following the research period. Indicative of how student voice is perceived by many teachers in Irish post-primary schools is the response from one mathematics teacher in Fleming's (2013, p.187) research when asked if he had discussed student voice and his thoughts on the students' comments with other teachers in his department:

> I'd say now their backs would go up straight away. I'd say they would be like 'who the hell, who does he think he is'…I think that maybe that would be too far for most people to take…I am comfortable enough to discuss that idea with certain staff members but I'm not sure now that I'd throw that out in a general staff meeting because…I don't think people would see that positively necessarily and would see it as a teacher siding with students rather than staff. So I'd leave that one go.

The literature to date indicates that student voice is still not commonly used in the classroom. As one student tells Forde et al. (2018, p.502), 'You don't really get a say in the classroom'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Harrison et al.'s (2020) case study research in one Irish post-primary school found that most students felt they were 'rarely' involved in decision-making at the classroom level. Mooney Simmie e al.'s (2019, p.63) research did

find some teachers were in favour of interrupting inherited and hierarchical practices and facilitating students to 'share their ideas and experiences and also to let them see that there is more than one way to solve a problem', and when asked 'is your teaching more centred on the young person or more teacher-centred?' most participants explained that they wanted to teach where 'the pupil is central to the learning experience' (Mooney Simmie et al., 2019, p.64). However, as Mooney Simmie et al. (2019, p.64) explain, this is not always possible for teachers to do:

> the concept of a student-centred practice was felt to be at odds with dominant cultural conservative pedagogies as 'students are not used to critiquing teachers or even how to enter into discourse with teachers. They are used to- and indoctrinated into- teacher transmitting information and not questioning it'. The lack of opportunity for students to critically question would appear to greatly influence the prevailing culture of the classroom. Students questioning their teachers appeared to be easily misinterpreted, not seen as providing constructive feedback but rather as a challenge to the persona of the teacher: 'if they do question it, we teachers find it hard to see it as other than a personal criticism'.

While the participants in Mooney Simmie et al.'s (2019, p.62) study were 'were mostly teaching in voluntary secondary schools', as well as the comment from the mathematics teacher in Fleming's (2013) research also coming from a teacher in a voluntary secondary school, the situation is not too dissimilar to what occurs in ETB schools, although the latter might be somewhat more open and receptive to student voice. Recent research exploring the views of second-year students towards their participation in school life in ETBs by McCormack et al. (2019b, p.8) found that while during quantitative data collection students tended to agree that they are encouraged to be actively involved in lessons, the qualitative data presented a discrepancy:

> focus group participants indicated that this depended on the teacher, with some adopting student-centred approaches while others were more didactic in their teaching styles. While students in School 18 indicated that "there is always an activity or something in class", the common message across focus groups was that during lessons, students usually listened, read or took notes. While some teachers may draw on active learning methodologies, students usually "sit down and listen to what the teachers are saying" (FG, School 1), "watch teachers doing stuff on the board" (FG, School 18) or "you listen to the teachers reading from the book and take notes" (FG, School 13). According to students in School 14b, "it's always the textbook". The main activity students engaged in was "listening in class…if you don't listen you won't *absorb the information*" (FG, School 16, emphasis added). Students views are supported by the findings of the TALIS study (2009), which highlighted the reliance of Irish teachers, in comparison to their OECD counterparts, on direct transmission approaches.

3.4.2 Are management-level consultations becoming more common?

While student voice remains a sensitive issue in Irish post-primary classrooms, more controversial are management-level consultations. It is clear from the recent research literature, however, that this is becoming a real possibility in schools, and again there are similarities here with how student voice often plays out in schools in England. Comments from participants in Harvey's (2015, p.151) research show how some school leaders are now taking the position that students' views should be sought on teaching and learning, and that this position is justified through the use of neoliberal language:

> I think to actually ask students for their opinions and ask parents for their opinions on teaching and learning is, again, its new territory for schools, but I think it's about time it happened. Like they are the customers and you are providing the service, so it is a source - it is an untapped source - in a lot of schools.

In O'Donovan's (2015) research with three case study schools (two secondary schools and one ETB school) it was found that principals were visiting classrooms on a regular basis. What O'Donovan (2015, p.261) refers to as a 'walkthrough' sounds remarkably similar to what are commonly known as 'learning walks' in England. This is a significant development in the Irish context in that it enables principals to informally observe classroom practice and student learning and to form an impression on what is taking place in the classrooms (O'Donovan, 2015). O'Donovan (2015, p.261) explains however, that

> While the principals' statements indicate that these routines are designed to observe teaching and learning, there is no explicit acknowledgement that this (is) the function of the routines as feedback is not provided. An important dimension not included is a shared and collaborative dialogue with the teacher(s) on the learning that is taking place in the classroom (O'Donovan, 2015, p.261).

More recent research by Young et al. (2018) also indicates that principals are using examination results to either monitor teacher performance or keep themselves updated on what is happening in classrooms. More notable, however, is that in addition to quantitative performance data, some schools also set targets for students to achieve, and it is here especially that there is potential for student voice to be used as a means of gathering information on teachers. For example, Young et al. (2018, p.149) explain that some principals 'manage the discussions with students themselves, especially selecting target grades in the Leaving Certificate'. In the absence of any dialogue with teachers, these acts, I contend, serve as forms of surveillance. An apt example of surveillance can

be seen in Salokangas et al.'s (2020) research with teachers in both voluntary and ETB schools where it was stressed that control can be exercised in subtle manners in schools. One teacher in an ETB school demonstrated awareness of the range of methods principals can use to monitor teachers, explaining that even if principals do not technically enter classrooms during lessons, they can use other methods to form a judgment on a teacher's classroom practice, including using student voice:

> The formal way is, I am liable to be inspected at any given time by the Department of Education in terms of the whole-school inspection, a department inspection...When you start off as a teacher you have to go through a process…the new teacher mentoring where a teacher mentors you, observes your lessons, you will take a lesson and they make a judgment call on whether you're ready to be left alone. That's the formal. In terms of the informal, the management in the school can always ask to observe a class. Now, you can tell them: 'no, you don't want them to', but they can always ask. They can always ask the students and the students will be honest. They can observe through a window, they can listen (Salokangas et al., 2020, p.343).

3.4.3 Are students consulted less in schools with a traditional majority-led (religious) school culture?

Although now declining in influence at a societal level, the Catholic Church previously invested considerably in maintaining control of many aspects of Irish life, not least education. As others have pointed out, maintaining total control of schools and excluding lay involvement was a tactic in the past. (see for example Daly, 2009; Fleming and Harford, 2014; B. Fleming, 2016). This is particularly significant considering that approximately half of Ireland's post-primary schools are Catholic schools, while many others are often also ripe with Catholicism. O'Donovan (2015, p.244) explains that collaboration and input from stakeholders other than school leaders have not been common features in schools in Ireland and particularly in the voluntary secondary schools:

> Schools in the Irish education system, along with the teachers in them have not had a tradition of engaging in collaborative planning and evaluation. Historically, the model for school leadership was based on a hierarchical system of governance, focused on authority, power and knowledge being vested in the principal at the apex of the organisation, especially in religious run voluntary secondary schools, which had a very weak middle management system. The culture was counter-collaborative with the 'lay teacher' (non-religious) being denied agency.

According to Lynch et al. (2012, p.28), 'schools were characterised by a strong ethos of institutional control, involving respect for authority, the expertise of teachers and a largely unquestioning approach to religious beliefs and values' and students in Ireland 'were trained to be intellectually acquiescent, especially in relation to social structures and institutions'. As Fleming (2013, p.116) contends, students in particular were previously positioned as subordinate figures:

> Children, as students in the context of schools, education and pedagogy in Ireland have been viewed traditionally as passive and in need of protection. This view arises from the strong influence of Catholicism on education and society as enacted by and through teachers and teaching in primary school classrooms (O'Sullivan, 2005). Children were viewed as vulnerable and to be protected in their moral development, a discourse that permeated schools and classrooms through the patronage of schools by the Catholic Church in Ireland.

While students do remain a considerably marginalised group in decision-making in Ireland today, their improved status has dovetailed with the decline of the Catholic Church rather than there being any motive within church-managed schools to empower students:

> As the Catholic Church was not (and is not) a democracy, the norms that guided governance within it were deeply hierarchical…While new systems of lay, and more democratic, governance were instituted from the 1970s onwards, these were devised primarily due to the decline in the availability of religious personnel. The secularisation of management in Church-run schools did not arise through any desire by the Churches (of all denominations) to divest themselves of control of schools (Lynch et al., 2012, p.26).

Nonetheless, with such a large volume of schools in Ireland still aligned with the Catholic Church, or somewhat influenced by it, there is reason to believe that the stronger the Catholic ethos in Irish schools, the less involvement stakeholders such as students have.

Investigating the influence of ethos and culture on access to and inclusive practice in mainstream schools in Ireland, Mc Keon (2020) puts forward that traditional structures and attitudes are preserved at post-primary level but that this is more so the case in voluntary secondary schools. Recent research does stress the inclusive nature of ETB schools (see O'Flaherty et al., 2018b; Liddy et al., 2019;) and Mc Keon (2020, p.171) concludes

> some schools, particularly in the secondary school cohort, remain compliant with their long-established ethos and culture, public perception and some stakeholders' views of how far and how quickly inclusive practice should advance.

This is significant because As Messiou (2019, p.769), writing more broadly, stresses,

> inclusion and student voice are interconnected ideas…in order to ensure participation of all, schools first need to offer opportunities to their students to express their views and, more importantly, to act on those in some way.

Thus, could it be the case that 'the history of a school is part of what it is in the present' (Lynch and Lodge, 2002, p.45) for many Catholic secondary schools? It is notable that the new Educate Together secondary schools appear to have strong democratic cultures (Mihut and McCoy, 2020). As an outside observer contended to Mihut and McCoy (2020, p.44), these schools have been 'early adopters of a level of student democracy not seen in other schools'. Therefore, while student voice might not be too advanced in Irish post-primary schools, with the most significant exception appearing to be the Educate Together schools, could it be the case that students are consulted less in schools with greater Catholic influence?

3.4.4 Are students consulted more in schools with disadvantaged status?

In a seminal study on teacher' beliefs and teaching practices in Ireland, Devine et al. (2013) report that teachers in non-DEIS schools were more likely to highly rate reflective practice behaviours and that more activities promoting higher-order skills were found in non-DEIS schools. Elsewhere, Devine and McGillicuddy (2016, p.435) state that 'while higher order/meta-cognitive teaching was more evident in our non-DEIS (middle-class) schools', 'Active learning was more evident in DEIS (working-class) schools'. Research by Smyth (2016) also suggests that teachers in working-class schools in Ireland adapt their methods to the profile of the student body and use more active teaching methods. It has also been found via large-scale survey data that students in schools categorised as serving impoverished areas have higher scores on the perceived influence on decision-making at school, with most of the items forming the perceived influence on decision-making focused on aspects of pedagogy (Cosgrove and Gilleece, 2012). Thus, are students in DEIS schools consulted on classroom practice more often than students in non-DEIS schools? The high-stakes nature of summative examinations at post-primary level in Ireland is often reported as manipulating teaching and learning and while students

studying for their final examinations and particularly those from more privileged backgrounds often develop a preference for curriculum coverage, teaching to the test, examination preparation, and revision 'notes' over time (Smyth et al., 2011; Smyth and Banks, 2012; Smyth, 2016), perhaps students in DEIS schools are more concerned with student-centred approaches that allow for more creativity, expression and voice in the classroom. To quote a student in Fleming's (2020, 91) recent research in DEIS schools, 'There is so much more to a person than results in exams'.

3.4.5 Do students in disadvantaged schools focus more on the quality of their relationships with teachers when consulted?

The quality of interactions and relationships between students and their teachers is a very important factor in how students in Ireland perceive their teachers (see, for example, Darmody et al., 2012; Smyth et al,. 2011; Smyth and Banks, 2012; Fleming, 2013; Smyth, 2016; McCormack et al. 2019b) and to this end, due attention should be paid to the classroom climate in DEIS schools which can be particularly challenging at times. For example, 'more positive classroom climates were observed' in non-DEIS schools by Devine et al. (2013, p.95). Smyth (2016, p.97) also explains that 'schools with a concentration of working-class students have quite different school climates than other schools, having greater levels of both positive and negative interaction'. While relationships with teachers are important to all students, might it be that relationships are more important to students in DEIS schools? In other words, if discussing classroom practice, are students in disadvantaged schools more likely to emphasise the quality of relationships with their teachers while students in non-disadvantaged schools focus more on teacher performance? Smyth's (2016, p.97) research with post-primary school students in Ireland highlights the importance of interactions and relationships in terms of how working-class students view, think of, and talk about their teachers:

> The quality of relationships with teachers was a dominant theme in the group interviews conducted with students across all year groups. Even when the interviewer asked about other issues, students returned time and again to catalogue incidences of unfair treatment by teachers. This was especially evident in schools with a concentration of working-class students, where many students felt that teachers held low expectations for them and consequently did not treat them with a great deal of respect.

Other studies in Ireland also show how such negative perceptions of teachers can continue into adult life, indicating the emphasis students in disadvantaged schools place on

relationships, and the impact relationships have on them. Research with young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds reflecting on their experiences of school shows that those previously involved in a negative cycle of interaction with teachers largely tended to feel that they had been treated unfairly by their teachers, and that they tended to be critical of their teachers and the teaching they received (McCoy and Byrne, 2011). Similarly, research with the parents of early school leavers in an area of disadvantage found that parents emphasised that they and their children, relative to others, had been treated negatively by teachers and school management due to being from this particular area (Doyle and Keane, 2019). The view of parents was that their children were experiencing school in the same way as they had done when they themselves were students. A significant remark that 'threaded through most of the interviews' was made by parent who stated that 'kids don't dislike school but dislike teachers' (Doyle and Keane, 2019, p.77)

3.4.6 Are early career teachers and middle leaders more relaxed about management-level consultations?

Recent research would suggest that some schools in Ireland are now more open to including the views of students in SSE (Harvey, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020a, 2020b) but it must be considered that this positivity emanates from data largely gathered from school websites and those in leadership positions and on designated SSE teams. While principals might find student voice useful, including in relation to classroom practice, as elsewhere, will different teachers have different views?

Like all schools, Irish schools are made up of teachers who are at different career stages, have a range of characteristics, and are variously motivated (see Skerritt et al., 2021a) and recent research indicates that more senior teachers can be fearful of collaborative practice (Moynihan and O'Donovan, 2021) while competitive individualism is emerging as a dominant trait of the country's early career teachers (Murray, 2021). Not only does strong anecdotal evidence suggest that teachers towards the beginning of their careers are more open to and relaxed about student voice, but it has recently been found that many practising teachers feel that demography and experience play a key role in determining how open staff are to the inclusion of stakeholders such as students and parents in SSE (Brown et al., 2020a). In this regard, could it be the case that relative to more experienced

staff and those nearing retirement, early career teachers and middle leaders are more relaxed about management-level consultations.

3. 5 A heuristic device

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical thinking that guides this research. This theoretical overview forms the basis of the conceptual framework used in this doctoral research. By conceptual framework I mean 'the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories' that supports and informs my research (Maxwell, 2013, p.39). This framework provides a 'map of the territory' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.20) or 'a set of general signposts' (Bryman, 2004, p.68), providing order in my thinking processes about the conceptual background and context of the research (Leshem and Trafford, 2007). Student voice is likely to play out differently in different types of schools and school settings and be experienced and perceived differently by different members of staff. As Ball et al. (2012, p.143) explain, 'History, intake and values mediate policy, policy contexts and discourses, as they find expression in the school'. The influence of the Catholic Church, or indeed its lack of influence, the social composition of the students, and teachers' characteristics are all important contextual factors.

As well as the concepts of classroom-level consultations which take place between teachers and students and management-level consultations which take place between management and students without the involvement of teachers, I have raised a set of contextual questions that not only aid this doctoral research, but that will be useful for researchers to consider and explore in future studies on the use of student voice in relation to classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools:

- Are classroom-level consultations infrequent?
- Are management-level consultations becoming more common?
- Are students consulted less in schools with a traditional majority-led (religious) school culture?
- Are students consulted more in schools with disadvantaged status?
- Do students in disadvantaged schools focus more on the quality of their relationships with teachers when consulted?

- Are early career teachers and middle leaders more relaxed about management-level consultations?

This framework should be considered as a heuristic device (Leshem and Trafford, 2007; Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2013) that will stimulate interest and encourage investigation and questioning (Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012). It is important to stress, however, that the heuristic device does not offer definitive accounts of 'how things are' but ways of thinking about 'how things may be' (Ball, 2017, p.7). It raises questions and sets out to provoke more critical thinking regarding how student voice plays out in Irish post-primary schools vis-à-vis classroom practice and serves as a starting point for research.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology. It begins with a discussion of worldviews and research paradigms and my stance as a pragmatic researcher. As mixed-methods research is undertaken in this doctoral research I discuss the rise of mixed-methods research, definitions of mixed-methods research, and my rationale for using it. I then give a detailed outline of the research design. The chapter is brought to a close with a discussion of this doctoral research's important ethical considerations and an outline of the limitations of the research.

4.1 Worldviews and research paradigms

4.1.1 My understanding of worldviews and paradigms

All research has a philosophical foundation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). It is therefore important to understand the philosophy of research because the philosophical stance taken determines what a researcher considers answerable by science and what will be addressed (Wolf, 2018). Whether a researcher is consciously aware of it or not, certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions are brought to the research (Creswell, 2013). As Ashkanani (2017) points out, most people engaged in research do so to try and to find things out that are relevant to their area(s) of interest. Researchers' beliefs and assumptions are often referred to as a 'paradigm' or 'worldview' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Many scholars have pointed out, however, that definitions of the term paradigm are varied (Morgan, 2007; Holloway and Biley, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Freshwater and Cahill, 2012, 2013; Mertens, 2012; O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015; Shannon-Baker, 2016). This research understands 'paradigm' to be synonymous with the term 'worldview' and as referring to my general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of my research (Creswell and Creswell, 2018), or, in simpler terms, paradigms and worldviews can be referred to as systems of beliefs and practices that influence how I choose to research and the way I choose to research (Morgan, 2007).

Paradigms comprise ontological beliefs, epistemological beliefs, axiological beliefs, and methodological beliefs. It is primarily ontology and epistemology that are discussed here because it is these two that constitute the fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches (Sale et al., 2002; Guba in Slevitch, 2011). However, utilising the work of Saunders et al. (2009), Mertens (2010), Creswell (2013), Edelheim (2015), O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) and Kaushik and Walsh (2019), my understanding of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology are outlined in Table 2. Scholars such

as Sale et al. (2002) and Slevitch (2011) have succinctly outlined the ontological and epistemological discontinuities between quantitative research and qualitative research. Ontologically speaking, quantitative researchers consider truth as an objective reality in that ultimate truth, and only one truth, exists while qualitative researchers see reality as being created and constantly changing through people's experiences; there is no single reality but multiple realities intersubjectively created and continuously recreated by participants (Sale et al., 2002; Slevitch, 2011). In terms of epistemology, whereas qualitative research can be described as subjectivist in that absolute objectivity is viewed as unattainable, the researcher and the researched are independent entities in quantitative research, meaning that the researcher is capable of studying a phenomenon without influencing it or being influenced by it, enabling objective truth to be discovered (Sale et al., 2002; Slevitch, 2011).

Term	***Definition***
Ontology	How I see the world and make sense of reality
Epistemology	How I see knowledge and privilege and legitimatise certain ways of knowing
Axiology	How my values and ethics will influence the research process
Methodology	How I approach the research from a particular school of thought

Table 2: My understanding of philosophical terms

4.1.2 Paradigm wars and the emergence of mixed-methods research

The methodology of social and behavioural research has experienced dramatic changes since the 1970s, impacting the purposes, worldviews, and methods of studying behaviours, programmes, and social interactions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a). For most of the previous century, research was dominated by quantitative methods, with positivism and its variants being the dominant worldview as value neutrality and objectivity were widely expected of researchers but from the 1980s onwards qualitative research emerged and became immensely popular with those dissatisfied with the established methodology (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a). Despite the merits of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, each approach has been criticised by

proponents from the other orientation, leading to what became known as the 'paradigm wars' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a). Thus, the field of mixed-methods research has evolved as a result of these discussions and controversies and as a pragmatic way of using the strengths of both approaches (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a). As explained by Gardner (2011, p.545):

> If great swathes of the literature were to be believed, analysis of our educational research community would reveal two diametrically opposed and continuously warring factions: those apparently entrenched in quantitative and positivist paradigms of research and those equally entrenched in qualitative and relativist paradigms. Within the factions themselves, sub-factions co-exist and sometimes, it would seem, not all that cordially. Policing the borders between the alleged main factions is a new wave of 'Mixed Methods' aficionados attempting to calm troubled research waters by spreading a form of methodological multiculturalism in the middle.

While there are purists who assert that paradigms and methods should not be mixed, and situationalists who contend that certain methods can be used in specific situations, there are pragmatists who argue for the efficient use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Cameron, 2009). The so-called 'paradigm wars' might now be considered to be 'outmoded' and there is recognition, as outlined by Kelle (2006, p.294), that no single method or paradigm should dominate:

> Many of the old war-horses seem to have become tired of repeating their arguments again and again. Moreover, proponents of a new trend towards 'mixed methods designs' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) claim that this movement marks the beginning of a new era in social research indicated by a tendency to combine quantitative and qualitative methods pragmatically unencumbered by old controversies. Mixed methods becomes a kind of fashion in social research.

As Ghiara (2020) affirms, it is now being recognised that epistemological and ontological assumptions can change within research communities and that research paradigms can be mixed.

4.1.3 My worldview and research paradigm

Johnson et al. (2007) suggest that it makes sense that a researcher might have one primary home. In my case, I would have considered myself to be a researcher purely interested and invested in qualitative research and data in the past (see for example Skerritt, 2019c, 2019d, 2020a), subscribing to interpretivist and subjectivist paradigms. I believed in bringing my own values to the research, getting as close to the participants as possible to

gather their subjective thoughts, and embracing multiple realities (Creswell 2013). This doctoral research, however, has challenged my thinking and encouraged me to reflect on and rethink my philosophical assumptions. I have learned that multiple paradigms can be incorporated into the one study—what might be referred to as dialectical pluralism (Johnson, 2011), paradigm pluralism (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012), or epistemological and ontological pluralism (Ghiara, 2020). In exploring how student voice takes place in relation to classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools, and how stakeholders feel about student voice based on their own experiences, I now see the value in gathering quantitative data in addition to the qualitative data I have so long espoused. Here, qualitative data is needed to investigate how student voice has played out in stakeholders' lives, how it continues to play out, and their hopes, desires and fears for the future but given that this is an under-researched area of Irish education, quantitative data is needed to gain an understanding of how this phenomenon fares at a wider level.

In the view of Shannon-Baker (2016), we should not argue for a single 'best' paradigm, or perspective, and mixed-methods research and the particular paradigm(s) used should be at the discretion of the researcher. It is pragmatism that tends to be associated with mixed-methods research (Johnson et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2008; Cameron, 2009; Feilzer, 2010; Lund, 2012), although there is the danger that it comes to be regarded as 'expedient' and positions mixed-methods research an approach in which 'anything goes' (Denscombe, 2008). The sheer difficulty of designing and carrying out mixed-methods research might explain the lure of pragmatism (Morgan, 2014). Mixed-methods research can be adopted uncritically by researchers who overlook the underlying assumptions behind the qualitative-quantitative debate (Sale et al., 2002). As explained by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003a, pp.ix-x):

> Most investigators using these methods have not been interested in delving deeply into the philosophical orientations that supposedly underlie the application of their research studies. This is why the paradigm wars of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s did not affect many of the researchers working with mixed methods; these authors simply were more interested in the research questions they were studying than in discussions of complex philosophical issues.

Furthermore, the philosophical assumptions of pragmatists are often not disclosed (Lincoln, 2010). However, I do not see pragmatism as a convenient escape route i.e. a way avoiding traditional philosophical and ethical disputes (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) or avoiding engaging in discussions about the assumptions that underpin the

research (Biesta, 2010). Worldviews can change during a study (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018) and I have not simply put aside my philosophical beliefs. Rather, I have come to the conclusion that the broader philosophical arguments can never be solved (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). As per above, I have come to see the value in quantitative data that can be generalised, and thus consider qualitative data to be compatible with quantitative data and vice versa. Indeed, within the scholarship on mixed-methods research, and particularly pragmatism, there are strong arguments that these data are not too dissimilar. However, it is the differences between the quantitative and qualitative philosophies that purists tend to focus on instead of the similarities (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005).

4.1.3.1 Pragmatism

It might be commonly said that quantitative researchers typically work with numerical data while qualitative researchers typically work with narrative data (Graff, 2017) but as Brannen (2005) contends, such claims are 'overly simplistic'. Similarly, claims that qualitative studies are concerned with meaning and that quantitative research focuses on behaviour are not fully supported either since both can be used to investigate people's views and actions:

> The association of qualitative research with an inductive logic of enquiry and quantitative research with hypothetic-deduction can often be reversed in practice; both types of research may employ both forms of logic (Brannen, 2005, p.175).

Both methodologies involve the use of observations to address research questions, and meanings result from the interpretation of data, whether represented by words or numbers, and both are interchangeable (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). As Symonds and Gorard (2010) point out, particular types of data are not confined to particular methods of analysis. Numerical data do not necessarily need to be quantified to be used in a study as the answers to a questionnaire for a single case can be examined in narrative analysis to create a portrait of an individual without the reporting of any numbers (Symonds and Gorard, 2010). Numerical data can show qualitative change, for example by applying factor analysis to a measure given at different time points to the same sample of participants, and survey results can also be displayed in matrices and conceptual maps, just like any other thematic data (Symonds and Gorard, 2010). In terms of interview data, it can be quantified by counting it—or as interview data is traditionally presented, there

are somewhat disguised numeric patterns referred to such as ‘most’, ‘many’, ‘few’, ‘none’ and so on (Symonds and Gorard, 2010). Finally, in relation to claims that quantitative methods and procedures are carried out objectively, it must also be considered that many human, or subjective, decisions are made throughout the research process (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Although the final version of an instrument can lead to objective scoring, because of the subjectivity built into its development, any interpretations of the scores yielded cannot be 100% objective (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). In light of these discussions, I have therefore come to the view that ‘there are overwhelmingly more similarities between quantitative and qualitative perspectives than there are differences’ (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005, p.379), that ‘numbers and words co-exist in virtually every research setting’ (Onwuegbuzie, 2003, p.396), and that ‘no generic method of analysis is fixed to any one paradigm’ (Symonds and Gorard, 2010, p.127).

Qualitative researchers should be free to use quantitative methods, while quantitative researchers should be free to use qualitative methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Differences in epistemological beliefs should not prevent a qualitative researcher from utilising data collection methods more typically associated with quantitative research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Ontologically, I still subscribe to the view that there are multiple realities, but I also appreciate that the view that there can a singular reality in which people’s views can be measured together. In terms of my epistemological beliefs, knowledge is to be generated efficiently based on people’s own experiences, and I can be both close to research participants and also be distant to them at times. Thus, I find myself aligning with the philosophy of pragmatism as I am now rejecting the rigid criteria for knowledge claims posed by other paradigms and thriving for the practical nature of reality (Shaw et al., 2010).

Pragmatism draws on many ideas, including employing ‘what works’, using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). It supports the use of mixed methods based on the assumption that there is not one set of methods that is appropriate (Mertens, 2012). Pragmatic researchers do not see the world as one of absolute unity—they draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions, choosing the methods, techniques and procedures that best meet their needs and purposes (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Pragmatists ascribe to the philosophy that research questions should drive the methods used (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Therefore, pragmatic researchers do not decide whether to use quantitative

methods or qualitative methods, but how they can use both methods to answer research questions (Graff, 2017). Pragmatists see value in not only using both methods, but in combining them. However, the emphasis here is on answering the research questions in the most practical and effective way using the most appropriate means. In this sense, pragmatism is outcome orientated and sees the best method as being the one that is most effective in producing the desired consequences of the study. As a pragmatist, I will be flexible in the techniques I use to address research questions. Thus, I am able to use qualitative research to inform the quantitative portion of the research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). The inclusion of quantitative research which is typically motivated by the researcher's concerns, along with the inclusion of qualitative data which is often driven by the desire to capture the participant's voice, can be merged within a single investigation (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). As a pragmatic researcher, I am cognisant of a wide variety of research techniques and can select methods with respect to their value for addressing the underlying research questions, rather than with regard to some preconceived biases about which paradigm is a hegemony in social science research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Moreover, considering that this research involves two phases, including some data first gathered as part of another project, is driven by own interest in student voice in schools and how it plays out differently in different school contexts, a pragmatic approach is ideal here. As outlined by Minstrell (2012, p.69), pragmatic research typically:

- builds on previous research and knowledge,
- recognises the research process is inherently value-laden,
- uses the research questions to drive method selection,
- seeks practical answers to inform effective real world practice, and
- acknowledges the influence of context on the research process and findings.

4.2 Mixed-methods research

4.2.1 The rise of mixed-methods research

Mixed-methods research is becoming increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognised as the third major research approach or research paradigm, along with qualitative research and quantitative research (Johnson et al., 2007). Based on the rationale that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves,

to capture the trends and details of a situation, more researchers in the social sciences have been using mixed-methods designs for their studies (Ivankova et al., 2006). In its recent history in the social and behavioural or human sciences, mixed-methods research started with researchers and methodologists who believed qualitative and quantitative viewpoints and methods were useful as they addressed their research questions (Johnson et al., 2007). Although mixed-methods research is not new per se, it has arisen in response to the currents of quantitative research and qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2007). It is a field that has only formally existed since the late 1990s or early 2000s (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012). Denscombe (2008, p.271), explains that:

> Although there has not been complete unanimity about the dates, the general theme has been that an early period in which the positivist paradigm (linked with quantitative methodologies) was dominant (1950s to mid-1970s) changed to an era in which the constructivist research paradigm (linked with qualitative methodologies) became established as a viable alternative (mid-1970s to 1990s). Mixed methods, as a research paradigm, is seen as emerging from the 1990s onwards.

According to Lund (2012, pp.155-156), mixed methods can be considered established as a formal discipline around the year 2000 and it is characterised by 'a practical/pragmatic attitude in that the research questions in empirical studies are given high priority, not philosophy of science, and in that qualitative and quantitative methods are used in combination for answering such questions'. Over the last two decades mixed methods has become an increasingly popular approach. Its rise has been, as stated by Cohen et al. (2011, p.22), 'meteoric'. Many influential scholars have played a key role in this:

> Championed by writers such as John Creswell, Abbas Tashakkori, Burke Johnson, Anthony Onwuegbuzie, Jennifer Greene, Charles Teddlie, and David Morgan, the mixed methods approach has emerged in the last decade as a research movement with a recognised name and distinct identity (Denscombe, 2008, p.270).

As Timans et al. (2019, p.194) have recently pointed out, the number of publications mentioning 'mixed methods' in the title or abstract in the Thomson Reuters *Web of Science* has increased rapidly over the past ten years, and especially since 2006. Moreover, not only has there been an increase in the number of mixed methods research studies, but as Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009, p.266) highlight, several journals 'now routinely publish mixed methods research (e.g. *Field Methods, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Quality and Quantity, Evaluation, Evaluation Practice, Research in Nursing and Health, Research in the Schools, The Qualitative Report*), and the list is

growing'. In addition to specific journals there are also, as Denzin (2010) points out, handbooks and plenary sessions at professional meetings devoted to the topics, while major professional societies and public and private funding agencies and institutes are endorsing the use of mixed methods. As Doyle et al. (2016) remark, the use of mixed-methods research continues to expand. Indeed, it is difficult to refute Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003a) belief that mixed-methods research would become 'the dominant methodological tools in the social and behavioural sciences during the 21st century'.

4.2.2 Defining mixed-methods research

Mixed-methods research both recognises and accommodates the view that the world is not exclusively quantitative or qualitative —it is a mixed world, even though certain research might have a predominant disposition to, or requirement for, numerical or narrative data (Cohen et al., 2011). The goal of mixed-methods research is not to replace either qualitative or quantitative approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It can be 'broadly defined' as 'research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a programme of inquiry' (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007, p.4). The 'basic assumption' is that mixed-methods research uses 'both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination' to 'provide a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself' (Creswell, 2014, p.565). 'In general', it involves 'collecting, analysing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon' (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009, p.267), or at 'its simplest', mixed-methods research 'involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate a particular phenomenon or research problem' (O'Hanlon, 2018, p.109).

While there are many simplistic ways of understanding what mixed-methods research entails, trying to provide a precise and agreeable definition of it is not easy, however. It remains the case that mixed-methods research 'is still in its adolescence in that scholars do not agree on many basic issues related to the field' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003, pp.3-4) and that the 'development of a nomenclature that is distinctly associated with mixed methods is both extremely important and overdue' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003 p.8). Johnson and Christensen (2014), for example, reassure us that the various terms

used by various authors can be treated as synonyms—elsewhere, mixed-methods research might be referred to as mixed methodology, multimethod research, methodological pluralism, and multiplism. With terminological distinctions waning over time, 'mixed-methods' has become, according to O'Hanlon (2018), more of an umbrella term for studies that integrate quantitative and qualitative work. In relation to the 'plethora of definitions that have been proposed', Timans et al. (2019, p.206) state that there is now wide agreement that some unified definition of mixed-methods research would be beneficial, but it is precisely here that there is a large variation in interpretations. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003b, p.62), for example, identify mixed-methods research as research in which a qualitative and a quantitative data collection procedure or research method is used to answer the research questions, but elsewhere they detail how they asked multiple scholars 'to designate and define a few terms, which they considered essential', and this demonstrated how there can be multiple definitions and disagreements among academics (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003, p.8). Similarly, due to mixed-methods research being defined in numerous ways, Johnson et al. (2007, p.118) examined 'the criteria leaders in the field currently consider important for defining mixed methods research'. In response to the 19 definitions provided by eminent scholars, of which there were varying levels of specificity, Johnson et al. (2007, p.123) offer the following general definition:

> 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.

However, 'a more comprehensive definition or summary of what is called mixed methods' is also provided:

> Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognises the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results. Mixed methods research is the research paradigm that (a) partners with the philosophy of pragmatism in one of its forms (left, right, middle); (b) follows the logic of mixed methods research (including the logic of the fundamental principle and any other useful logics imported from qualitative or quantitative research that are helpful for producing defensible and usable research findings); (c) relies on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference

> techniques combined according to the logic of mixed methods research to address one's research question(s); and (d) is cognisant, appreciative, and inclusive of local and broader sociopolitical realities, resources, and needs. Furthermore, the mixed methods research paradigm offers an important approach for generating important research questions and providing warranted answers to those questions. This type of research should be used when the nexus of contingencies in a situation, in relation to one's research question(s), suggests that mixed methods research is likely to provide superior research findings and outcomes (Johnson et al., 2007, p.129).

Acknowledging that there several definitions of mixed-methods research have emerged over the years, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p.5) 'rely on a definition of core characteristics of mixed methods research'. This definition combines methods, a philosophy, and a research design orientation, and highlights the key components that go into designing and conducting a mixed-methods study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p.5), in mixed methods the researcher:

- collects and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data rigorously in response to research questions and hypothesis
- integrates (or mixes or combines) the two forms of data and their results
- organises these procedures into specific research designs that provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study
- frames these procedures within theory and philosophy

4.2.3 Rationale for mixed-methods research

Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches is 'in many cases, a no-brainer' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010, p.271) and mixed-methods research is used here for a variety of reasons. Seminal work by Greene et al. (1989) put forward five key purposes for mixing methods: to triangulate and seek convergence, to complement and seek elaboration and clarification, to develop the research further, to initiate paradoxes and fresh perspectives, and to expand and extend the breadth and range of inquiry. Denscombe (2008) similarly identified mixed-methods research as being used to, inter alia, improve the accuracy of data, provide a more complete picture, and to develop the analysis and extend on initial findings. Thus, mixed methods will help to provide me, the researcher, with a better understanding of the research problem than either qualitative or quantitative research can do by itself as neither of these approaches would enough to address the problem or answer the research questions on their own (Creswell, 2014). There is more insight to be gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research

than either form by itself (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). By combining the different perspectives provided by qualitative and quantitative methods, not only is a more complete picture expected to be produced but a convergence of results from different strategies can provide more valid inferences, while any divergences can generate new theoretical insights (Lund, 2012). The value of using more than one method is succinctly outlined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p.273):

> We believe that the mixed approach closely parallels everyday human problem solving in a way that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone can do. Everyday problem solvers use multiple approaches (similar to qualitative and quantitative pathways) concurrently or closely in sequence and examine a variety of sources of evidence in decision making (and in forming impressions)…We contend that mixed methods emphasises this humanistic conceptualisation of the research process more so than the other two monolithic methodological approaches/movements.

Thus, utilising both quantitative and qualitative data will provide me with a stronger understanding of the research problem (Biesta, 2012). By using both quantitative and qualitative data in this research I will be able to make both statistical generalisations about populations, and in-depth interpretations of participants' worldviews, perspectives and subjective meanings (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). I will be able to provide an overall interpretation of what is taking place at a generalised national level while also investigating in further detail how this is playing out a more local level (Youngs and Piggot-Irvine, 2012).

On a more personal note, I also see particular value in using mixed-methods research as part of this doctoral research 'in order to learn and experience this form of research design' so that I am 'well-informed about the latest research approaches' (Creswell, 2014, p.566). Some scholars see it as important that 'graduate students learn to utilise and to appreciate both quantitative and qualitative research' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005, p.376). As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.15) contend:

> Today's research world is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, complex, and dynamic; therefore, many researchers need to complement one method with another, and all researchers need a solid understanding of multiple methods used by other scholars to facilitate communication, to promote collaboration, and to provide superior research.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p.14) similarly argue that mixed-methods research aids the development of broader skillsets that will stand to researchers going forward:

> Students using mixed methods emerge from their programme with some expertise in multiple forms of research methods- quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and mixed methods. In short, they have enhanced their toolkit of skills to address research questions, to become productive members of mixed methods teams, and to be able to teaching using multiple methods.

4.3 Research design: a 'partially mixed sequential dominant status design'

Research designs are 'procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p.51). Similar to definitions of both paradigms and mixed-methods research, there are a plethora of designs in existence (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009), while many are still in development (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). As outlined by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006, p.12), typologies are important in mixed-methods research because they help researchers decide how to proceed when designing their studies and provide a variety of paths, or ideal design types, that may be chosen to accomplish the goals of the study, they help establish a common language for the field, they help to provide the field with an organisational structure or multiple alternative structures, they help to legitimise the field because they provide examples of research designs that are clearly distinct from either quantitative or qualitative research designs, and they act as a useful pedagogical tool when teaching mixed methods.

In mixed-methods research, researchers must decide when and how they will mix or integrate the quantitative and qualitative data from their study (O'Hanlon, 2018), if the study will include one phase or multiple phases (Graff, 2017), whether the quantitative and qualitative components or phases of the study will take place at the same point of time (i.e. concurrently) or whether they will be organised into phases over time (i.e. sequentially), and whether the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study will be given equal emphasis or if one paradigm will have more weight than the other (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). To this end, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009, pp.267-268) conceptualise that mixed-methods designs can be represented as a function of the following three dimensions:

> (a) level of mixing (partially mixed versus fully mixed); (b) time orientation (concurrent versus sequential), and (c) emphasis of approaches (equal status versus dominant status). Level of mixing refers to whether the mixed research is partially mixed or fully mixed…Time orientation refers to whether the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research study occur at

> approximately the same point in time (i.e. concurrent) or whether these two components occur one after the other (i.e. sequential). Finally, emphasis of approach pertains to whether both qualitative and quantitative phases of the study have approximately equal emphasis (i.e. equal status) with respect to addressing the research question(s), or whether one component has significantly higher priority than does the other phase (i.e. dominant status).

Thus, this study might be considered to be a 'partially mixed sequential dominant status design' which according to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009, p.270) 'involves conducting a study with two phases that occur sequentially, such that either the quantitative or qualitative phase has the greater emphasis'. As explained by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006), sequential designs include at least two phases that occur chronologically, and the conclusions that are made on the basis of the results of the first phase lead to the formulation of questions, data collection, and data analysis for the next phase. As outlined in Figure 2 below, both the quantitative and the qualitative phases of this research were conducted sequentially before being mixed at the data interpretation stage (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009), and the emphasis is on the qualitative phase. The first phase of research comprises qualitative data collected through case studies in a total of seven post-primary schools . The subsequent phase of research then consists of a nationwide survey administered electronically to the country's post-primary school principals.

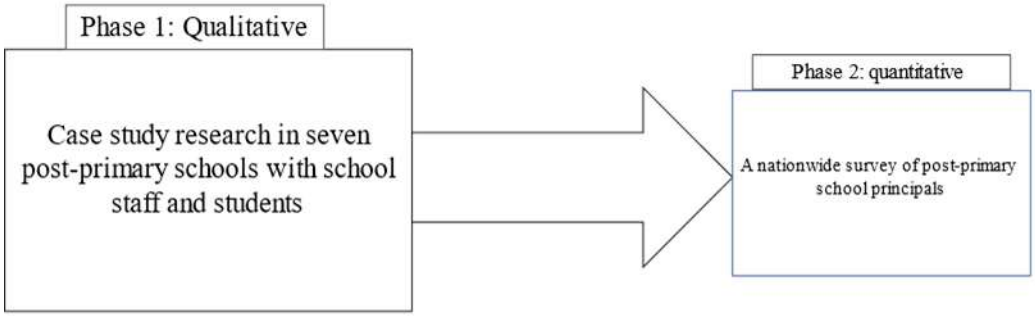


Figure 2: A 'partially mixed sequential dominant status design'. Source: The Author.

As part of an Erasmus+ funded project entitled 'Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools' (DEAPS), I visited five case study schools and conducted interviews with staff, students, and parents about the role of students and parents in school decision-making in post-primary schools in Ireland. This data were gathered, transcribed and analysed in the first instance by me and then analysed by the collective research team. The findings, published elsewhere, found that student voice mainly focused on non-academic matters

in post-primary schools (see Brown et al., 2020b). However, although the emphasis in the interviews was on issues relating to school lunches, mobile phone policies, graduations, school tracksuits and so on, in analysing the data I became conscious that student voice was also, to some extent, being used in schools in relation to classroom practice. In various instances, it also appeared that student voice was being used as a tool for surveillance i.e. a way of monitoring teachers. For example, the principal of one school spoke of interviewing students:

> I'm asking them about their experience of learning with that teacher. And that can give you a sense of whether they're engaged in their learning or not. If you've got an entire class coming in and there's little engagement you've got to do something about it, and that might require going back to the students which I would have done (Principal, ETB school, non-DEIS)

As another example, a year head in separate school was concerned about how student voice could influence the principal's perceptions of staff:

> It's kind of awkward because our principal is great. He's really fair, he's brilliant but the worry would be if he goes into your classroom and asks them, and the kids all slate you, does that change his opinion of you? (Post-holder responsibility for year group, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

These are just two examples but part of an area, I felt, warranting further analysis. With the permission of the project's Principal Investigator, the interview data gathered from the interviews with staff members and students in the five case study schools I visited were analysed as part of the first phase of this doctoral research to specifically look at how these stakeholders' experienced and felt about student voice being used in relation to classroom practice. Working with the existing data set, a 'data-driven approach' was taken in that the data set was continuously reviewed to determine what kind of questions could be answered by the available data (Cheng and Phillips, 2014) as part of the secondary analysis. To supplement this data, and to ensure that the main models of schools with both DEIS and non-DEIS status were included, an additional two case study schools were also then visited to collect further data about how student voice is playing out in relation to classroom practice, and how this is experienced and perceived by stakeholders (the seven schools, contextual information about each school, and the 101 interviewees are outlined in in Table 3). After the qualitative data were analysed, an online questionnaire was then designed and distributed to the principals of Ireland's 723 post-primary schools in 2019/2020.

As first outlined in the opening chapter, there were six questions I set out to answer in this study:

1. In what ways are students consulted on classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools?
2. Are students consulted differently in different types of Irish post-primary schools?
3. Are students consulted differently in Irish post-primary schools in different socio-economic contexts?
4. Is student voice being used to monitor teachers in Irish post-primary schools?
5. Do staff and students in Irish post-primary schools feel that students can be a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools?
6. How do staff and students in Irish post-primary schools feel about the prospect of management consulting students on teacher performance?

School	*Participants interviewed*	*Additional notes*	*Primary or secondary analysis*
Voluntary secondary school (non-DEIS) This is a single-sex (male) voluntary secondary school of a Catholic ethos. Its 700 students come from a variety of backgrounds—some come from middle-class backgrounds with well-educated parents in high-status employment, and others come from working-class backgrounds. This school is considered to be a high-performing school in terms of students' academic attainment, and it also has a reputation for sporting excellence.	• Principal • Deputy principal • Post-holder with responsibility for SSE • Two post-holders with responsibility for year groups • Three classroom teachers • Eight students	The students interviewed were in 1st and 2nd Year. Two were on the student council but all would be part of the School's new student SSE team.	Secondary
Voluntary secondary school (DEIS A) This school is a single-sex (male) voluntary secondary school of a Catholic ethos. The school is classified as a disadvantaged school as it serves students from low-income families. More than 500 students are currently enrolled. The school often faces problems in terms of students' behaviour and parents' engagement, and a major problem is students' attendance	• Principal • Post-holder with responsibility for SSE • Post-holder with responsibility for year group • Home School Community Liaison • Post-holder with responsibility for student council • Three classroom teachers • Eight students	The students interviewed were from 1st and 2nd Year. Two of them were on the Student Council.	Secondary

Voluntary secondary school (DEIS B) This school is a single-sex (female) voluntary secondary school of a Catholic ethos. The school serves an impoverished area and has DEIS status. Less than 200 students attend this school and notably, many do later attend university.	• Principal • Deputy principal • Home School Community Liaison • Post-holder with responsibility for student council • Four classroom teachers • Eight students	The school's student voice coordinator was absent on the day of the interview. None of the students interviewed were on the student council. The students interviewed were all junior cycle students.	Secondary
Community school (non-DEIS) This is a co-educational community school serving more than 1,000 students. The students attending this school come from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and the school caters for a very diverse range of students and academic abilities.	• Principal • Post-holder with responsibility for student council • Post-holder with responsibility for year group • Three classroom teachers • Five students	Of the five students interviewed, three were in 4th Year, one was in 5th Year, and one was in 6th Year. All of these students were on the student council.	Secondary
Community school (DEIS) This is a co-educational community school serving a region of socio-economic disadvantage. The school has disadvantaged status and a key issue in the school is students' behaviour. Approximately 500 students attend this school.	• Principal • Deputy principal • Post-holder with responsibility for special educational needs • Post-holder with responsibility for school action plan • Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare • Three classroom teachers • Six students	The six students interviewed were all in 6th Year and two of them were on the student council.	Primary

ETB school (non-DEIS) This school is a co-educational ETB school in an affluent area. Over 1,000 students attend this school. The majority of students are coming from privileged backgrounds but students from disadvantaged backgrounds also attend the school, and a small proportion of students are technically homeless. The school is a high-performing one.	• Principal • Three deputy principals • Post-holder with responsibility for year group • Four classroom teachers • Eight Students	The students interviewed were all senior cycle students .(seven were in 5th Year and one was in 6th Year). All of these students were on the student council.	Secondary
ETB school (DEIS) This school is a single-sex (female) ETB school attended by less than 200 students. The school has disadvantaged status and faces many socio-economic challenges with attendance in particular being a key issue.	• Principal • Deputy principal • Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning • Post-holder with responsibility for wellbeing • Post-holder with responsibility for special educational needs and student voice • Three classroom teachers • Three students	The three students interviewed were all senior cycle students (two were in 6th Year and one was in 5th Year). None of the students interviewed were on the student council. Only three students were interviewed because only three students because over the course of a two-day visit to the school, only three students presented consent forms signed by a parent or guardian.	Primary

Table 3: Case study schools

4.3.1 Data collection

4.3.1.1 Phase 1: qualitative

The first phase of data collection consisted of case study research, based on an initial five schools as part of the DEAPS project and then an additional two further schools. With the advantage of using a case approach for better understanding the process or dynamics of certain aspects of practice now recognised (Merriam, 1985), this form of research has become increasingly common in education (Verschuren, 2003; Gerring, 2007; Tight, 2010). As with other forms of qualitative research, qualitative case studies search for meaning and understanding with the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis using inductive, investigative strategy and producing richly descriptive reports (Merriam, 2009). Case studies focus on one, or just a few, instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing in-depth accounts of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance (Denscombe, 2014). The phenomenon being studied was student voice and there were seven instances i.e. seven post-primary schools. As data were collected and analysed from seven cases, this phase can be described as multicase study research (Merriam, 2009).

Case study research has a level of flexibility that is not readily offered by other qualitative approaches and is designed to suit the case and research questions (Hyett et al., 2014). Thus, case studies address questions about how or why (Corcoran et al., 2004; Cope, 2015) and to this end, case study research dovetails with the pragmatic approach taken in this project. As Harrison et al. (2017) point out, case study research has evolved to be a pragmatic, flexible research approach with philosophical versatility. The case study approach works best when the researcher wants to investigate an issue in depth and provide an explanation that can cope with the complexity and subtlety of real-life situations (Denscombe, 2010). It is for these reasons that the emphasis is on case studies in this research. Case studies were employed to provide ‘quotes from key participants, anecdotes, narratives composed from original interviews, and other literary techniques to create mental images that bring to life the complexity of the many variables inherent in the phenomenon being studied’ (Hancock and Algozzine, 2017, p.16).

The work of Robert Yin, Robert Stake, and Sharan Merriam informed the approach used in this phase. These three scholars have been referred to as ‘foundational writers in the area of case study research’ by Brown (2008, p.1) and as ‘prominent methodologists’ and

'seminal authors' in the field by Yazan (2015, p.134). While Yin is more orientated towards postpositivism and Stake and Merriam towards constructivism, their positions can be mapped out on a continuum. According to Harrison et al. (2017), objectivity is a goal for Yin but he also recognises the descriptive and interpretive elements of case study, while Stake emphasises the researcher's interpretive role as essential in the process, seeing reality as multiple and subjective and based on meanings and understanding. Between them, however, is Merriam who maintains a constructivist approach in that the researcher assumes that reality is constructed intersubjectively through meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially—while at the same time recognising that it is important to utilise processes that help interpret, sort, and manage information and to adapt findings to convey clarity and applicability to the results (Harrison et al., 2017). As Brown (2008, p.7), outlines:

> I envisioned the qualitative case study methodology of Merriam somewhere near the middle of the continuum, with Yin's work situated on the far right, and Stake's work located on the far left. Merriam presented a balanced, pragmatic approach, while Yin was highly methodical and logical, and Stake was like an artist or poet, creating and crafting meaning.

As a novice researcher conducting qualitative case studies, Merriam's work was particularly useful and beneficial in terms of the guidelines for data collection, but these guidelines are also complemented by Yin's principles for data collection (Yazan, 2015). Merriam (1998) provides a discussion on conducting literature reviews, constructing a theoretical framework, identifying a research problem, forming research questions, and purposive sampling, as well as outlining, amongst other things, how to conduct interviews, interact with interviewees, and record and evaluate interview data. Yin (2018) asserts that two or more sources of evidence should be gathered, that evidence should be assembled in a database that contains field notes, documents, preliminary narratives and memos, that a chain of evidence must be maintained, and that care must be exercised if social media is used as a proxy for sources of evidence. In carrying out qualitative case studies, Merriam's procedures for gathering data were most useful, but the principles outlined by Yin should not be discounted as they also helped me maintain focus on the link between data collection and the questions and theoretical propositions (Yazan, 2015).

4.3.1.2 Phase 2: quantitative

Once the qualitative data were analysed, quantitative data were gathered via a questionnaire issued to a Ireland's post-primary school principals. Questionnaires are perhaps the most common form of quantitative research in social research and were used in this research to measure how principals feel about how student voice is used their schools. Questionnaires allow for a wider geographical spread than other data collection techniques and are both convenient and generalisable (Male, 2016). A questionnaire is also a very effective data collection tool in that it will enable data to be generated from a large sample of people in a relatively short period of time (Connolly, 2016). Furthermore, questionnaires are also relatively easy to arrange and they reduce 'interpersonal factors' as standardised answers are produced (Brown, 2013).

The questionnaire administered was designed in a way that is clear and concise, culturally sensitive, and free from any emotionally sensitive or double-barrelled questions. It was also decided to circulate the questionnaire online as opposed to via post because online versions are more cost-efficient, convenient, and environmentally friendly, but also because also an online questionnaire was expected to wield a higher response rate. For example, in Brown's (2013, pp.101-102) pilot study it was felt that

> fewer resources would be wasted and a higher response rate would be achieved with an electronic version. The reason given for the preferred choice of electronic questionnaire was that principals receive too many paper based questionnaires and most questionnaires that are received are ignored regardless of their content or quality. Furthermore, another principal was of the view that if an electronic version of the questionnaire was used, it would take a lot less time to complete, and less of the researcher's resources would have been spent if participants chose not to complete the questionnaire.

Furthermore, relative to a traditional paper-based questionnaire, internet-based questionnaires are also less prone to error a as I did not have to read and then input paper-based responses, thus reducing any chance of making a human-error and incorrectly inputting data (Brown, 2013).

As this phase of the research consisted of a questionnaire administered to principals to investigate their attitudes how student voice is used in their schools, the questionnaire consisted largely of Likert Scales. Within the literature, the various definitions of 'attitude' imply that it can be measured and that it can range from a positive or a negative response towards some object or process within a system, and the cause of this response

is either an internal or external stimuli (Brown, 2013). Similarly, within the field of social research Likert Scales in self-completed questionnaires are perhaps the most widely used research instrument for measuring attitude (Brown, 2013). Each Likert Scale in the questionnaire was designed following Vagias' (2006) 'Likert-type scale response anchors' so principals' attitudes could be measured along a scale of, for example, 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree.

All constructs were tested through Cronbach alpha to measure the internal consistency amongst the items —the extent to which all of the items in a test measure the same concept or construct, hence it is connected to the inter-relatedness of the items within the test (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). A value of .7 or higher was needed to ensure statistical reliability. Alpha is an important concept in the evaluation of questionnaires and according to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), it is mandatory that researchers estimate this quantity to add validity and accuracy to the interpretation of their data. Internal consistency was determined to ensure validity (i.e. the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure) before the test was employed for research purposes. In addition, reliability (the ability of an instrument to measure consistently) estimates show the amount of measurement error in a test. If the items in a test are correlated to each other, the value of alpha is increased. However, a score does not always mean a high degree of internal consistency as alpha is also affected by the length of the test, meaning if the length of the test is too short, the value of alpha is reduced. Thus, to increase alpha, more related items testing the same concept were added to the test (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011).

The online questionnaire was first piloted by presenting it as a draft survey instrument to a small sample of principals, teachers, doctoral researchers, and subject matter experts before administering it to the entire survey sample (Lochmiller and Lester, 2017). Piloting is a 'cardinal rule in research' (Johnson and Christensen, 2014, p.212) and all instruments should be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to any items that allow for any items that not yield usable data to be removed (Bell, 2014). Based on the feedback received, the questionnaire was revisited and revised, and then disseminated widely via SurveyMonkey—online software that facilitates the creation of customised surveys.

The target population for this questionnaire were post-primary school principals in Ireland and all 723 post-primary schools were contacted in an attempt to ascertain their views. The larger the sample size, the better, because larger samples result in smaller sampling errors which means that the sample values will be closer to the true population values (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). In order to maximise response rates, the questionnaire issued was of no financial cost to principals and was deemed to be sufficiently short in that it did not require an arduous effort to complete. However, no material or financial incentives were offered to principals as it was felt that such remuneration could possibly skew their motives. The ethical dilemma of payment or compensation for participation in research remains a core concern for many scholars (Hammett and Sporton, 2012) and this research subscribed to the view that research should not be commodified.

4.3.2 Data analysis

4.3.2.1 Phase 1: qualitative

The analysis of interview transcripts was aided by a software package known as NVivo (Basit, 2003; Grossoehme, 2014; Houghton et al., 2017). As described by Meaney et al. (2012, p.549):

> NVivo software is a package which imports and stores data relating to qualitative studies such as transcripts, audio recordings, and relevant literature. This software allows qualitative data to be managed by sorting and organising the data into the various categories and theme.

Some might say that NVivo 'is relatively simple to use' (Welsh, 2002) but it is a sophisticated tool that requires training and practice. Throughout my doctoral research I made use of several NVivo training sessions provided by the university at both beginner and intermediate level, often resitting the same training numerous times to hone my skills. While not exactly 'simple', I did find NVivo to be far more efficient than traditional hand-based analysis. For example, I was able to manage the data in a single location, record ideas and memos, and code, organise, and analyse the data (Oliveira et al., 2016). As such, an important point is that NVivo is not an analysis system but a system for managing documents, and I, the researcher, still needed to perform the analysis.

Figure 3 offers an example of two separate statements made by two different interviewees. These data were then analysed by me, and not by NVivo. Figure 4 gives an example of how I coded the data first shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Screenshot of some interview transcripts. Source: The Author.

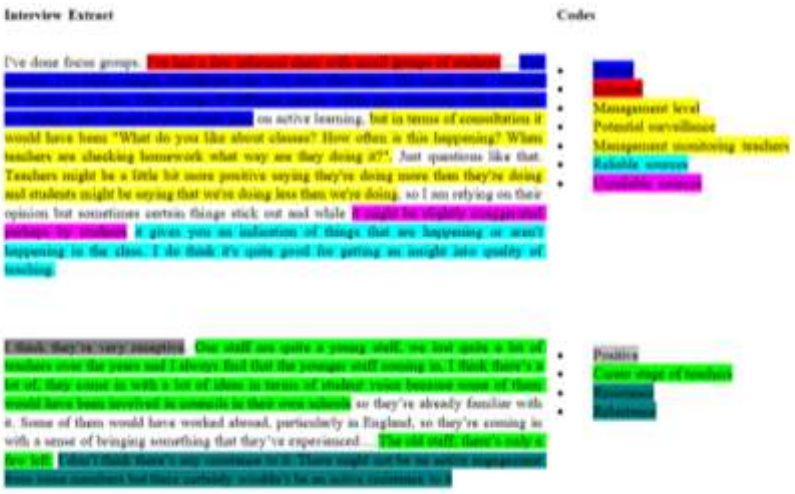
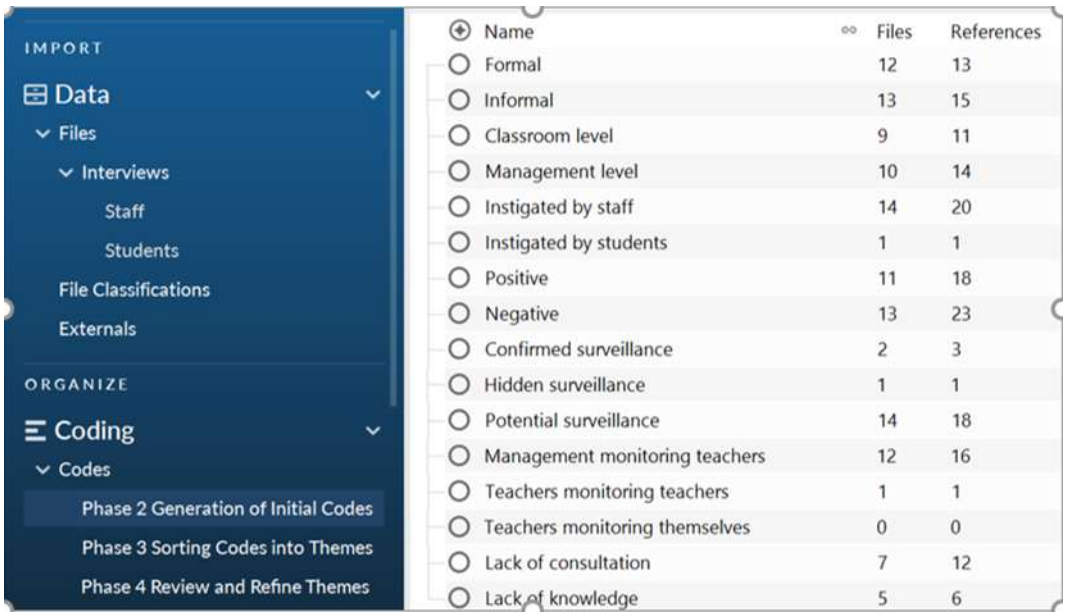


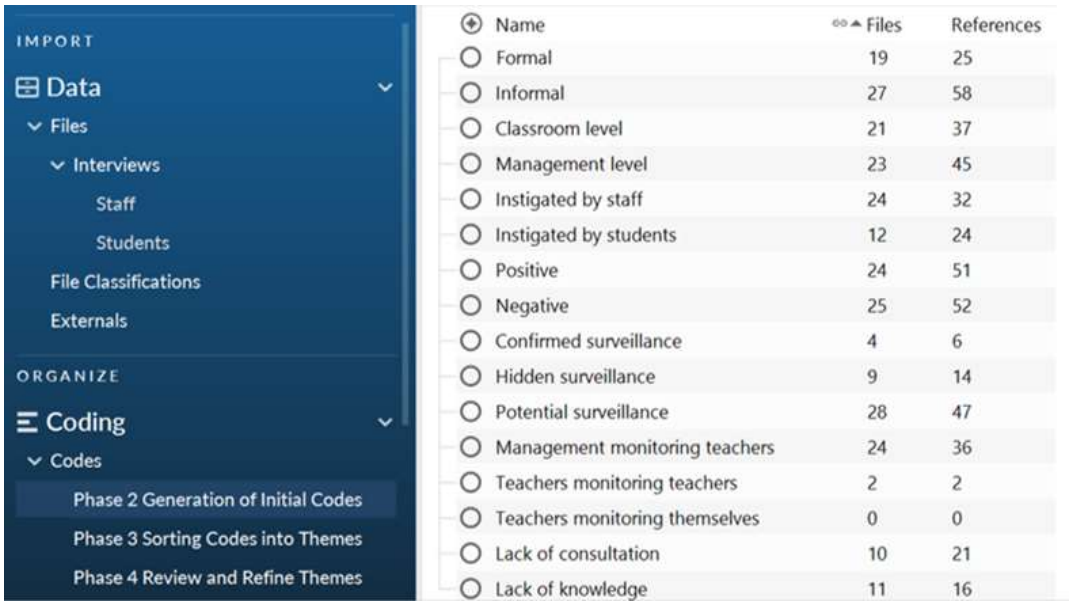
Figure 4: An example of coding. Source: The Author.

Figure 5 shows some of the initial codes I began generating after familiarising myself with the data from the five schools as part of the DEAPS project. Figure 6 then shows how these initial codes began to develop once two additional schools were incorporated into this study and I began analysing the data from seven schools



Name	Files	References
Formal	12	13
Informal	13	15
Classroom level	9	11
Management level	10	14
Instigated by staff	14	20
Instigated by students	1	1
Positive	11	18
Negative	13	23
Confirmed surveillance	2	3
Hidden surveillance	1	1
Potential surveillance	14	18
Management monitoring teachers	12	16
Teachers monitoring teachers	1	1
Teachers monitoring themselves	0	0
Lack of consultation	7	12
Lack of knowledge	5	6

Figure 5: A screenshot of a selection of initial codes generated based on the first five schools. Source: The Author.



Name	Files	References
Formal	19	25
Informal	27	58
Classroom level	21	37
Management level	23	45
Instigated by staff	24	32
Instigated by students	12	24
Positive	24	51
Negative	25	52
Confirmed surveillance	4	6
Hidden surveillance	9	14
Potential surveillance	28	47
Management monitoring teachers	24	36
Teachers monitoring teachers	2	2
Teachers monitoring themselves	0	0
Lack of consultation	10	21
Lack of knowledge	11	16

Figure 6: A screenshot of how these initial codes began developing after the the inclusion of two additional schools. Source: The Author.

4.3.2.1.1 Secondary analysis: A secondary analysis was first performed on the data collected from the five case study schools as part of the DEAPS project. Secondary analysis involves using data previously collected for an earlier study (Perryman et al., 2018), either by the same individual or group of researchers or by different researchers

altogether (Ruggiano and Perry, 2019), and it can be used for two main purposes: to investigate new or additional research questions, or to verify the findings of previous research (Heaton, 2008). In this instance, the secondary analysis involved reusing data derived from a previous study that was gathered by myself, the doctoral researcher, for the purpose of investigating new research questions. Secondary analysis of quantitative data has been far more common than secondary analysis of qualitative data (Devine, 2003; Heaton, 2003; Long-Sutehall et al., 2010) and it is a relatively under-used technique in education (Smith, 2008). Reflective of this is how introductory textbooks do not usually offer secondary analysis as a qualitative method in education (Schratz, 2020). However, I see secondary analysis as a useful way of generating new knowledge and hypotheses (Heaton, 2003), as well as being a useful way for novice researchers to enhance their data analysis and synthesis skills (Long-Suthehall et al., 2010) while saving both time and money (Sherif, 2018).

Various scholars have highlighted the different types of secondary analysis. There is significant overlap between these different types, meaning that there are several ways of outlining the 'type' of analysis used in this paper. Four types of secondary analysis of qualitative data were identified in the literature by Hinds et al. (1997). One of these approaches involves reanalysing data by focusing on a concept that was present but that was not specifically addressed in the primary analysis. This, it is argued, 'occurs when investigators of the primary study become impressed by the appearance of a concept in the transcribed interviews or other data sources but know that they did not analyse that concept as part of the primary study' (Hinds et al., 1997, p.410). According to Thorne (1998), at least five distinct types of secondary qualitative analysis can be identified. Of these five, two are relevant here: 'analytic expansion', where researchers conduct a secondary interpretation of their own database to answer new or extended questions, and 'retrospective interpretation', where an existing database is tapped to develop themes that were not fully analysed in the original study (Thorne, 1998). Five types of secondary analysis of qualitative data were then identified by Heaton (2004). Of note here, is what is referred to as 'supplementary analysis'—'a more in-depth focus on an emergent issue or aspect of the data which was not addressed, or was only partially addressed, by the primary research' (Heaton, 2004, pp.41-42). Supplementary analysis extends the original work and examines a particular theme or subset of the data which has become a post hoc matter of interest in more depth (Heaton, 2004, p.42). The types of secondary analysis

outlined here are well-established, emanating from the most prominent scholars in this area, and succinctly convey the approach taken in this phase of analysis.

Secondary analysis is likely to be easier for researchers if they were part of the original research (Heaton, 2003). As I was reusing self-collected data (Heaton, 2008), or 'auto data' (Heaton, 2000), I was very familiar with the data, its meanings, representations and contextual factors. The issue for secondary analysists of not having 'been there' did therefore not apply here, and the issue for analysists reusing their own data of not having been there 'for a while' (Heaton, 2004) was alleviated as I carried out the secondary analysis and wrote the findings in the same calendar year as I carried out the original interviews. In between, I had transcribed and analysed the primary data and submitted a written report to the Principal Investigator.

4.3.2.1.2 Reflexive thematic analysis: Thematic analysis is the most widely used qualitative approach to analysing Interview data (Jugder, 2016) and was used in this research to analyse the data generated during the phase of case study research. All qualitative data, both the five schools from the DEAPS project and the two additional schools visited were analysed thematically. Specifically, the original work of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to guide this analysis. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017, p.3353), Braun and Clarke's 2006 framework 'is arguably the most influential approach, in the social sciences at least, probably because it offers such a clear and usable framework for doing thematic analysis'. Braun, Clarke, and their collaborators have often acknowledged the widespread popularity and use of these guidelines (see Braun and Clarke, 2014, Braun et al., 2019a, 2019b; Clarke and Braun, 2014a, 2014b; 2018). Writing recently Braun and Clarke (2019a, p.590) state:

> We did not anticipate that paper to have such impact and wide uptake; it is now one of the most cited academic papers of recent decades

A quick glance on Google Scholar shows that this framework has currently been referenced over 125,000 times! The case study data were therefore put through an established and widely recognised process, and the large volume of work on thematic analysis that these authors have produced since, both with each other and also with others, allowed me to keep abreast of developments and aware of misconceptions in the field.
Not only is this framework now highly acclaimed and accepted in the research community but it was particularly useful to me in this doctoral research. As the authors argue,

thematic analyses ‘can offer a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in a qualitative research career’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81) and ‘should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.78). The original paper states that:

> It is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.78).

Moreover, not only is thematic analysis very accessible but it has a clearly defined set of procedures (Braun et al., 2014; Clarke and Braun, 2014a) and, to some degree, is theoretically flexible (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun et al., 2014; Braun and Clarke, 2016).

Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) ‘is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’. Here, a ‘theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.82). Using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step guide to performing thematic analysis, the case study data were analysed as follows:

1. I familiarised myself with and immersed myself in data so that I was familiar with the breadth and depth of its content. This involved continuously reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and making note of initial ideas and thoughts.
2. I generated initial codes and began assigning data to each code.
3. I sorted the codes into different themes.
4. I reviewed and refined the themes.
5. I defined the themes and assigned them titles.
6. I wrote up the results of the analysis, presenting appropriate extracts from the data set.

However, thematic analysis is more of an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches (Clarke and Braun, 2018), and the specific form of analysis used here has more recently been labelled ‘reflexive thematic analysis’ (Braun et al., 2019a; Braun and Clarke, 2019a, 2019b). This approach is no longer described as ‘just’ thematic analysis but reflexive

thematic analysis to signal that it is a particular type of thematic analysis, located in a qualitative paradigm, and centred on researcher reflexivity (Braun et al., 2019b) and subjectivity (Braun and Clarke 2019a). Braun and Clarke (2019a, p.591) explain how they see their qualitative approach as creative, reflexive, and subjective, with the researcher's role in knowledge production at the heart of the approach:

> For us, qualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling 'stories', about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the 'truth' that is either 'out there' and findable from, or buried deep within, the data

Braun et al. (2019a) have now described three broad types of thematic analysis, and it is the aforementioned reflexive approach that was used here; essentially, the Braun and Clarke (2006) guidelines christened as reflexive thematic analysis. The approach does remain a fully qualitative one; what might be classed as a 'Big Q' approach to thematic analysis in that it is an organic approach informed by the unique standpoint of the researcher (Clarke et al., 2015). Here, themes are conceptualised as meaning-based patterns that come from

> considerable analytic work on the part of the researcher to explore and develop an understanding of patterned meaning across the dataset. Coding is an organic and open iterative process; it is not "fixed" at the start of the process (e.g., through the use of a codebook or coding frame). Codes – the product of coding – can evolve throughout the coding process. An initial code might be "split" into two or more different codes, renamed, or combined with other codes. The aim of such changes during coding is to better capture the researcher's developing conceptualisation of the data (Braun et al., 2019a, p.6).

Themes, therefore, do not passively 'emerge' from the data (Clarke and Braun, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2019a; Braun et al., 2019b)— they are not already there, sitting idly and waiting to be identified. Instead, the researcher constructs, generates, and develops themes (Braun et al., 2019b). The aim is to offer a

> coherent and compelling interpretation of the data, grounded in the data. The researcher is a storyteller, actively engaged in interpreting data through the lens of their own cultural membership and social positionings, their theoretical assumptions and ideological commitments, as well as their scholarly knowledge (Braun et al., 2019a, p.6).

As indicated in Figure 5 and Figure 6 above, an exntensive list of codes were initially generated, along with others too, including but not limited to the following: Reliable sources; Unreliable sources; Age of students; Career stage of teachers; Resistance. All of these codes were then sorted into a set of themes that were eventually reviewed and refined, meaning some themes were incorporated into others, or to some extent discarded. The themes that remained were then defined and named, and a representation of this process can be seen in Appendix H.

4.3.1.2 Phase 2: quantitative

The results from the online questionnaire issued in the second phase of the research were imported into and analysed using SPSS, a software package for statistical analysis (Heinz 2013). SPSS is probably the most common statistical data analysis software package that is used in research in education as it is user-friendly and 'does everything we need it to do' (Muijs 2011, p.73). Furthermore, this software is commonly used in and consequently provided by the institution overseeing this research. Once in SPSS, any errors in the data or missing data were accounted for and the data were cleaned.

4.3.1.2.1 Descriptive analysis: Descriptive analysis was first used to summarise data in a meaningful way. Descriptive statistics do what they say: 'they describe, so that researchers can then analyse and interpret what these descriptions mean' (Cohen et al., 2011, p.622). This type of analysis allowed me to examine trends in the data (Creswell, 2014). For example, descriptive statistics were used to examine and indicate the responses given by principals of different school types. The data were then also explored further through crosstabulations. For example, in looking at the voting on an item, nominal data were placed in rows and the ordinal data placed in columns. As Cohen et al. (2011, p.623) explain, a crosstabulation 'is simply a presentational device, whereby one variable is presented in relation to another, with the relevant data inserted into each cell'**.**

4.3.1.2.1 Nonparametric Analyses: Inferential statistics were needed to compare the attitudes of principals based on school type. These inferential statistics were used to make inferences from the data. Likert scales, a type of scale commonly used in questionnaires to produce ordinal data (Opie, 2005), were frequently used in this research so the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare two categories of nominal variables against ordinal variables. For example, this test was used to understand whether attitudes towards student voice differ based on the socio-economic context of schools i.e. the Mann-Whitney U test

was used to compare the responses of principals in DEIS schools with the principals of non-DEIS schools. Extending on this, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was then used to see if there was a significant difference between the responses of principals of secondary schools, ETB schools, and community/comprehensive schools. The Kruskal-Wallis test is an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test in that it allows upwards than two independent groups to be compared.

4.4. Researcher reflexivity

Research is always influenced by a number of factors, including those related to the research process as a whole and the researcher's position and influence in this context (Barrett et al., 2020). With this being a particularly qualitative-dominated project, particular care needed to be taken with the collection, analysis, and reporting of the qualitative data. Qualitative researchers are central figures who influence, if not actively construct, the collection, selection and interpretation of data, and examining how in this role I impinged on, and even transformed the research is important (Finlay, 2002). As Dodgson (2019, p.220) explains:

> In qualitative research, it is assumed that who the researcher is makes a difference in the findings of their study; objectivity is not present…readers of qualitative research need to understand who is doing the research in ways that go beyond their name and professional affiliations to include the researcher's positionality in relation to what is being studied.

The opening chapter of this thesis including an account of how 'I' fit into this research, which will help readers better understand this topic and my interpretation of it (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). It must also be understood, therefore, that my past experiences of and with student voice bear considerable influence over this doctoral research, from conception to completion. To alleviate the impact and influence I have on this research, I have continuously reflected on and given due consideration to how my own beliefs and attitude affect my work. Measures have always been taken to be as reflexive as possible:

- My theories and viewpoints were always kept private during both the recruitment and the interview process so that participants did not on some level tell me what they thought was what I wanted to hear

- Notes were recorded on how each set of interviews went so that I could be aware of my own subjectivities and so that I could reflect and be extra conscious of this when visiting the next set of schools
- Interviews were intentionally conducted at separate intervals over a spread of time to allow for sufficient reflection time between each interview
- Participants' views that did not match with my own views are included in the data presentations
- Substantial and detailed data extracts are provided to allow readers to make their own evaluations and interpretations of the data

4.5 Ethical considerations

Before commencing, this research was granted approval by the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. The research subsequently undertaken was always conducted as outlined in my application for ethical approval and in line with the university's guidelines. I contend that this research maintained and upheld high ethical standards throughout and will continue to do so as the phases of research undertaken as part of this project are submitted to various scholarly outlets for publication.

4.5.1 Collecting and analysing new data

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and in the case of students under the age of 18, consent was also acquired from their parents/guardians. For the questionnaire issued to principals, respondents ticked a box at the beginning of the survey to indicate that they provided their consent. For the interviews conducted as part of the case studies, documentation was sent to participating schools in advance of my visits. This documentation included plain language statements, semi-structured interview schedules, and informed consent forms. Via the plain language statements, all participants were made fully aware of what this research was exploring, what it involved, and what would be done with the data. Within this, it is also stated that the likelihood of enduring any harm or distress as a consequence of this research was minimal. No parts of this research posed any physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic risks to any participants and the probability of any harm or distress being caused by this research was never any greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine everyday activities.

It was made clear to all participants that their identities would be protected throughout and after this research. Participants were made aware that participation was completely voluntary and that if they did not want to answer certain questions then they did that have to and that they could also withdraw from the research at any time up until publication and that if they choose to do so their data would be destroyed. While it was stressed that any published data would be anonymised to protect their identity, it was also stated that it is possible for data to be subjected to freedom of information claims and that in the unlikely situation that issues or concerns arose in either interviews with adults or students in relation to child protection or safeguarding, I would have a responsibility to disclose the relevant information to the appropriate person and/or body, and to act accordingly. I fully understand and appreciate that informed consent is not a once-off incident, however, but an ongoing process and before each interview session I again, in-person, explained to participants what this research was exploring, what it involved, and what would be done with the data.

When liaising with schools to coordinate my visit, it was suggested to my point of contact in each school that in order to create a suitable atmosphere for participants to offer their thoughts in a comfortable manner, an appropriate venue/setting should be used to conduct the interviews in. Thus, a room in the school that was familiar to the participants was advised. Moreover, as students were being interviewed in groups as opposed to individually, it was suggested to schools that they arrange for friendship groups, acquaintances and students who share positive relationships with each other to participate in the group interviews. These pre-existing relationships, it was felt, would help the students to relax and feel more comfortable as there would be an already established trust amongst them.

4.5.2 Analysing previously collected data

In terms of research ethics, the data from the DEAPS project analysed in the first phase of this research differed from the quantitative data and the additional qualitative data collected in that informed consent was not sought from participants for this specific analysis—consent was obtained, however, when participants were first interviewed. Secondary analysis raise various ethical complexities, and these were given full consideration. As outlined by Thorne (1998), secondary research raises difficulties in confidentiality, fidelity, and informed consent that require thoughtful deliberation to

dignify the spirit of ethical research. In the case of my study, I do agree with Hinds et al. (1997, p.414) when they state that a researcher 'planning a secondary analysis will doubtlessly feel more ethically correct if permission from the participants in the primary study has been solicited at the time of the primary study', but while informed consent was obtained for the primary research, a secondary analysis was not envisaged at the time and so I did not 'seek permission from participants in the primary study for a secondary analysis of their data'. After the primary data had been collected and analysed, and a secondary analysis was considered, obtaining retrospective consent was not considered to be feasible (Heaton, 2000, 2003, 2004), and re-contacting participants, given the busy nature of school life, was deemed to be an unnecessary burden for participants (Heaton, 2004).

In relation to 'previously collected data ('secondary use')' the European Commission's (2018, pp.12-13) *Ethics and data protection* document, posted on the Dublin City University website states that if the 'use of data raises specific ethics issues (e.g. as regards consent and transparency, privacy and the rights and expectations of the data subjects), you must… explain how the ethics concerns will be mitigated'. Thus, in what follows below, I rationalise how ethical concerns about the secondary analysis were alleviated.

When a researcher conducts a qualitative secondary analysis using his or her own data, the issues referred to above are generally avoided while some additional benefits can be availed of such as their in-depth knowledge of the original research being beneficial in terms of protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality, and their familiarity and closeness with the data eliminating ethical concerns associated with the interpretation of data created by other researchers and participants (Sherif, 2018). Thus, when qualitative secondary analysis researchers conduct analysis with their own data, they often feel that the secondary analysis is covered under the original protocol approval (Ruggiano and Perry, 2019). In Long-Sutehall et al.'s (2011, p.339) study, for example, it was explained that

> the secondary research questions were generated during analysis of one of the primary datasets and were directly related to the intention of the primary research; therefore, the judgement was made that the consent gained in the primary research was sufficient to carry out this secondary analysis.

In my case, as the secondary analysis examined a particular theme in the data from the original research, and because I was using self-collected data and therefore not breaking any confidentiality, I am strongly of the view that informed consent was not required to use this data as the purpose of the secondary analysis is sufficiently related to the primary research and is covered by the terms under which consent was originally obtained (Heaton, 2000). For example, the original research explored both student and parent voice in schools in relation to evaluation, planning and decision-making. When principals were invited to have their schools participate in the original case study research, the letter they received declared that the overarching aim of the project was 'to address issues of capacity in schools in the areas of school evaluation and quality assurance' and the case study protocol they were provided with gave an overview of the questions that staff, students and parents would be asked during the interviews. It was stated that teachers would be asked the following questions:

- To what extent are students involved in SSE (Role, level of engagement, stage)?
- What impact has the inclusion of students in SSE had on your school? (Which areas e.g. teaching and learning?; Positive/Negative)

Similarly, the following questions were listed as being of interest in the interviews with students:

- Do you feel that your voice is included in what happens in your school (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?
- Are you consulted on decisions that may have an effect on you (e.g. how to make the school better)?
- What issues do you think that you should be consulted on (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?
- Do you participate in activities that evaluate the school? Are you encouraged to participate in these activities?

Staff and students also received copies of the case study protocol with their plain language statements and consent forms. For students in particular, a list of questions, including the two above, were also included in their consent form and highlighted in purple font so that they stood out. All participants were also provided with details of the project website (www.deaps.net) where they could read more about the research. In this regard, my professional judgement on the matter (Heaton, 2003) was that this data could be reused.

Based on the original research, and what participants provided consent for, their rights were in no way violated.

As I am very close to this data, I was able to main confidentiality and fidelity and uphold the integrity of the research and ensure that the reuse of participants' data in this project did not and will not cause them any harm or distress. As remarked above, I see informed consent not as a once-off incident but as an ongoing process, and as with the primary data collected, the identity of the participants in Phase 1 of this research were protected and no information that could be used to identity them was provided in the presentation of findings. Thus, the likelihood of participants enduring any harm or distress as a consequence of this secondary analysis are minimal. No parts of the secondary analysis pose any physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic risks to any participants.

4.6 Limitations

While using both quantitative and qualitative research in this doctoral research helps me to combine their strengths and alleviate weaknesses, there are, nonetheless, some limitations to this study. Outlined below are four main limitations that I am conscious of in reporting this research.

This research relies solely on the viewpoints of participants as opposed to being supplemented by, for example, observational or ethnographic work. While it is mixed-methods research consisting of both quantitative and qualitative methods, it is the qualitative that enjoys the 'dominant status'. Thus, while there is generalisable data, the majority of the data is subjective and is more interested in participants' experiences and interpretations as opposed to one singular reality. In being a predominantly qualitative study, and especially one related to classroom practice, I am also conscious that some participants were likely to, at times, provide somewhat defensive answers, and/or also what they perceive to be desirable answers. Conversations between principals and university-based researchers are imbued with power relations, and there can be a desire on the part of the former to produce the 'good' school and the 'good' principal (Maguire and Braun, 2019). Narratives can be rehearsed for research interviews (Ball et al., 2012) and those in both senior and middle management positions can do 'work' in the interviews to produce particular accounts of their schools (Maguire et al., 2013). When certain discourses are strongly promoted as being central to education it can be difficult for any

teacher to put forward a contrary view and some of the positivity put forward by school staff, from senior leaders to classroom teachers, might therefore also be 'seen with a cautionary eye' (Wilkins, 2011). Similarly, students can work to portray and present themselves and their teachers as 'good' students and 'good' teachers to researchers (Davies in Charteris and Thomas, 2017).

Particularly in the case of data gathered from students, the selection of certain students by schools represents another limitation of this study. While it is important during focus group interviews, and with adolescents especially, that students feel comfortable during interviews, and it was suggested to schools that friendship groups be interviewed, the students handpicked for research interviews and similar initiatives which might involve an external person are often those schools often think of being the best ambassadors. In some schools, for example, all students interviewed were members of the student council, which can narrow student voice (Martin et al., 2015).

A particular challenge in interviews in three of the DEIS schools related to the flow of conversation with students. While the interviews with students in the three schools in more privileged contexts, as well as one of the DEIS schools, produced deep and insightful data, the data collected from the students in some of the DEIS schools were often not as rich. During interviews in these schools, it was difficult to generate and maintain a flow of conversation and students' responses to questions were often very short, with little elaboration offered. Elsewhere, I have previously highlighted how the language skills of students in DEIS schools can be more limited than students from more privileged backgrounds (Skerritt, 2017), and this was very much the case in most of the DEIS schools I visited as part of this project.

Given the growing rate and promoted ethos of what are known as 'Educate Together' schools at post-primary level, these multidenominational schools (Rougier and Honohan, 2015; Faas et al., 2016; Darmody and Smyth, 2018; Sai et al., 2019) are notably absent from this research. Educate Together schools developed as an alternative to Catholic schooling (Stapleton 2020) and while they are more common at primary level, there are currently 19 post-primary level Educate Together schools. Since the first post-primary level Educate Together school opened in 2014 there has been a lot of anecdotal evidence suggesting that student voice is more widely adopted in these settings. While there has been little research on Educate Together schools so far, recently published research

supports these anecdotes (see Mihut and McCoy, 2020). Educate Together schools at post-primary level are categorised as voluntary secondary schools, although some can also be joint patrons of or in partnership with other types of schools, but they appear to differ significantly from Ireland's typical denominational voluntary secondary schools. Considering these differences, the absence of case studies in the form of any Educate Together schools must be considered a limitation.

In terms of the quantitative data, a limitation is that of the questionnaire administered to Ireland's 723 post-primary schools only 95 principals responded. As a questionnaire issued as part of the DEAPS study garnered 164 responses, representing 22% of the total population of the country's post-primary school principals (Brown et al., 2020b), a response rate greater than 13% was originally hoped for and expected during the research design and piloting stages but alas, the COVID-19 pandemic, which one suspects significantly reduced the number of responses, peaked in Ireland when the questionnaire was administered, resulting in the nationwide closure of school buildings. With principals working remotely for several months under unprecedented challenging conditions, requests to complete a questionnaire about student voice were most likely trivial to many. Not only was the questionnaire issued during what might be considered to be the worst time in living memory to be requesting principals' time, and on a voluntary basis, but the COVID-19 era also gave rise to many novel and opportunistic research studies that also comprised questionnaires aimed at schools' and stakeholders' experiences of the pandemic. Thus, my doctoral questionnaire was also competing with questionnaires sent from researchers with much higher profiles, larger budgets, and researchers with a far greater reach. For example, a high-profile questionnaire about second-level education in Ireland during the pandemic was issued by Ireland's Economic and Social Research Institute at this time, receiving 236 responses (a response rate of 33%). The subsequent report produced by Mohan et al. (2020, p.15) stated that

> All of Ireland's 723 second-level schools were in the sampling frame for the online survey. To raise awareness and to promote engagement, an email containing the online survey link was first sent out to principals on 13 May 2020 via the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).

In contrast, I wrote to professional bodies on two separate occasions in May 2020 inquiring about the possibility of them sharing a message from me with a link to the questionnaire in their 'network via email, newsletter etc.' but I did not have any success.

This is indicative of how my doctoral research did not have the reach that other researchers had at this time. At a time when principals were inundated with work, requests, and unusual challenges, in hindsight, a response rate of 13% for a low-profile questionnaire as part of a doctoral study not specifically concerned with the pandemic that dominated all aspects of life at the time is perhaps better than first envisaged.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the data are presented. Because this is a 'partially mixed sequential dominant status' study in which two phases of study occurred sequentially with the qualitative phase having the greater emphasis (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2009, p.270), this chapter begins by presenting the key findings from the qualitative phase of the research. That is, the data collected through interviews with 101 participants in seven Irish post-primary schools are mapped out. Then building on this qualitative data, the key quantitative findings that came from a subsequent nationwide questionnaire issued to the principals of Ireland's post-primary schools are set forth.

5.1 Qualitative data

5.1.1 How students are consulted on classroom practice[1]

5.1.1.1 Classroom-level consultations: consulting students in lessons

The clearest form of consultation reported involved students providing feedback on teaching and learning in their lessons, and there was a strong view among the school staff discussing this that it reflected a positive cultural change in classrooms in Irish schools in recent years. However, classroom-level consultations were not common practice in most schools. In voluntary secondary schools in particular, regardless of socio-economic context, teachers exhibited little knowledge or awareness of students being consulted in classrooms. When asked if student voice would be used in classrooms most teachers in these schools were hesitant and unconfident. As one teacher said,

> Eh, no. Not on stuff that would happen inside the classroom. (Classroom teacher 1, eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

In the voluntary secondary schools and community schools, but especially in the case of the former, only rarely did teachers mention or give examples of affording students voice

[1] The key points from section ''5.1.1 How students are consulted on classroom practice'' have recently been published in a peer-reviewed article in *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* (see Skerritt et al., 2021c).

and increased responsibility at the classroom level. Some of the few instances of classroom-level consultations related to teachers seeking feedback on their teaching from students, students choosing the classroom layout, students evaluating and assessing their own learning, and students choosing the texts to be studied. As mentioned, however, the community schools were more active in this area than voluntary secondary schools:

> So, one of the things I would actually do at the end of every year term is, I would have a feedback sheet and so I'm giving the students voice at the end of every term. What am I doing well, what do I need to work etc.? I think that's hugely important. I've actually carried it over from my teaching practice days. (Classroom teacher 1, three years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> My students decided what way we would lay out the room and what way they felt was conducive to effective learning.(Classroom teacher 1, nineteen years of teaching experience, community school, non-DEIS)

> If you take a classroom, at the end of a maths class, the end of a graphics class, students are now being asked to assess their own work. That leads to what should we do next? What should our programme lead onto and so on? So they're playing a bigger role in the classroom first of all. (Post-holder responsibility for year group, community school, non-DEIS)

> In English, I let them pick the texts sometimes that they study…we might have a vote on it but I don't know if that happens across the board. Some years I actually don't do that with, it depends on the class and it depends on the texts as well. (Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare, community school, DEIS)

The common view of both staff and students in voluntary secondary schools and community schools was that classroom-level consultations were used at the discretion of some teachers:

> A couple of teachers have done it. It's not across the board in the school. I actually threw out there "Right lads, what did you find interesting? What did you not like?" and I've actually tailored my programme this year to suit that. (Classroom teacher 2, six years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> I think a lot of teachers like to think it's their classroom and they are the person in that classroom, and they are in charge. I would be open. I like to hear what they say. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> One of the teachers. One of the teachers actually cares how we would like to learn but the majority of them teach how they want to teach even if we say

> that we would prefer if it is taught this way…This year we got so many new teachers and we were like ‘’We would like to learn this way because we’re used to it’’ and they were like ‘’Yeah, but that’s not my way so you’re just going to have to put up with it’’. (Student 2, community school, DEIS)

Moreover, it was widely felt in these schools that classroom-level consultations were only used occasionally as opposed to regularly:

> I think it’s always a more term by term basis when it happens because it’s the teacher trying to improve themselves rather than the school trying to improve the teaching. (Student 1, community school, non-DEIS)

> Sometimes at the end of a topic their teacher might give them a little evaluation as to what worked well, what learning methods worked well, what didn’t, what you’d like to see more of. Sometimes they fill out little evaluations like that in their specific subjects. (Classroom teacher 2, fourteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

Classroom-level consultations were reported to be uncommon and infrequent in voluntary secondary schools and community schools, with very few examples given. The staff in the community school with DEIS status, however, did appear to be more open to student voice in the classroom and it was in this school, relative to the other voluntary secondary schools and the community school in more privileged circumstances, that school management expressed a strong interest in improving the current levels of consultations. The principal’s optimism was based on the evolving staff demographics:

> The last ten years there’s been a huge amount of retirements. We have a lot of kind of younger staff coming through so I think absolutely, they are receptive and they are open. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

Similarly, the deputy principal spoke of management’s interest in gradually changing the culture of teaching and learning in the school:

> In terms of in the classroom then, in terms of how the lessons are taught or the particular style, that’s something again we want to work on because myself and the principal are a bit anxious about moving…With new teachers coming in, they might bring in some methodologies that haven’t been used in this school before, and with the principal coming from her previous school, she wanted to bring these methodologies in but bring them in at a slow, easy pace to get people used to it and to get the students involved as well…Our staff are

> quite a young staff, we lost quite a lot of teachers over the years and I always find that the younger staff coming in, I think there's a lot of, they come in with a lot of ideas in terms of student voice because some of them would have been involved in councils in their own schools so they're already familiar with it. Some of them would have worked abroad, particularly in England, so they're coming in with a sense of bringing something that they've experienced….The old staff; there's only a few left. I don't think there's any resistance to it. There might not be an active engagement from some members but there certainly wouldn't be an active resistance to it. (Deputy principal, community school, DEIS)

As both the principal and the deputy principal explained, changes to the staff body could prove pivotal. In interviews with classroom teachers and post-holders in this school, three members of staff mentioned how their experiences of teaching in other jurisdictions have normalised student voice for them. In this instance, a classroom teacher with three years of experience refers to her pre-service teacher education:

> I've done feedback forms. I trained in Scotland, my teacher training, so it was kind of put in to make sure we do that so we can adjust or adapt. (Classroom teacher 1, three years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

Reflective of the current culture in the school, however, is how an initiative introduced on feedback has failed to take hold. In these remarks, the principal explains what the initiative entails, and a student laments its lack of progress:

> Last year we implemented a comment only formative feedback process kind of for their semester one exams. Students are expected to take the feedback in the form of what went well with this piece of work or this exam and the even better if; so the idea was that they were to check these comments from their exams and they were to put them into the inside page of their hardback copy so that they would see a pattern from a piece of work. Piece of work A to B to C and they would be expected to note what they do well and to improve on the piece of work for the next piece of work. The English Department pioneered this initially and then we rolled it out across the school…We're trying to kind of get them more involved in kind of looking at how do I make work better? How do I use teacher feedback? It's in its infancy…. The idea is that every student will take that feedback. Every department is doing it. It's built in to this what we're doing as part of our attainment goal for DEIS. We are looking at improving student attainment by involving the student more in their own work using feedback constructively. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

> Last year we had a huge thing and they tried to put in teachers giving back feedback instead of grades and they did that for like the first two weeks and they were like ''Ok, you're not even getting your grade back, just comments''

> and then they absolutely forgot about it halfway through the year and we had a huge meeting and there was a big sheet of paper and they asked ‘’What do you think students are doing correctly?’’ and they did this whole thing to see what students would prefer teachers to do and they absolutely scrapped it completely. They don’t do that anymore. At all. Even though we said that we do like the feedback. (Student 2, community school, DEIS).

Relative to the other schools, student voice discourses were undoubtedly stronger in the ETB schools. Senior leaders in the ETB school in an affluent area emphasised that student voice actively took place in classrooms with teachers consulting students on teaching and learning matters:

> In a lot of classes they will do summary work with their teachers. What works for them, what doesn’t work for them and all that. (Deputy principal 3, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> Teachers check in with students and they ask them, especially if they've tried new things or new approaches in class they actually ask them and say 'What did you think of this?' 'Have you enjoyed it?' (Deputy principal 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

However, despite these contentions, the four classroom teachers interviewed in this school did not quite share this view. When discussing student voice with classroom teachers there was little mention of student voice taking place at the level of the classroom or in relation to teaching and learning. Only in one instance did a classroom teacher mention student voice in academic terms. The following comment was made by a teacher who has 18 years of experience and who is a mentor to newly qualified teachers in the school:

> I suppose in the classroom, in terms of teaching and learning I would say students are very much involved in evaluating with their own learning. I would say they're very much involved and encouraged to be involved in their own learning...There’s this whole thing now of reflective practice both for students and for teachers where they’re looking for you to reflect, reflect, reflect on everything that you do and think of how you can improve what you’re doing. They’re also looking at collaboration which is the new buzzword, or groupwork, presentations, a lot more of that type of thing so I think students are more involved in their learning and evaluating their learning than they ever were in the past. (Classroom teacher 4, eighteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)

Similar to most classroom teachers in this ETB school, the one post-holder interviewed in this school also gave the impression that student voice was rather peripheral to him. When asked if students are consulted on teaching and learning matters in the school, this participant made an attempt at suggesting students were consulted in their classrooms:

> Not that I'm aware of. Maybe in an inspection…Maybe it's done informally, assessment for learning. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, ETB school, non-DEIS)

It was only in the ETB school with DEIS status that classroom-level consultations appeared to be common. The post-holder with responsibility for both special educational needs (SEN) and student voice explained that most teachers were supportive of student voice in the classroom:

> It varies, it definitely varies. I'd like to think, and maybe that's pessimistic almost, I'd like to think there's maybe a 60-40 split in terms of 60-40 in favour of the students having a certain amount of autonomy in the classes. I would hope. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN and student voice, ETB school, DEIS)

Staff members in this school spoke confidently about student voice being used in lessons throughout the school, but in doing so acknowledged that there was still room for improvement in some classrooms. For example:

> I personally am very conscious of it. I try to include them all the time. I was doing it today in every class. I think we're good but that doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement…Students would often say 'We'd like to do something different'. Teachers try to accommodate if at all possible but I would say there's room for improvement in that area… I definitely see some classes where it's more evident depending on the teachers' style. There's some that would maybe be more traditional but that would be very minimal, maybe one or two….there are other teachers who are very, very open to student voice on an everyday basis. (Post-holder with responsibility for wellbeing, ETB school, DEIS)

It was commonly said in this school by both staff and students that it was the more experienced staff members who were more reluctant to engage with student voice in their classrooms, while their more junior colleagues were more active in this area:

> Now I know that's not going to be 100% across the school here because we've got a certain generational experience. We've got a different sort of cohort with different age groups within the school here. (Principal, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> The younger teachers are brilliant at it because that's where they're coming from and it's about bringing that across the board to every classroom. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> It's only younger teachers seem more open to the idea of the students telling how we like to be taught whereas the older members of staff are more set in their ways and this is what has worked for them for so many years. (Student 3, ETB school, DEIS)

A teacher with one year of professional experience was also of this view:

> I'd say some teachers are like 'It's this way, we're doing it this way and that's it' whereas I'm kind of more into trying different things because I'm still trying to find my feet…It's them learning at the end of the day. Whatever they feel they're learning better they need to do. There's no point coming in and saying we're going to just take notes for 40 minutes which a lot of teachers do. That's not how everyone learns so it's good to try things. It's them learning so they should be the ones saying what works for them and that's the way it should be done. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Indicative of the value placed on student voice in this school and the intent to continue building upon the current culture is how the post-holder responsible for SEN and student voice raised the 'need to address student voice as part of our classroom schemes', while the post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning similarly spoke of encouraging teachers to engage with feedback provided by students:

> Personally as student voice coordinator I'd like to see it more explicitly done…We are going to undertake that but I hope it happens sooner rather than later because I think this is a huge area that we need to address. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN and student voice, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> I think some teachers will still just teach the way they like to teach, which may not necessarily work for the class and that's why in my post I'm asking and encouraging teachers to use different strategies because I know from the student voice that's what they're looking for but it's still not happening in every classroom. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

While classroom-level consultations were not common in participating voluntary secondary schools or community schools, there was a strong discourse of consultation in

the ETB schools. However, while this appeared to be genuine in the ETB school with DEIS status, it was somewhat more ambiguous in the ETB school in a more privileged setting. Of note, was the community school with DEIS status which was hoping to develop a culture of student voice in the school and striving to be more proactive with classroom-level consultations.

5.1.1.2 Management-level consultations: questionnaires issued to students

Students were being consulted in all three voluntary secondary schools via questionnaires, regardless of socio-economic context. Here, designated staff members would gather data on students' views on teaching and learning across the school:

> I would have been involved in gathering data on, Ms Kelly conducted a survey on differentiation in the classroom because we're trying to differentiate teaching and learning here so I would have been involved because I'm the IT (Information Technology) teacher, conducting the surveys in the computer room on teaching styles they liked. Ms Kelly would have a whole feedback from 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years all took part in a survey evaluating how they liked to learn, what methods they liked. (Classroom teacher 4, twenty-one years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> The last survey we had was on literacy, numeracy, active learning. We have a big drive on active learning. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> The surveys. I've tried a couple of different ones. I've done short ones. The recent ones I did had 30 questions in them. Like a range of different aspects within the classroom with the view to starting a new school improvement plan on active learning. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

Outside of the voluntary secondary schools, questionnaires appeared to be marginally used in both ETB schools and community schools, with very little mention of them taking place. In the community school with DEIS status, some staff members did refer to surveys being used:

> We surveyed them all. We regularly use surveys… They would have done learning matters, the homework piece and the formative feedback piece. (Principal, community school, DEIS).

> In a formative feedback initiative we were doing with the staff, the students were consulted, did a survey, and homework as well last year. (Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare, community school, DEIS)

Students in this school also referred to the school's use of questionnaires. It is worth pointing out, however, that they referred to the schools' formative feedback initiative in an uncomplimentary fashion. The following exchange between students produced multiple ensembles of laughter:

> They made an effort to find out what learner we are- practical learners and stuff. We did quizzes online (Student 1, community school, DEIS)
>
> They made a big effort to find out what learner you are, how you excel…They didn't do anything with that. Got the numbers and said ''Oh, look at this fancy graph'' (Student 5, community school, DEIS)
>
> But they didn't change the classrooms in order (Student 2, community school, DEIS)
>
> ''You know what type of learner you are but we're not going to help you'' (Student 1, community school, DEIS)

There were no mentions of questionnaires being used in the community school without DEIS status, and only one mention of questionnaires being used in both the ETB school with DEIS status and in the ETB school in more privileged circumstances. In the case of the latter, a previous questionnaire was mentioned, but only by one participant, a deputy principal, and it was noted that the questionnaire was part of an additional initiative:

> We recently surveyed students on aspects of their learning with regards to oral language development for a different project that we're doing. (Deputy principal 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

Another deputy principal in this school did mention, however, that questionnaires are in the pipeline:

> At the moment we're devising a questionnaire for parents on provision of learning support in Second Year. And were going to give a similar questionnaire to the students. we just want some feedback on their experiences of learning support. (Deputy principal 3, ETB school, non-DEIS)

This form of management-level consultation only appeared to be common in voluntary secondary schools, regardless of socio-economic context. In ETB schools and community schools, the use of questionnaires might be considered marginal, with one of the community schools, a community school with DEIS status, occupying the middle ground.

5.1.1.3 Management-level consultations: interviewing students

Some schools conducted interviews with students to explore how they felt about general school life, as well as matters relating to teaching and learning. In most cases, however, focus groups tended to be concerned with general matters. For example:

> We had some focus groups that we would pull together to look at particular issues. One big issue and it still is an issue and a problem is toilets… The focus groups would be where we'd have say a teacher leading a particular aspect of, say for example the IT teacher leading, getting everybody involved in how to use Office 365. She would have had a focus group of kids, it wouldn't have been a formal focus group, she'd bring a few kids together and she'd say to them ''Here's what we're planning to do and you guys would probably know a little bit more about computers than we do, can you see any pitfalls in this, can you see how, how many kids do you think have computers, do we really need computers, can people use their phones, how do you use their phone?'' And it's getting their input. That would be the focus groups that we'd have. We'd have them in other areas as well. Take for example, in terms of late coming was an issue here as well, particularly among the seniors and the teacher who was in charge of the whole area, punctuality, got a focus group together just to try and identify what were the issues that's causing late. I know sometimes people come in 'Aw, I slept it out' but that's not the issue, it's a symptom of something that's there. (Deputy principal, community school, DEIS)

Nonetheless, two schools did use focus groups to discuss teaching and learning. For example, in the voluntary secondary school without DEIS status, a head of year who also had a role in assisting the post-holder with responsibility for SSE explained that the school had 'set up an SSE team which meets regularly', as well as a student SSE team. The student SSE team was described as 'a general focus group or feedback group that will tell me about what's working well, what's not working well'(post-holder with responsibility for year group 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS). Similarly, in the ETB school without DEIS status, focus groups were used to discuss teaching and learning. While focus groups did take place in this ETB school, however, they were not common practice:

> Last year we met a group of students and we asked them their experiences of CBAs (Classroom-Based Assessments) and how they found it. (Deputy principal 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

However, the principal of this school did mention that each student in their final year of school is personally interviewed for feedback purposes:

> Every student will have had a meeting with me before they graduate. In sixth year. Every single one. And they get an evaluation of the school. They actually fill out their own personal evaluation form and they meet me, and they also evaluate themselves, and the contribution they've made, and I do ask them if there was one thing they'd change about the school. And I ask them about teaching and learning and I ask them about their engagement with it, and that's where we get our information. (Principal, ETB school, non-DEIS)

It is evident that interviews with students are not common, and particularly interviews in relation to classroom practice. Only two schools reported conducting interviews with students and these were both non-DEIS schools.

5.1.1.4 Management-level consultations: informal conversations with students

While interviews were not common in schools, informal conversations between management/post-holders and students were far more prevalent, and especially in ETB schools and community schools:

> Informally we would as well. Often, we chat to students to say "How are you getting on?" How are you finding this year? What works well for you in a class? What do you enjoy in a lesson?". Sometimes we cover lessons and that's a chance to ask them then again. (Deputy principal 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> The informal conversations I think are happening all the time. I think the informal conversations are just, you're walking down the corridor or you, you're taking, you get into a class, kids might be standing outside and you're standing outside talking to kids…getting them to articulate. (Deputy principal, community school, DEIS)

In contrast, there was only one mention of informal conversations taking place in the three voluntary secondary schools:

> I've done focus groups. I've had a few informal chats with small groups of students. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

While informal conversations were spoken of by senior leaders and post-holders in ETB schools and community schools as being commonplace, notably, staff members in the ETB and community schools with DEIS status exhibited very strong awareness of these conversations. Some comments from classroom teachers included:

> If they feel overwhelmed they'll say it to the year head as well and she'll try and get someone in to talk to them, or tell the teachers to maybe go a bit easier- or go harder! I use Ms Walsh as an example because they literally tell her EVERYTHING. They will, if they have an issue with anything, they'll tell her straight away because she's just that kind of woman. She'll check in with them on a regular basis. What kind of mood they're in mainly, and their mood is obviously affected by what's going on in classrooms. They would be very open with her. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

> Senior year heads, I just know from being in the school, often teach them as a class as well so they have lots of group interaction with them and then they have individual interactions with them as well. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

> Our pupils are very vocal. If they feel that something isn't right they will make it known. They are not holding back. They will go straight to their year head. (Classroom teacher 2, fourteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

While interviews were rare, informal conversations were very common, but only in the ETB schools and community schools. Striking, however, was the awareness the teachers in the ETB school and community school with DEIS status had of these conversations.

5.1.2 Management-level consultations as a tool and technique for monitoring teachers

Across the schools, staff seldomly spoke of student voice being used as a way of monitoring teachers, and when asked if student voice had the potential to serve a way of overseeing the work of teachers, most participants were of the view that this was not the case in their respective schools. Some, however, did not rule it out:

> Ugh, you hear it anecdotally, but I wouldn't say it's a practice that's used by anybody in this school at the moment on an ongoing basis…It would be more to monitor other students than to monitor staff, that you might use the older students to keep an eye on things: at lunchtime, in the corridor, those kind of things. Not necessarily with staff, no. Not that I've seen. Not that I can think of off the top of my head. Now that's not to say it hasn't happened. I haven't seen it recently…I could stand to be corrected on that…That might just be one-to-one conversations students have gone and had with the principal. It mightn't become common knowledge. (Classroom teacher 1, ten years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Others, however, felt that student voice could and was being used in this way but that it was somewhat subtle:

> I don't think staff are aware enough of it really. They don't necessarily know that it goes on until it's reported at a staff meeting perhaps. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN and student voice, ETB school, DEIS)

> I just don't think it's openly known or very evident, but it is going on underneath the surface all the time. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

While there were various elements of surveillance evident in various schools it was only in the ETB school with DEIS status that student voice was openly and explicitly confirmed as being used as a way of monitoring teachers. When asked if student voice 'can be used as a way of finding out what some teachers are like, what their practices are like', the principal affirmed that this was indeed the case in the school:

> Absolutely and I think it's important to do that. I suppose one of the other things when I came in here, the staff wouldn't have been used to the principal or the deputy principal walking in and out of their classes, you know? I walk into everyone's classes. Every room in this building, we have a right to go into EVERY single room. So obviously if I have a student coming to me saying 'Can't handle her, can't handle him, this happened in my class' blah, blah, blah, I will definitely take action on that. I will go back to the teacher, I will discuss with the teacher. It doesn't necessarily have to be discipline, it doesn't necessarily have to be something like that, it can be about teaching and learning...We might discuss that here with the student support team: 'How do we support that teacher?'…but it definitely has to come from the student. And then the attainment—we look at that, VERY closely…They're the considerations we make, they're the considerations that have to be made, and that's exactly what the students tell me. (Principal, ETB school, DEIS)

Some staff in this school were adamant that student voice was being used to monitor teachers:

> 100%, 100%. That definitely goes on and it goes on everywhere…definitely, I know 100% that kind of tab keeping, that goes on, definitely. I suppose it's a chance for them to say when they're frustrated or whatever, and they do often say as well. 'Well I like this and I like that' but there is a lot of keeping tabs on teachers, definitely. Special needs assistants as well. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Other staff members spoke of the role they played in fostering student voice in the school. Evident in this example is the tracking of practice:

> I myself tend to be one of the teachers who run a lot of initiatives in the school so I go around and I get input from the students. What would they like to see that week, what would make them happy, and I just said to them now that I'm going to start doing a check and connect with each class each week: go in, see how everything's going, have they any concerns, is there anything they would like the school to do, any activities they would like to organise or any type of issue at all. I'll do that every week. I said I can't promise anything but I will bring them then to the people who need to hear it. (Post-holder with responsibility for wellbeing, ETB school, DEIS)

While participants had mixed views on whether management-level consultations are used as a tool and technique for monitoring teachers, the rest of this section will now highlight how these consultations can be used, or are indeed used, to monitor the work of teachers.

5.1.2.1 The use of questionnaires

Questionnaires used to gain an understanding of students' views on teaching and learning at the whole-school level, while helpful and useful for school improvement, can serve as a way of monitoring teachers. For example, in the following explanation of a questionnaire that was administered to students it is evident that it has the potential to serve as a mechanism for surveillance:

> There was a survey done earlier in the year. The student council kind of helped facilitate it a little bit but it was done through management. Management came up with the survey, designed it and it was all about the quality of teaching,

> quality of management, happiness in the classroom. (Post-holder with responsibility for student council, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

Intentionally or unintentionally, questionnaires are likely to generate some comments about individual teachers unless they consist entirely of closed questions. By inviting feedback about teaching and learning matters and happiness in the classroom, it is likely that some teachers will be mentioned in students' responses. For example, one principal mentioned how open-ended questions mean students can sometimes hold forth:

> You'd be asking them 'Do you do this? How often do you do this? Why do you do this?' There's always another option or an opportunity to explain why. 'Do teachers' give you feedback?': ''No''. 'Do teachers' ever show you how to improve their work or do teachers' ever show you what a top grade looks like, or how to make it better?' Those kinds of questions, you know? Always trying open-ended and sometimes you get a rant. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

More pronounced, however, and rather telling are the remarks made by some of those responsible for SSE in their schools. In two schools, designated post-holders responsible for SSE alluded to using questionnaires to check up on teachers, framing teaching staff as being somewhat dishonest about their practice. As can be seen in the following comments, students were being surveyed with a view to obtaining information about teachers:

> In terms of consultation it would have been "What do you like about classes? How often is this happening? When teachers are checking homework what way are they doing it?". Just questions like that. Teachers might be a little bit more positive saying they're doing more than they're doing and students might be saying that we're doing less then we're doing, so I am relying on their opinion but sometimes certain things stick out and while it might be slightly exaggerated perhaps by students it gives you an indication of things that are happening or aren't happening in the class. I do think it's quite good for getting an insight into quality of teaching. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> We wanted to see are teachers actually implementing active learning methodologies, and who's best to tell you? The teachers will always say "Aw yeah, I am". (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

Indeed, in one of these schools some staff members and students were conscious and aware of how questionnaires being issued to students can serve as a tool for monitoring teachers. For example:

> Some second years were taken out and we did a survey online in the computer room and they asked us loads of questions, about 30 questions, about the school. Like how often would teachers do this and different things like that. (Student 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> I know that the SSE team did survey students last year about how teachers are performing and how they use this, that, and the other. (Classroom teacher 3, twelve years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

5.1.2.2 The use of interviews

Although interviews were not common in schools, there were still instances of these management-level consultations being used to monitor teachers. When discussing school life with students, human nature is bound to determine that teachers, positively and/or negatively, will feature as part of the conversation. In the words of the principal who personally interviews students:

> I would ask generally about how they are experiencing learning in the school, what's working for them, what's not working for them, and if THEY bring it up and say "I'm struggling in maths" I will explore it with them and you can't fudge the issue. And they will say it and that's empowering them. They have to put words on it too: "I don't like being in Mr Murphy's class because his way of teaching doesn't suit me". (Principal, ETB school, non-DEIS)

The very essence of these discussions mean that they can inadvertently serve as a mechanism for gathering information on teachers. Indeed, one classroom teacher in this principal's school did make reference to these meetings, and framed it in this very manner:

> I know what Mr O'Brien does—tracking meetings. Students are asked how they're getting on in the different subjects. I would not be surprised if that was also a method of tracking teachers. I would say that students are asked 'How are you getting on with Ms Power?': ''Well actually I'm getting on great or not getting on great''. I think that there's a certain level, and Mr O'Brien meets every student in every year group, we are being tracked unbeknown to

> ourselves. (Classroom teacher 4, eighteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS).

Elsewhere, while a head of year assisting the teacher responsible for SSE in the school did address the controversial issue of asking students about teachers by contending that this is not a feature of the newly formed student SSE team which he helped to establish, it is inevitable that teachers will come to be mentioned. Without even realising the contradiction, this participant inferred that students would be asked about teachers:

> I'm not there, and nor have any of my colleagues signed up to have their teaching assessed by students and aired out to me or their colleagues, so you always have to be very conscious of asking those kind of questions. I don't think it's too fair to ask them to be honest. I'll ask the students what's going well, what's not going well, but I won't be saying the quality of teaching in certain subjects or anything like that. I'll just say "Did that work? Your teacher that's supposed to be doing this, have they been doing it? What's working for you? Why is it working? What else could we do for you?". (Post-holder with responsibility for year group 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

5.1.2.3 The use of informal conversations

Informal conversations between students and either management or post-holders were a common form of management-level consultations in both ETB schools and community schools. Senior leaders in the ETB schools in particular placed an emphasis on how these schools were always open and welcoming to student voice, and how students felt comfortable approaching senior members of staff:

> The culture in the school. There is a culture in this school where they are open to talk, I don't know if you noticed that with the kids? It's very open and transparent and honest. The core values of the school, I'm sure Deputy principal 2 said it to you: ''Honesty, Respect, and Partnership'' (anonymised for ethical reasons)— they're the core values. A kid comes in here, they're the ones I focus on. (Principal, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> My door is always open, the deputy's door is always open. (Principal, ETB school, DEIS)

Senior managers in both the ETB schools and the community schools spoke of students coming to them for informal discussions, which often involved airing grievances:

> They would be very comfortable coming talking to us if they feel uncomfortable about something or if they have an idea about something, they have a suggestion on how things could be better. They do know the channels to go through. (Deputy principal 2, ETB School, Non-DEIS)

> I mean, they'll come forward and tell you now if they're not happy. (Principal, community school, non-DEIS)

> You have your little forays, little, not forays, posse's coming. Knock, knock, ''I want to talk about X teacher. They don't teach the way the other one did last year''. That kind of thing and wanting the structure that they're used to and wanting things to be the same and sometimes it not possible. I'll speak to that teacher afterwards and say ''Look, they're a bit concerned, how are you feeling? What do you think that might be? What could we do to allay their fears? How can you capture their imagination or how can we bring them on side?'' They have a right to know this is what the children are thinking so that they can work on it. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

While informal conversations appeared to be commonplace in ETB schools and community schools, it was in the ETB schools and community schools with DEIS status that staff showed the greatest level of awareness of them. As detailed above, students would often approach their year heads, but what was also apparent was that students in both the ETB school and community school with DEIS status could sometimes vocalise complaints about or comparisons of teachers in the presence of other teachers:

> Sometimes they think they can start giving out about other teachers in my room and ''She doesn't do this and she doesn't listen'' so I always say ''No, no. We're not going to talk about someone who isn't here because that's not fair''. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

> They let you know, they'd let you know like…especially if you take over a group: ''Oh, that's not how Ms O'Neill did it last year''. (Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare, community school, DEIS)

While informal conversations could be considered to serve as a way of monitoring teachers in the ETB schools and community schools, this was far more prevalent in the ETB school with DEIS status. This was the only school in which a principal confirmed that student voice could be used to monitor teachers. Within this, as the deputy principal explains, informal conversations were part of the monitoring:

> We do have openness in that we're often in and out of classrooms and all that but we're not there witnessing the teaching and learning in the classroom as such so you are to a certain extent relying on, not direct feedback, but the feeling coming back to you of whether the student is happy or not happy. There's no official system with them communicating with us but it does get back to you, you know? (Deputy principal, ETB school, DEIS)

Students also spoke of how some of their peers would approach the principal and deputy principal:

> The students would go up to them. If you wanted to go on a trip or be taught a certain way or need permission for something. (Student 3, ETB school, DEIS)

Some staff members were also aware of how common this line of communication was, and it was noted that it could produce pressure and stress for some teachers:

> Some students would have a bit of a direct path to the principal and make complaints very quickly. As students, as teenagers, they can be a bit hot-headed. If I wreck their head during an English class they're straight up to complain about me. For me, that's grand, it's taken within the context that it is so you can see, I think the principal is very good at noticing 'Ah, she's just letting off a bit of steam' and it isn't taking a case against the teacher…You would notice the students who have a direct path to the principal. You know that they're talking about you and your class. This isn't necessarily my experience- I mean I'm watching and I can see other teachers that are annoyed and then it definitely causes difficulty for some people. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

5.1.3 Students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools

5.1.3.1 The views of senior leaders

Principals and deputy principals across all schools were largely in agreement that students' judgements of high-quality teaching and low-quality teaching were dependable. A key contention among these participants was that students were well placed to recognise different standards of teaching. When asked if they felt if students were a good judge of the quality of teaching, most principals were adamant that they could be, and that they were indeed good judges of the quality of teaching in classrooms. For example, some comments from principals included:

> Yeah, absolutely. They're in the classroom, they know what they like, they know what they don't like. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)
>
> Totally. Absolutely. You were in school yourself; you remember! We knew who was helping us and who wasn't helping us much. Totally, they absolutely know. (Principal, community school, non-DEIS)
>
> They absolutely get it…They know when a teacher's prepared, they know when a teacher knows their stuff, they know when a teacher's consistent and on top of corrections. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

Notably, two principals responded with remarkably similar examples:

> Absolutely. Put it this way- I remember one time we had three teachers for one subject in 5th year and the students didn't realise that they were going to be allocated to a class so there was a list. 'You're in this class, you're in this class', whatever. And they saw all three rooms with the three different teachers and they basically ran for one room and when they couldn't get in there then they ran for another room and you know when they couldn't get in to that room they were disappointed that they had to go in there. So that was telling me that was the best teacher and that was the worst teacher…They know a good teacher. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)
>
> I would say definitely. How do we know that? How I know that? When you're placing options on their timetable, the girls will always go for the good teacher, ok? It's not necessarily the one they like, it's the one that they feel is productive. We have two (competing) subjects on our timetables, right? One is relatively new in the school and the other would have been the dominant subject. One teacher is really engaged with the students, uses every strategy she possibly can, she differentiates, she engages, she will reflect, she will go back in the next day and do something differently if it hasn't worked, she will say 'I made a mistake', she will do that…the other teacher is quite old-school, has a very set way of learning, and very set way of teaching- chalk and talk- would have a different rapport with the students, would never acknowledge mistakes, would never accept that her way is not the correct way, and what happens? The students won't choose that subject, they choose the other…The girls are using their choice, their actions to make that point; that they are happy with the teaching and learning in that subject and they are not happy with the teaching and learning going on in that subject and you see that clearly with the options. (Principal, ETB school, DEIS)

Also of note, however, was how both the principal and one of the deputy principals in one particular school pondered about what students actually constitute as being good teaching. While both the principal and this deputy principal were interviewed separately, their messages were remarkably similar and are perhaps indicative of how there can be a

backwash effect on teaching and learning in schools serving academically strong students in that teaching can become geared towards high-stakes examinations:

> I always ask this question: "What makes a good teacher?" and then explore stuff with them. "Well I know Ms Ryan gives good notes". WRONG ANSWER. ABSOLUTELY wrong answer. A teacher is not defined by good notes and then you get them to look at that. They want to be in Ms Ryan's class because she gives good notes, that's not a reason. (Principal, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> I've heard students here and they've made very insightful comments and they're very clued in and they're talking about teaching and learning and they don't even realise it. They're talking about things they enjoy learning and approaches they enjoy and make them think. But then again, at the same time, unfortunately we still have, it's a societal thing, we still have a grinds culture out there so there are still some students who will come to you and say "So and so doesn't give us notes". (Deputy principal 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

5.1.3.2 The views of teachers with posts of responsibility

The general consensus among teachers with posts of responsibility was that, as most senior leaders had also pointed out, students were very capable of judging teaching:

> I remember back to being in school myself. You knew who the best teachers were, it wasn't that everyone was the same. (Post-holder with responsibility for Student Council, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> We've all sat in front of a teacher and she's brutal. You don't need a maths degree to know that that teacher can't teach. (Post-holder with responsibility for wellbeing, ETB school, DEIS)

> I think they could be, I think they can. They know what they like, what they don't like. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> They can be, yeah, absolutely… They're the inspectors of the future… What is it like, they're in school 15,000 hours or something from when they started primary school? They are qualified to sort of give their feedback on teachers really. (Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare, community school, DEIS)

Notwithstanding, some reservations relating to the composition of students were expressed by a minority of this group of stakeholders. Some wondered if small samples of students representing larger cohorts of students should be consulted, while others had some concerns about students' maturity levels:

> I think when you ask the entire group they do tend to...You would get a slight negative attitude. Maybe perhaps in small groups, select groups it might be a little bit better. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> Some of them have a lot to say and some of their contributions are on the money and are very telling. It's just a matter of controlling that, organising it properly because they still are immature and young so it is a difficulty. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, community school, non-DEIS)

> In 6th year, after they've gone through it, 6th years definitely…maturity levels might not be in the right place. The 6th years are nearly adults and they actually make a much better decision. Not an emotional-led decision. (Post-holder with responsibility for school action plan, community school, DEIS)

Overall, however, teachers with posts of responsibility were of the view that students were good judges of the quality of teaching in classrooms:

> I'm going to say yes. No more than staff ourselves….I think students' feedback can be invaluable and can really shape our practice but I mean you have to design surveys with students in mind. I've answered your question in a really longwinded way, but yes. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN and student voice, ETB school, DEIS)

5.1.3.3 The views of classroom teachers

Among any group of stakeholders it was when classroom teachers were asked if they felt that students were good judges of the quality of teaching that answers varied the most. What was most noticeable here was the lack of consistency— there was a mixed reaction from classroom teachers of various levels of experience and in various types of schools. Some teachers were very positive and were confident that students were more than capable of recognising different standards of teaching:

> Absolutely. They're sitting there every day. They know what works for them, what teaching styles, what methods. (Classroom teacher 1, nineteen years of teaching experience, community school, non-DEIS)

> They've got nine teachers a day and they can see some style of teaching will work for them but they'll know who comes in, who's prepared, who gets the class going, who's got regular homework, who gives the test results back on time, so definitely I think they are a very good judge because they have their experience. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

> You know when a teacher is a doing the job right. You know if they're doing everything that they can to help you learn and they probably should be listened to a lot more. I think we've all had teachers that do the bare minimum, and you know it. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

On the other hand, however, most were sceptical about how students could depersonalise the process. In the words of one teacher,

> I think so... (but) the relationships you have with students affect how they think of you as a teacher. So. if you're a little bit hard on them they might say ''She's not a good teacher'' but they're missing the point. ''She's firm, I don't really like her'' but they put them down as bad teacher. (Classroom teacher 4, eighteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)

Notably, however, this was a far greater concern among teachers in the DEIS schools. For example, some comments from teachers in schools with DEIS status included the following:

> Some students would resent certain teachers. Would resent certain teachers just because of certain experiences they've had in the classroom with them or just negative experiences they've had with them in the past. (Classroom teacher 1, eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> I think a lot of the time with students who have a lot of behavioural problems, you don't get on with everyone so I don't know. (Classroom teacher 2, nine years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> I think they could be, in certain, but you would have to take the personal element out. (Classroom teacher 1, twenty-eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> It depends on the school and the cohort of students. So, if you have a large group of students and they're very focused on their academic journey it is probably going to go well generally for most teachers but if you have a cohort of students where there's a lot of challenges or you have to make lots of interventions to make stuff happen and they may not like it, they may not like you for part of the year, and that could influence their judgement. It depends. If things are going well, everything is fine, if you have to deal with situations where they're not happy with it, they might not like you there and then, they might like you tomorrow so it can be very much based on their moods, their behaviours, what they think. They're very much in the present. (Classroom teacher 2, twenty-five years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> Some definitely. Some, you have to be careful because kids tend to take whether they like the teacher over whether they like the subject. So if they have a particular problem with a teacher or if they've got a really good relationship with a teacher, that can often colour the opinion of the subject or the work or the level of what's going on in the classroom because they have a personal like or dislike of the teacher so it can be a personality thing rather than a subject thing. (Classroom teacher 1, ten years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

> Some of our most challenging classes can interpret a strict teacher as not being a good teacher. Some of our pupils who are most challenging, they think that that's not a good class because the teacher's being very strict with them and they…can come back and say 'Oh, I hate that class' because of whatever but it's not actually. It's actually that they're getting good teaching but they're seeing it as they're not allowed to mess. (Classroom teacher 2, fourteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

While concerns about teacher-student relations were plentiful, and especially in the DEIS schools, a secondary concern related to students' capacity to meaningfully comment on teaching, largely due to their age and their level of maturity. Some teachers felt that students did have the ability to judge teaching but more so students in older year groups:

> It's interesting because if you say to them, for the older mature student, they're actually very, very good at feedback. The young students tend to focus on stuff like ''You give too much homework'' or you might be a little bit strict in the classroom or stuff like that but the older students will say ''I like some of the activities we're doing'' or ''Your approach is very good but you might need to explain terms a little bit more''. (Classroom teacher 1, three years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> I think the senior cycle ones definitely can. They know well if something's working for them and if it's not. I've heard them say 'This is really good, I like that we're doing this, this is helpful' and they know well. I would trust what they say most of the time. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)
> It depends on the student. Most of them probably can be a good judge, maybe not in 1st year because they're not there long enough but certainly by the time the get to even 3rd year probably. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

However, some interviewees did not think that any students, junior nor senior, were mature enough to be able to comment on the quality of teaching. As one teacher explained:

> I would say no at junior level. I would say at junior level they might have an issue with the teacher who was strict or giving them homework so they might

> have a preference for the teacher who's a bit more relaxed. When they come to senior level, they realise that that's the teacher getting the most out of them. Because their brains are developing…I still think at 5th and 6th year you'll have people who'll know where the path being smoothened out for them and "If I go into this person's English class versus this person's English class this is where I can sit back and coast for two years" and that's their preference, that's the box they would tick if you asked them. (Classroom teacher 2, nine years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

Across all schools, only one classroom teacher outright rejected the idea of students being a reliable judge of teaching. When asked if students had the capacity to judge the quality of teaching in classrooms, this participant admitted 'My instinct is to say ''No'' and I know that's probably wrong' (Classroom teacher 2, nine years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A). However, this participant's belief was not based on an unfounded assumption, but on a reflection and a recollection of past experiences. Notably, while some senior leaders and post-holders had referred to being able to recognise various standards of teaching when they were in school themselves as students, this classroom teacher was the only staff member in any school to point out that these judgements could be dependent on context:

> I couldn't say when I was back in school that I could recognise (good teaching). I loved my history teacher and then I did history in college and I thought he was the bee's knees. I had no history copy, we read our book, sometimes we read the book, mostly he lectured and I thought he was brilliant and I done really well in his class but it's only after I did that I realised there was a whole group of people in that class left behind...I thought he was great and there was great quality teaching going on there but probably people like me covered up the fact that there was no copies, no exam papers because I was off doing the work on my own and getting good grades. (Classroom teacher 2, nine years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

5.1.3.4 The views of students

Notably, the students interviewed were not confident that students were capable of being a good judge of the quality of teaching in classrooms. Ultimately, they felt that students would not be able to genuinely engage in discussions about teaching. There were two key reasons why students felt incapable of this. In some schools, mainly but not limited to schools with DEIS status, students felt that teacher-student relations could cloud and blur students' judgments, and that students could therefore not be considered to be reliable sources:

> A lot of the time there's a lot of bias towards certain teachers. Not giving homework or just letting the class mess, there would be bias there…If a teacher was a really strict but they were good at teaching, overall, in general most students would say that teacher's bad. If a teacher is not really strict then a lot of students will say they're a really good teacher. (Student 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)
>
> If someone was given out to by a teacher, they'd kind of be saying negative things about them. (Student 2, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)
>
> I think some students if they don't like the subject or the particular teacher, they might have a more biased opinion. (Student 1, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> It's all personal preference Some students would be like ''I don't want to learn because I don't like this person''…The relationship with the teacher is a very big thing (Student 5, community school, DEIS)

Of course, these concerns did not relate to all students but to a significant number, which could then skew the data:

> It depends what students you pick because I'm sure there's a few students that would do it for just a laugh. (Student 2, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)
>
> I think overall they'd give accurate but if they're in a mood, you're in a bad mood then the whole school is going to be on your hate list. You'd have to catch us in the right time. (Student 3, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> Someone who tries in school, absolutely because they're actually trying to get good teacher, trying to learn but if it's someone who doesn't care about school you can't rely on them because they're just going to tell you everyone's bad because they make them do work. (Student 2, community school, DEIS)

A second reason for students not feeling capable of judging teaching was found, mainly in other schools. Students in the non-disadvantaged community school and ETB school were very aware of and conscious of teachers' professional status, and consequently did not see themselves as the experts in the classroom. As one classroom teacher above had pointed out, students might feel that they know what good teaching is, but this is according to their own experiences in their own context. As these students in the ETB school explain, students could potentially offer appropriate feedback on teacher performance, but it is likely to be skewed somewhat:

> I think we can to a certain extent but the style of teaching that suits me might not suit someone else so what I think is good teaching might not be. (Student 3, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> We can only compare it to what we have so if there is someone that you find is not a good teacher, they might not be as good as the teachers that you have had but that could be because they were really good teachers. (Student 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

The students in the community school were also conscious of how their preferred teaching styles can be determined by the pressures of external examinations taken at certain points of their school lives:

> There's a big gap between the old-school teachers and the new-school teachers. The teaching styles are different. Most older teachers, not older in a bad way, they use the book more. Younger ones tend to use more technology, I guess a more interesting way of teaching, but I prefer the old-school teachers really… When it's exam years like 3rd Year, 6th Year, you don't want to be playing Kahoot in class! You actually want to do revision stuff. (Student 3, community school, non-DEIS)

> Newer teachers seem to try way too hard to incorporate technology and try new things, which is fine. Like, there's times when it benefits but…(Student 1, community school, non-DEIS)

5.1.4 Management consulting students on teacher performance

5.1.4.1 The views of senior leaders

While senior leaders were of the view that students were very capable of judging the quality of teaching, those leading voluntary secondary schools did not feel that this was a viable practice in Irish schools. Two of these principals would not actually be in favour of asking students about teacher performance, and as it was felt that such a practice would not be well received by staff, these principals did not think that it would be appropriate for them to do so. Notably, it was common for them to reference teachers' professional status here:

> Everybody's a professional, so you have to go with that. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> The teachers here are professionals, and if you're building a house you get an architect….if we need medical advice we would get a doctor. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

While one secondary school principal was more in favour of consulting students on teacher performance, it was felt that doing so would be too disruptive to staff relations, and thus, as in the other voluntary secondary schools it was felt that this was a practice best left undone:

> A principal is like a politician, you know? I don't face re-election but nonetheless you can be foolish to do some things. This has always been a strong union school and If I was going to get feedback on individual teachers I think the teachers would be unhappy. Now would I be unhappy getting it? I wouldn't be. Would I encourage students to make complaints or parents to make complaints? Yes, I would. Have I followed up on complaints about teachers? Yes, I have, to the extent of bringing these complaints to the board of management. I've done that....but teachers would totally object to that. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

Principals of other school types were somewhat more proactive in this area, however. As mentioned earlier, students in the ETB schools and community schools often approached senior leaders, and the principal of the ETB school without DEIS status held meetings with students where they were asked about their experiences in the school, including with teaching and learning. However, as one principal explained, there is a need for performance reviews in Irish schools but the use of student voice might be a step too far:

> I suppose we're one of the few countries in the world where there is not a teacher performance review at the end of the year and I think that's a major lack in the system because I think that most teachers would like that. I do meet the teachers for an hour at the end of every year…it's still not the same because a lot of teachers would like that to be formalised and for an awful lot of teachers who are not performing the impact of non-performance is massive— not just for the cohort they teach but to their colleagues who are picking up the pieces constantly after them. I don't know how, I think the unions would massively resist any kind of performance review by students when we don't even have it for ourselves. It's the same for principals— we should all have reviews, reviews for how we perform because too many people are impacted by doing the job badly. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

While relative to voluntary secondary schools there was not the same sensitivity surrounding student voice in the community schools, senior leaders in community schools

were not enthusiastic about the possibility of consulting students on teacher performance in the future. For example, one deputy principal was not optimistic about such a prospect:

> Teachers would automatically go into defence mode, 'Jesus Christ'… I don't think I'll see it certainly in the next few years while I'm still here, I don't think so. (Deputy principal, community school, DEIS)

In another community school, the principal pointed out that students can already make formal complaints, provided that they were justified:

> If they come in they have to have this properly thought out. They have to know what the problem is, what the issue is, and they have to commit it to paper and be willing to follow it up. You can't just be coming in talking about people willy-nilly. It has to be concrete (Principal, community school, non-DEIS)

This principal was also of the view that the current informal procedure in the school that involved students and individual teachers working towards resolutions together in the first instance, without any interference from the principal, was sufficient:

> The first thing each time people are asked to do each time is go back to the teacher and try and have a dialogue with them and say what the problem is. It could be that they are concerned about poor teaching. That happens, but I would encourage them to really clarify what it is they have a problem with and try and resolve it with the teacher. (Principal, community school, non-DEIS)

Similarly, the principal of one of the ETB schools shared this view, and felt that it worked well:

> You go down and tell the teacher they have a concern and I always put it back to them (the student) going talking to the teacher. The first thing you need to do is go talk to the teacher and if you don't get a resolution there come back to me. And nine times out of ten it's resolved at that point. (Principal, ETB school, non-DEIS)
> .

It was only in one school, the ETB school with DEIS status, that a principal was both open to students being consulted on teacher performance and saw it as a genuine

possibility. This principal did recognise that student voice could be threatening for teachers, and particularly older members of staff:

> It depends on teacher. Their training, frame of mind and what they feel their professional position to be. And I know that sounds a little odd but it is because in here we're dealing with brand new students straight out of their PME (Professional Master of Education), all this training and all they're lacking is experience and practice. And then you have teachers who are near the end of their career and they're tired, they don't want to adapt anymore, they don't want to learn and let's be honest, twenty years ago they were exceptionally successful in what they were doing so they can't understand: ''I was successful twenty years ago, now I'm not. Why am I not?'' They are not adapting to the students in front of them, the social changes, the curriculum changes, they're not adapting to maybe the technology, they're not adapting to those sort of strategies in the classroom so they definitely feel threatened and why wouldn't they? That's where my job comes in, to support that teacher. (Principal, ETB school, DEIS)

Overall, however, this principal thought that consulting students was 'essential' to and 'part and parcel' of performance reviews. It was felt that performance reviews should be introduced first before student voice potentially becomes part of the process. This principal began discussing this issue by referring to 'RateMyTeachers', a public online platform 'where students evaluate, rate, and review teachers and courses' (www.ratemyteachers.com). This website attracted nationwide attention in Ireland when it was launched in the mid-2000s, including in the national media:

> RateMyTeacher. That was the first initial starting point for that. I went in and rated myself I have to admit! That was really my first experience of that and it was used as a bitchy session, it was used to beat the teacher with. If you didn't like them you put up nasty stuff about them. It is a big difficulty. We just had a whole-school evaluation and within the whole-school evaluation last year of course there's questionnaires for students and they're asking not about teacher performance but in a roundabout way they're asking about teacher performance and it is a positive but it can also be a negative because number one we'll definitely get the small cohort of girls that will use that, or boys, for vindictive purposes. Then you have the fear element for teachers. We're not at the stage yet in this school where we do a performance review yet and I don't think I would be comfortable with the performance review being done by students first and then the process coming that way but I do think it is essential. It's part and parcel of it. (Principal, ETB school, DEIS)

5.1.4.2 The views of teachers with posts of responsibility

There was some apprehension among a minority of post-holders. For example, two post-holders, both in different schools raised the issue of RateMyTeachers:

> Do you remember ratemyteacher.ie? Depending on the relationship…because you could have people struggling as well and then there's a vendetta. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN, community school, DEIS)

> The reason I would be very hesitant about students necessarily performing (sic) their teachers is, I'm going back to RateMyTeacher and RateMyTeacher vilified members of the teaching profession, it was absolutely atrocious. It really affected people's lives and it affected good teachers' lives and there were teachers who were very upset by RateMyTeacher so I suppose I'm drawing on that experience. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN and student voice, ETB school, DEIS)

Despite issues and resistance that could arise in schools, most post-holders tended to assert that they would have no particular issue with management asking students about how teachers are performing:

> I wouldn't have a problem with it. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> I don't have anything against it. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN, community school, DEIS)

> I wouldn't be against it. I would want to know where the information was going and how it was going to be used and who would be privy to that information. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

Some even expressed an interest in and were welcoming to the idea of student voice being used in relation to teacher performance:

> Like I actually think it's a good idea. I know it sounds like I don't but I think it's a good idea. (Post-holder with responsibility for school action plan, community school, DEIS)

Some felt that student voice should form part of an overdue performance appraisal in Irish schools:

> I would hope it would have a future because as I've said the concept I think is solid and I think it should form part of the conversation and it should be in there as a voice, as part of the jigsaw piece but you even have in Ireland the situation where senior management don't come into classes as much to give

> feedback and that probably needs to happen before, but that needs to be part of the picture as well. I think it's definitely a piece of the puzzle. (Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare, community school, DEIS)

> If you're in a business, you're brought in for a yearly review and you're given a score and you're told how to improve- that doesn't happen in teaching so I think it needs to happen somewhere along the line because, well we get inspections but what's the follow up on that? How am I going to change my teaching as a result of that? There's definitely room. I'm teaching 15 years, of course you can get stale, you'd get stale in anything after 15 years…I'd adapt and change but lots of people from haven't and they don't…I definitely think that could be used in a very productive way, but be very careful in how you do it. It shouldn't be a bashing of teachers. Performance appraisal should happen. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

Some event felt more relaxed because they had previously worked in England:

> That's part of why I wouldn't mind it because it was like every week those types of inspections or observations or whatever…I think it could be good, I think it's a good idea. (Post-holder with responsibility for school action plan, community school, DEIS)

Notably, it was common for teachers with posts of responsibility to juxtapose their relaxed feelings towards this potential practice with classroom teachers, who they contended would be more anxious:

> I wouldn't have a problem with it but I could see where there would be, but I wouldn't have a problem. (Home School Community Liaison Coordinator, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> When I went back in to do the survey again…I just got a sense that people had a bit of a negative sort of attitude about the idea of it...When I gave that feedback to the staff I do think some people were like "That's a little bit ridiculous, we give feedback all the time"....I think it could be spilt in that some people could go "That's really good" and you're going to get others that would be maybe feeling like "What would they know?". (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> I would be open…but I definitely think some teachers would be very worried. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, community school, non-DEIS)

> People don't like being criticised, being told that you're not a good teacher but I don't think, if that was to be the case it should be about measures for improvement as opposed to just criticising….but I'm open to criticism and some people aren't because it's difficult. It's very difficult to accept that. But

> they (students) are the experts in how they learn. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

With SSE on the rise in schools, combined with the increased role afforded to students, which resembles a great change for many, it was felt that teachers could be anxious about student voice and how it is used:

> There's an awful lot of teachers afraid of what's going on. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> People are, like some teachers don't want other teachers in the classroom with them, I don't know if they're going to like students rating their teacher performance. (Post-holder with responsibility for school action plan, community school, DEIS)

It was often the case that in highlighting the anxiety among teachers, post-holders singled out older members of staff:

> It's very much a personal thing. I think younger staff see it as part and parcel of the career now and older staff, it's down to their personality. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, community school, non-DEIS)

> I think definitely older staff would not be happy. I think younger staff, as I said teaching has changed, and I'm kind of in the middle, I'm not younger staff anymore, we'd kind of be more open to it and see the benefits of it and where I think older staff would feel threatened and undermined and again their professionalism is being questioned. (Post-holder with responsibility for wellbeing, ETB school, DEIS)

> There is that notion of 'Oh, shur they're running the school' and 'Being told how to do my job' as if I'm the expert and I know absolutely everything and I'm God and I need to be listened to. That would be a very old-school mentality and maybe some younger teachers…The classroom was traditionally your four walls, closed door, nobody knew what happened in your classroom. That has changed over the last number of years…That's a fear for people. If somebody is entering my classroom or if that student is going talking about my teaching are people going to question me? Am I going to be brought into the office? Am I going to be in trouble?...It's an insecurity in teachers because teaching was an isolated job. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

5.1.4.3 The views of classroom teachers

Classroom teachers were split on the idea of management asking students about teacher performance. Some teachers, predominantly but not entirely those towards the beginning

of their teaching careers, were receptive towards this idea and often linked it to improved teacher performance and the need for teachers to be held accountable:

> I think it can only make you a possibly better teacher. More aware of what you're actually doing and your style of teaching...Teachers don't know it all, we have to be looking to constantly improve. (Classroom teacher 2, six years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> Fine, fine, fine. I think it's paramount…I think we're all accountable. (Classroom teacher 1, three years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> I think it needs to happen. I think there are some teachers that definitely don't do their very best for the kids. At least if that was the case where kids could say how they feel about teaching by a particular teacher they might be encouraged to do better for the children. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

> I don't mind it. It's maintaining standards. (Classroom teacher 4, eighteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS).

In a similar way to teachers with posts of responsibility, some classroom teachers went as far as to contrast their relaxed positions with other teachers'. Significantly, the classroom teachers doing this were still in the earlier years of their careers:

> I think teachers would resent that. They would feel maybe that there would be a certain paranoia about being spied on…I don't think I'd have any problem with it. I don't think I'd have too much of an issue with it. No, I can't see any problem with it. (Classroom teacher 1, eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> I would feel nervous as well if I knew that students could judge me teaching them and complain about me if they didn't like it. I think all teachers would be a bit nervous about that but unless you're not confident in your ability, or you're too lazy, you wouldn't have a problem with it. And I think some teachers, obviously, are so they would have a problem with it. Teachers that would have a problem with that are teachers who aren't confident in their teaching or they're not willing to put in the work that they know they need to do.(Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

The age of staff members was again perceived as being a key factor:

> I think you'd have massive objection from some staff. I know this might be generalising a little bit but I think you'd have more buy-in from newer members or younger members of staff who are probably more used to

> evaluation, reflection, assessment, all that. People that have been teaching for years and they've never had anyone come near them and don't let anybody into their classroom—now that's gone a lot…that's a whole culture change in a school and in a society so that could take a whole cycle of staff for that to be embedded but I'd say there would be a lot of resistance at the beginning. (Classroom teacher 1, ten years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Some also referred to how their experiences abroad have prepared them for the use of student voice in this manner; a contrasting experience to many long-serving members of staff:

> I used to teach in Northern Ireland and we were observed, frequently. So, I was kind of used to that all the time. I think maybe some maybe more experienced teachers who aren't used to it. (Classroom teacher 2, fourteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

Overall, however, most classroom teachers were overwhelmingly against the idea of management asking students about teaching performance:

> It could turn into something you don't want it to turn into. (Classroom teacher 1, two years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> Oh, I don't think it would be positively received. (Classroom teacher 3, voluntary secondary school, twelve years of teaching experience, DEIS A)

> If there's a culture of fear that's going to come into it, if I thought people were going to be watching me all the time and complaining, I'd have to leave teaching….I hate to see the profession being slammed and being downgraded and I think that will creep in over the years BUT I hope that the unions and the teachers themselves will be strong enough to nip that in the bud. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Notably, while there were some teachers in six of the schools unopposed to the idea of management asking students about teachers, every single classroom teacher in a seventh school, a voluntary secondary school with DEIS status, was against this notion:

> I would not like to go down that road. (Classroom teacher 1, twenty-eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> I wouldn't say it would be welcomed. (Classroom teacher 2, twenty-five years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> You'd have to be careful in how you approach that with students. I think it would turn into more of a rating for teachers and that's not fair on professionals. (Classroom teacher 3, thirteen years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)
>
> I don't see that as productive, really. (Classroom teacher 4, twenty-one years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

One concern in particular, that this could potentially turn into a 'rating for teachers', something that is 'not fair on professionals' resonated strongly with teachers across the different schools. Several interviewees struggled with the idea of having their professional expertise scrutinised by someone outside of the profession. For example:

> I fully believe that student voice is very important but I also believe that there has to be balance around the weighting that's given to that because as an adult, and as a trained professional, not that you know everything but you might know a little bit more. (Classroom teacher 3, four years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)
>
> I just can't imagine a teacher judging a doctor on his professional ability because, perhaps, his manner. Really, it's ludicrous, I think, and I would be very pro student (**laughing). (Classroom teacher 1, twenty-eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

At the forefront of many teachers' minds was the idea of being rated by students. While RateMyTeachers did not make a good impression on teachers, it certainly left a lasting one:

> I wouldn't like to see a 'Rate My Teachers'. (Classroom teacher 1, twenty-eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)
>
> That thing 'Rate My Teachers' is your biggest fear of your life because they're young teenagers, they might just want to mess. (Classroom teacher 3, twelve years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)
>
> Do you remember that whole thing that came up at the time about 'Rate My Teachers'? A lot of the, now lots of nice comments or whatever, but you'll find that those type of things attract the wrong type of person to comment on it. This is their opportunity to slate you! This is their chance. (Classroom teacher 4, eighteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)

5.1.4.4 The views of students

Students in some schools, namely voluntary secondary schools, unanimously suggested that they should be consulted on teacher performance. This was an area they were very keen to be involved in. For example, when initially asked about what type of things students should be consulted on, their classroom experiences were at the forefront of their minds:

> How we're getting taught... Different ways of learning. Some teachers just go by the one, they don't really vary it much so some students get a lot learned while other students not so much and its not really their fault. (Student 1, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> Teaching in general. Your tutors can just go "Is there any teachers who could be doing something better?" (Student 2, voluntary secondary school, Non-DEIS)

While eager to be consulted, these groups of students also acknowledged that such a practice would not be received well by staff. There was unanimous agreement that teachers would be disgruntled if management were to ask students about teacher performance, and tongue-in-cheek comments were often made to illustrate this:

> They'd probably make more of an effort. (Student 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> The bad teachers would be snapping. (Student 5, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

In other schools, however, such as the ETB school and community schools, students did not feel that they should be because, as students, they were not the experts in the classroom. These students were content to continue placing their trust in teachers who they recognised as the qualified experts:

> Students being a judge of teaching. Like I would never imagine how it is to teach and how hard it is…how can students tell a teacher that's simply doing its job? (Student 3, community school, non-DEIS)

> You've spent years studying teaching and you're trying to implement it and people don't like it? (Student 4, community school, DEIS)

Providing their views to management on teacher performance did not appear to them as being productive:

> Realistically, I don't think it would be beneficial for the school. (Student 3, community school, non-DEIS)
>
> I don't feel it should be a student kind of input. A principal should be more involved in what they're doing, how they're teaching. I'm not saying that the principals aren't, I don't know what principals do to be fair…I don't think we should be the ones going through this stress…it shouldn't be on us…we shouldn't be the ones, it should be the principal who is the one, the head and the one who hires people. (Student 6, community school, DEIS)
>
> I think it can be awkward for the teachers if they thought that their way of teaching was the best approach for the students to turn and say 'Well, actually….'. (Student 1, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> You don't want to put yourself in a position where you've said something that is not what teachers or people on management, Board of Management, want to hear. (Student 2, ETB school, non-DEIS)

5.2 Quantitative data

Principals were mainly in agreement that students are consulted on teaching and learning issues in their schools, and there was no significant difference between schools based on their socio-economic context, as shown by the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 4). As Table 5 shows, those leading ETB schools were more positive in this area. For example, over 73% of principals of ETB schools either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Students are consulted on teaching and learning issues in this school (e.g. how students like to be taught and how they feel they learn best is taken into account)'. However, a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the difference between schools was not significant (see Table 5). Thus, overall principals of Irish post-primary schools are of the view that students are consulted on teaching and learning issues in their schools. It should be noted, however, that just over one quarter of these principals 'somewhat agree' with the statement, indicating that consultations are not common practice across the board.

Socio-Economic Context		*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
DEIS Status	*Count*	0	2	1	1	5	15	2
	%	0.0%	7.7%	3.8%	3.8%	19.2%	57.7%	7.5%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	1	2	3	7	19	20	14
	%	1.5%	3.0%	4.5%	19.2%	28.8%	30.3%	21.2%

U(1) = 837.500, Z = -.185, p = .853

Table 4: The extent to which Students are consulted on teaching and learning issues based on DEIS Status

School Type		*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	1	1	3	6	12	14	11
	%	2.1%	2.1%	6.3%	12.5%	25.0%	29.2%	22.9%
ETB school	*Count*	0	1	0	1	5	15	4
	%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	3.8%	19.2%	57.7%	15.4%
Community /comprehensive school	*Count*	0	1	1	1	8	6	1
	%	0.0%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	44.4%	33.3%	5.6%

P = 0.166, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 3.587$

Table 5: The extent to which Students are consulted on teaching and learning issues based on school type

5.2.1 How students are consulted on classroom practice

5.2.1.1 Classroom-level consultations: consulting students in lessons

The qualitative data suggests that classroom-level consultations are not common practice in most schools. Of the case study schools, it was only in ETB schools where there was a strong discourse of student voice at the classroom level, and in practice, it was only the ETB school with DEIS status where a genuine culture of classroom-level consultations was evident. The majority of principals surveyed, however, were of the view that, to some extent, teachers in their schools ask students for feedback both on their teaching and on how the students are learning (see Table 6). In neither case was there a significant difference between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools (see Table 7 and Table 8). In terms of school patronage, and in line with the qualitative data, Table 9 and Table 10 show that ETB school principals were more likely to either agree or agree strongly that teachers both ask students for feedback on their teaching and on students' learning. However, Table 9 and Table 10 also show that the difference between school types was

not actually significant. This is notable when the qualitative data is factored in because most teachers in the voluntary secondary schools and community schools exhibited little knowledge or awareness of students being consulted in classrooms during the qualitative case studies. Even in one of the ETB schools, despite strong contentions from the principal and deputy principals that classroom-level consultations were embedded in the school culture, little evidence of this was found in the interviews with teaching staff.

		Strongly Disagree	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
Teachers ask students for feedback on their teaching	Count	1	2	4	2	31	38	16
	%	1.1%	2.1%	4.3%	2.1%	33.0%	40.4%	17.0%
Teachers ask students for feedback on how they are learning	Count	0	2	2	4	25	41	20
	%	0.0%	2.1%	2.1%	4.3%	26.6%	43.6%	21.3%

Table 6: The extent to which teachers ask students for feedback on teaching and learning issues

Socio-Economic Context		***Strongly Disagree***	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
DEIS Status	*Count*	1	0	2	1	9	10	3
	%	3.8%	0.0%	7.7%	3.8%	34.6%	38.5%	11.5%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	0	1	2	1	21	28	13
	%	0.0%	1.5%	3.0%	1.5%	31.8%	42.4%	19.7%

U(1) = 706.500, Z = -1.393, p = .164

Table 7: The extent to which teachers ask students for feedback on their teaching based on DEIS Status

Socio-Economic Context		*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
DEIS Status	*Count*	0	2	0	1	5	15	3
	%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	3.8%	19.2%	57.7%	11.5%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	0	0	1	3	19	26	17
	%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	4.5%	28.8%	39.4%	25.8%

U(1) = 782.500, Z = -.697, p = .486

Table 8: The extent to which teachers ask students for feedback on how they are learning based on DEIS Status

School Type		*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	0	2	2	1	13	18	12
	%	0.0%	4.2%	4.2%	2.1%	27.1%	37.5%	25.0%
ETB school	*Count*	0	0	1	1	6	14	4
	%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	3.8%	23.1%	53.8%	15.4%
Community /comprehensive school	*Count*	1	0	0	0	11	6	0
	%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	61.1%	33.3%	0.0%

P = 0.053, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 5.889$

Table 9: The extent to which teachers ask students for feedback on their teaching based on school type

School Type		*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	0	0	1	3	13	16	15
	%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	6.3%	27.1%	33.3%	31.3%
ETB school	*Count*	0	0	0	1	4	16	5
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	15.4%	61.5%	19.2%
Community /comprehensive school	*Count*	0	0	1	0	7	9	0
	%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	38.9%	50.0%	0.0%

P = 0.053, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 5.890$

Table 10: The extent to which teachers ask students for feedback on how they are learning based on school type

5.2.1.2 Management-level consultations

There were many instances of various forms of management-level consultations in the qualitative data and this is reflected in the quantitative data. Table 11 shows that principals are positively disposed towards consulting students on teaching and learning matters, with 84% of respondents to some extent agreeing with the statement 'I actively consult students on teaching and learning issues'. Table 11 also shows that principals feel comfortable and are enthusiastic about doing this. Within this, just under 50% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that they ask students for feedback on teachers' teaching, with a further 14% somewhat agreeing. Table 11 shows, however, that while teaching is often discussed during management-level consultations, it is more common for conversations to include discussions on students' learning.

		Strongly Disagree	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
I feel comfortable consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Count	1	1	2	3	12	38	37
	%	1.1%	1.1%	2.1%	3.2%	12.8%	40.4%	39.4%
I am enthusiastic about consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Count	0	0	0	5	20	31	38
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	21.3%	33.0%	40.4%
I actively consult students on teaching and learning issues	Count	0	3	2	10	24	31	24
	%	0.0%	3.2%	2.1%	10.6%	25.5%	33.0%	25.5%
Management (principal and/or leadership team) ask students for feedback on teachers' teaching	Count	1	14	6	14	13	29	16
	%	1.1%	15.1%	6.5%	15.1%	14.0%	31.2%	17.2%
Management (principal and/or leadership team) ask students for feedback on how they are learning	Count	1	3	2	3	24	36	25
	%	1.1%	3.2%	2.1%	3.2%	25.5%	38.3%	26.6%

Table 11: The extent to which principals are positively disposed towards consulting students on teaching and learning matters

5.2.1.2.1 Management-level consultations: questionnaires issued to students

Questionnaires were a popular tool among principals for management-level consultations with almost 60% 'often' using them and 25% 'sometimes' using them. A Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no significant difference between schools serving disadvantaged areas and schools serving more affluent areas (see Table 12). While the qualitative data found that questionnaires were more commonly used in voluntary secondary schools, a Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant difference between schools according to their patronage, although a slightly higher percentage of principals in secondary schools, relative to ETB schools and community/comprehensive schools, did in fact indicate that questionnaires were used 'often' and 'always' in their schools (see Table 13). Thus, it appears that questionnaires are being used more in voluntary secondary schools than other types of school but the difference between the different schools is not technically significant.

Socio-Economic Context		***Never***	***Rarely***	***Sometimes***	***Often***	***Always***
DEIS Status	*Count*	1	1	9	13	2
	%	3.8%	3.8%	34.6%	50.0%	7.7%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	1	4	14	42	5
	%	1.5%	6.1%	21.2%	63.6%	7.6%

U(1) = 758.500, Z = -.983, p = .326

Table 12: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use surveys/questionnaires to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on DEIS status

School Type		***Never***	***Rarely***	***Sometimes***	***Often***	***Always***
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	1	4	8	30	5
	%	2.1%	8.3%	16.7%	62.5%	10.4%
ETB school	*Count*	1	0	7	18	0
	%	3.8%	0.0%	26.9%	69.2%	0.0%
Community/comprehensive school	*Count*	0	1	8	7	2
	%	0.0%	5.6%	44.4%	38.9%	11.1%

P = 0.448, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 1.605$

Table 13: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use surveys/questionnaires to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on school type

5.2.1.2.2 Management-level consultations: interviewing students

Individual interviews were mainly used 'sometimes' as 40% of principals indicated. However, more than one quarter of principals use these interviews 'often'. Coinciding with the qualitative data, individual interviews were not a common practice. The qualitative data found that only one of the case study schools was using individual interviews and subsequently, in the quantitative data there was no significant difference between schools based on either socio-economic context (see Table 14) or their patronage (see Table 15).

Socio-Economic Context		***Never***	***Rarely***	***Sometimes***	***Often***	***Always***
DEIS Status	*Count*	2	5	10	7	2
	%	7.7%	19.2%	38.5%	26.9%	7.7%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	2	15	27	17	5
	%	3.0%	22.7%	40.9%	25.8%	7.6%

U(1) = 849.000, Z = -.082, p = .935

Table 14: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use individual interviews to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on DEIS status

School Type		***Never***	***Rarely***	***Sometimes***	***Often***	***Always***
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	2	12	16	14	4
	%	4.2%	25.0%	33.3%	29.2%	8.3%
ETB school	*Count*	1	6	10	6	3
	%	3.8%	23.1%	38.5%	23.1%	11.5%
Community/comprehensive school	*Count*	1	4	10	3	0
	%	5.6%	22.2%	55.6%	16.7%	0.0%

P = 0.552, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 1.187$

Table 15: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use individual interviews to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on school type

The quantitative data show that like individual interviews, focus group interviews were not common either. This again dovetails with the qualitative data which found that only two case study schools were employing focus groups. While the two case study schools using focus groups happened to both be non-DEIS schools, there was no significant difference between schools based on their socio-economic context in the quantitative data (see Table 16). Similarly, there was no significant difference found between secondary schools, ETB schools, and community/comprehensive schools (see Table 17).

Socio-Economic Context		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
DEIS Status	*Count*	2	4	10	9	1
	%	7.7%	15.4%	38.5%	34.6%	3.8%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	3	8	34	18	3
	%	4.5%	12.1%	51.5%	27.3%	4.5%

U(1) = 854.500, Z = -.033, p = .974

Table 16: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use focus group interviews to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on DEIS status

School Type		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	3	7	21	14	3
	%	6.3%	14.6%	43.8%	29.2%	6.3%
ETB school	*Count*	1	3	11	10	1
	%	3.8%	11.5%	42.3%	38.5%	3.8%
Community/comprehensive school	*Count*	1	3	11	3	0
	%	5.6%	16.7%	61.1%	16.7%	0.0%

P = 0.307, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 2.359$

Table 17: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use focus group interviews to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on school type

5.2.1.2.3 Management-level consultations: informal conversations with students

Informal conversations were most commonly used by principals to get feedback from students on classroom practice. 57.6% of principals 'often' did this, while 27.2% 'always' used this strategy. Similar scores were given by principals of DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools, and a Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was no significant difference between schools in disadvantaged settings and schools in more privileged areas (see Table 18). Similarly, a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was no significant difference between the three school types (see Table 19). Notably, however, while the qualitative data suggest that informal conversations were commonplace in community/comprehensive schools and ETB schools, with very little evidence of these conversations taking place in secondary schools, Table 19 shows that principals view them as common in all schools. 93.8% of secondary school principals surveyed use informal conversations 'often' or 'always' to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice (see Table 19), which is rather remarkable considering there was only one mention of informal conversations in the three secondary schools visited as part of the case study research.

Socio-Economic Context		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
DEIS Status	*Count*	1	0	2	15	8
	%	3.8%	0.0%	7.7%	57.7%	30.8%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	0	1	10	38	17
	%	0.0%	1.5%	15.2%	57.6%	25.8%

U(1) = 794.000, Z = -.626, p = .531

Table 18: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use informal conversations to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on DEIS status

School Type		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	0	0	3	31	14
	%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	64.6%	29.2%
ETB school	*Count*	1	0	5	15	5
	%	3.8%	0.0%	19.2%	57.7%	19.2%
Community/comprehensive school	*Count*	0	1	4	8	5
	%	0.0%	5.6%	22.2%	44.4%	27.8%

P = 0.181, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 3.421$

Table 19: The extent to which principals (or the management team) use informal conversations to get feedback from students regarding classroom practice based on school type

5.2.2 Management-level consultations as a tool and technique for monitoring teachers

The quantitative data clearly show that it is not common for principals to 'ask students about individual teachers when discussing their lessons'. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that no significant difference exists between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools (see Table 20) and a Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant difference between the three school types (see Table 21).

Socio-Economic Context		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
DEIS Status	*Count*	10	8	7	1	0
	%	38.5%	30.8%	26.9%	3.8%	0.0%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	24	19	15	7	1
	%	36.4%	28.8%	22.7%	10.6%	1.5%

U(1) = 803.000, Z = -.500, p = .617

Table 20: The extent to which principals ask students about individual teachers when discussing their lessons based on DEIS status

School Type		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	21	13	8	5	1
	%	43.8%	27.1%	16.7%	10.4%	2.1%
ETB school	*Count*	10	10	5	1	0
	%	38.5%	38.5%	19.2%	3.8%	0.0%
Community/comprehensive school	*Count*	4	4	8	2	0
	%	22.2%	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%	0.0%

P = 0.143, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 3.890$

Table 21: The extent to which principals ask students about individual teachers when discussing their lessons based on school type

It was, however, much more common for students to 'name individual teachers when discussing their lessons', which might suggest that there is not necessarily a need for principals to ask students the names of teachers outright. Again, there was no significant difference between DEIS schools and Non-DEIS schools, as shown by a Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 22), and no significant difference between school types, as shown by a Kruskal-Wallis test (see Table 23).

Socio-Economic Context		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
DEIS Status	*Count*	1	6	8	7	4
	%	3.8%	23.1%	30.8%	26.9%	15.4%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	3	7	26	19	9
	%	4.7%	10.9%	40.6%	29.7%	14.1%

U(1) = 781.000, Z = -.474, p = .635

Table 22: The extent to which students name individual teachers when discussing their lessons based on DEIS status

School Type		*Never*	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	3	6	19	13	7
	%	6.3%	12.5%	39.6%	27.1%	14.6%
ETB school	*Count*	1	3	8	9	3
	%	4.2%	12.5%	33.3%	37.5%	12.5%
Community/comprehensive school	*Count*	0	4	7	4	3
	%	0.0%	22.2%	38.9%	22.2%	16.7%

P = 0.880, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 0.256$

Table 23: The extent to which students name individual teachers when discussing their lessons based on school type

In terms of the purpose of consulting students on classroom practice, principals' responses in the survey indicated a strong commitment to student-centred discourses. As Table 24 shows, principals almost unanimously agreed that consultations on classroom practice ensured that student voice was heard, improved the student experience, and made schools more democratic and inclusive. However, there was also, albeit to a lesser extent, an emphasis placed on holding school staff accountable and monitoring their performances. Over 45% of principals consider student voice as a way of holding teachers accountable for their performances and over 40% of principals see it as a way of monitoring teachers (see Table 24). Thus, while student voice can serve multiple purposes in schools, surveillance is certainly one of them.

		Strongly Disagree	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
Ensuring student voice is heard in the school	Count	0	0	1	2	9	45	37
	%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	2.1%	9.6%	47.9%	39.4%
Improving students' experience of school	Count	0	0	0	0	4	35	54
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	37.6%	58.1%
Making the school a more democratic and inclusive institution	Count	0	0	1	3	9	39	42
	%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	3.2%	9.6%	41.5%	44.7%
Improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school	Count	0	0	0	0	4	37	53
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	39.4%	56.4%
Holding teachers accountable for their performances	Count	4	10	6	14	17	22	20
	%	4.3%	10.8%	6.5%	15.1%	18.3%	23.7%	21.5%
Monitoring teacher performance	Count	7	7	6	18	18	26	12
	%	7.4%	7.4%	6.4%	19.1%	19.1%	27.7%	12.8%

Table 24: The extent to which student voice is used for various purposes

5.2.3 Students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools

Dovetailing with the qualitative data, the principals surveyed were confident in the capacity of students to judge the quality of teaching in schools. Table 25 shows that principals largely agree that students give fair and trustworthy feedback on teachers' classroom practice and that they are a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools, as

well as being a reliable source of information on the matter. While the principals mainly agreed as opposed to agreeing strongly with this in the quantitative data, and approximately one third of principals only agreed 'somewhat', it links with the responses of principals in the interviews in that the consensus was that students are a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools.

		Strongly Disagree	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
Students give fair feedback on teachers' classroom practice	Count	0	2	5	5	32	37	12
	%	0.0%	2.2%	5.4%	5.4%	34.4%	39.8%	12.9%
I trust students' feedback on teachers' classroom practice	Count	0	1	2	6	35	39	11
	%	0.0%	1.1%	2.1%	6.4%	37.2%	41.5%	11.7%
Students are a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools	Count	0	0	1	6	32	41	14
	%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	6.4%	34.0%	43.6%	14.9%
Students are a reliable source of information when evaluating the quality of teaching in schools	Count	0	0	0	6	32	39	16
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%	34.4%	41.9%	17.2%

Table 25: The extent to which students are good judges of the quality of teaching in schools

5.2.4 Management consulting students on teacher performance

Despite the positivity shown towards management-level consultations, and their confidence in students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools, principals were considerably split on the appropriateness of principals or senior leaders asking students about the performances of individual teachers. When asked, over 50% of principals disagreed to some extent with this statement, indicating that they do not think that this is an appropriate practice, while over 40% of principals were in some form of agreement with the statement, indicating that they do think this is an appropriate practice. While the principals surveyed were split, a Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was no significant difference between schools according to their socio-economic context (see Table 26) and a Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that there was no significant difference

between secondary schools, ETB schools, and community comprehensive schools (see Table 27). Indeed, the qualitative data also suggests that most principals do not see it as appropriate to ask students about teacher performance.

Socio-Economic Context		***Strongly Disagree***	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
DEIS Status	*Count*	4	3	2	5	7	4	1
	%	15.4%	11.5%	7.7%	19.2%	26.9%	15.4%	3.8%
Non-DEIS Status	*Count*	13	14	11	2	11	10	5
	%	19.7%	21.2%	16.7%	3.0%	16.7%	15.2%	7.6%

U(1) = 764.000, Z = -.826, p = .409

Table 26: The extent to which IT is appropriate for principals (or the school management/leadership team) to ask students about the performance of individual teachers based on DEIS Status

School Type		***Strongly Disagree***	***Disagree***	***Somewhat Disagree***	***Neither Agree nor Disagree***	***Somewhat Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
Voluntary secondary school	*Count*	11	8	11	1	9	5	3
	%	22.9%	16.7%	22.9%	2.1%	18.8%	10.4%	6.3%
ETB school	*Count*	6	6	1	3	6	3	1
	%	23.1%	23.1%	3.8%	11.5%	23.1%	11.5%	3.8%
Community /comprehensive school	*Count*	1	3	2	2	2	6	2
	%	5.6%	16.7%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	11.1%

P = 0.76, df = 2, $\chi 2 = 5.156$

Table 27: The extent to which it is appropriate for principals (or the school management/leadership team) to ask students about the performance of individual teachers based on school type

Now that the data have been laid out here, in the next chapter the data will be broadly summarised and then teased out as part of a critical discussion.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter offers an analysis of the findings and some suggestions for future directions. It begins by broadly summarising the data presented in the previous chapter. As part of this broady summary, the focus is on the following key aspects of this research: the main forms of consultation, classroom-level and management level consultations; student voice as surveillance; stakeholders' views on students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools; and how stakeholders feel about the prospect of students being consulted on teacher performance. Following on from this broad summary, the proceeding section then pays close attention to context and teases out how consultations may or may not differ between different types of post-primary schools and post-primary schools in different socio-economic settings, what students in different schools focus on in management-level consultations, and how these consultations are experienced by different members of school staff. I then flag a number of additional concerns emanating from the data that we should also be mindful of, before discussing how, despite some reservations, I am optimistic about the future of student voice in Ireland, and a possible way forward for student voice is suggested; that is, through the method known as lesson study. The penultimate section of this chapter puts forward suggestions for future research, policy and practice to consider, while the final section comprises my final words.

6.1 Broad summary of the data

6.1.1 In what ways are students consulted on classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools?

While student voice in Irish post-primary schools continues to focus on non-academic issues, as found in the DEAPS project (see Brown et al., 2020b), this research has shown that student voice is being used, to some extent, in relation to classroom practice in Irish schools. Both the qualitative and quantitative data presented here provide clear evidence that students in Irish post-primary schools are now being consulted on teaching and learning matters through what I have coined 'classroom-level consultations' and 'management-level consultations'. Classroom-level consultations involve teachers liaising with their students on classroom practice and the examples given during interviews included teachers seeking feedback on their teaching from students, students evaluating and assessing their own learning, and students choosing the texts to be studied. On the other hand, management-level consultations involve senior leaders gathering data from students on classroom practice, or having this data collected for them, with

classroom teachers removed from the process. The main forms of management-level consultations found both in the qualitative and the quantitative data were questionnaires issued to students and management having informal conversations with students, while to a lesser extent interviews were also taking place, either with individual students or with focus groups.

6.1.2 Is student voice being used to monitor teachers in Irish post-primary schools?

Student voice has strong potential to serve as a mechanism for monitoring teacher performance and as part of the management-level consultations taking place in Irish post-primary schools surveillance is also taking place, although in subtle ways. Even though only one principal in the case study schools explicitly confirmed that student voice is used as a way of surveilling teachers, discussing classroom practice with students can, even unintentionally, be a form of surveillance. As Page (2015, p. 1042) contends, 'it would be difficult for anyone not to be influenced by pupil reports of poor teaching'. Indeed, as one teacher in the United States tells Finefter-Rosenbluh (2020, p.11), such reports should be investigated:

> You know what? You ask kids what they think of their teachers…if negative things come up, then that's a starting point to have a discussion for an administrator…it should be a red flag to delve more deeply into what is going on with that teacher.

Notable, however, was the lack of awareness most teachers in the case study schools had of student voice as surveillance. Most participants interviewed had no awareness of this, and did not believe this to be the case in their schools, but there were some that felt that student voice could and was being used in this way but that it was somewhat subtle:

> I don't think staff are aware enough of it really. They don't necessarily know that it goes on until it's reported at a staff meeting perhaps. (Post-holder with responsibility for SEN and student voice, ETB school, DEIS)

> I just don't think it's openly known or very evident, but it is going on underneath the surface all the time. (Classroom teacher 3, sixteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)

For the most part, student voice was not often openly mentioned by participants in interviews in this way and when asked if student voice had the potential to serve as a way of monitoring the work of teachers most participants were of the view that this was not the case in their respective schools. Thus, this might be considered to be a subtle and

almost hidden form of surveillance in Irish post-primary schools, but it is a practice that is certainly happening. As the quantitative data show, while principals almost unanimously agreed that consultations on classroom practice enabled student voice to be heard, improved the student experience, and made schools more democratic and inclusive places, many principals also reported that student voice served purposes such as monitoring teachers and holding them accountable for their performances. Even unintentionally, questionnaires and informal conversations can serve as ways of monitoring teachers' work, as the comments from this principal interviewed show:

> You'd be asking them 'Do you do this? How often do you do this? Why do you do this?' There's always another option or an opportunity to explain why. 'Do teachers' give you feedback?': ''No''. 'Do teachers' ever show you how to improve their work or do teachers' ever show you what a top grade looks like, or how to make it better?' Those kinds of questions, you know? Always trying open-ended and sometimes you get a rant. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

> You have your little forays, little, not forays, posse's coming. Knock, knock, ''I want to talk about X teacher. They don't teach the way the other one did last year''. That kind of thing and wanting the structure that they're used to and wanting things to be the same and sometimes it not possible. I'll speak to that teacher afterwards and say ''Look, they're a bit concerned, how are you feeling? What do you think that might be? What could we do to allay their fears? How can you capture their imagination or how can we bring them on side?'' They have a right to know this is what the children are thinking so that they can work on it. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

6.1.3 Do staff and students in Irish post-primary schools feel that students can be a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools?

Considering that student voice is now coming to play a role in teaching and learning in Irish post-primary schools, it is perhaps unsurprising that for many, students are considered to be good judges of the quality of teaching in schools. Both the principals interviewed and the principals surveyed were largely of the view that students are good judges of the quality of teaching in schools. Notably, the qualitative data show that post-holders, despite some reservations, are largely of the same view as principals. For example:

> I remember back to being in school myself. You knew who the best teachers were, it wasn't that everyone was the same. (Post-holder with responsibility for Student Council, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> They can be, yeah, absolutely… They're the inspectors of the future… What is it like, they're in school 15,000 hours or something from when they started primary school? They are qualified to sort of give their feedback on teachers really. (Post-holder with responsibility for student welfare, community school, DEIS)

Both classroom teachers and students, however, were less positive in their feelings on this. In the case of the teachers, while some were very positive and were confident that students were more than capable of recognising different standards of teaching, most were actually sceptical about how students could depersonalise the process, as well as being concerned about the age and maturity of the students. Some comments included:

> I think so... (but) the relationships you have with students affect how they think of you as a teacher. So. if you're a little bit hard on them they might say ''She's not a good teacher'' but they're missing the point. ''She's firm, I don't really like her'' but they put them down as bad teacher. (Classroom teacher 4, eighteen years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> I think the senior cycle ones definitely can. They know well if something's working for them and if it's not. I've heard them say 'This is really good, I like that we're doing this, this is helpful' and they know well. I would trust what they say most of the time. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Most remarkable, perhaps, were the views of students. The students interviewed were not confident that students were capable of being a good judge of the quality of teaching. Some felt that teacher-student relations could cloud and blur students' judgments:

> A lot of the time there's a lot of bias towards certain teachers. Not giving homework or just letting the class mess, there would be bias there…If a teacher was a really strict but they were good at teaching, overall, in general most students would say that teacher's bad. If a teacher is not really strict then a lot of students will say they're a really good teacher. (Student 1, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

> It's all personal preference Some students would be like ''I don't want to learn because I don't like this person''…The relationship with the teacher is a very big thing (Student 5, community school, DEIS)

Other students felt that students did not actually have the required expertise to genuinely judge teaching:

> I think we can to a certain extent but the style of teaching that suits me might not suit someone else so what I think is good teaching might not be. (Student 3, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> We can only compare it to what we have so if there is someone that you find is not a good teacher, they might not be as good as the teachers that you have had but that could be because they were really good teachers. (Student 1, ETB school, non-DEIS)

6.1.4 How do staff and students in Irish post-primary schools feel about the prospect of management consulting students on teacher performance?

Asking students about the performances of individual teachers was a controversial topic in interviews. While one of the principals interviewed, the only one to confirm using student voice as a way of monitoring teachers, was both open to students being consulted on teacher performance and saw it as a genuine possibility in the future, all other principals interviewed did not see this as a realistic possibility. To draw on the words of a deputy principal,

> Teachers would automatically go into defence mode, 'Jesus Christ'… I don't think I'll see it certainly in the next few years while I'm still here, I don't think so. (Deputy principal, community school, DEIS)

There was a feeling among some of the principals that doing so is not appropriate, especially considering that teachers are professionals:

> Everybody's a professional, so you have to go with that. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> The teachers here are professionals, and if you're building a house you get an architect….if we need medical advice we would get a doctor. (Principal, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

While the qualitative data rather strongly suggest that student voice is an unlikely prospect as part of performance reviews in Irish schools, the quantitative data is considerably more balanced. Approximately half of the principals surveyed indicated that they would not consider this to be appropriate but two fifths of principals would actually consider it to be appropriate.

In interviews with post-holders, there were some minor reservations, but on the whole these participants contended that they would have no issue with having their teaching evaluated by students, and many went as far as to welcome such a practice and to contrast their relaxed position with what they felt would be the anxious reaction of classroom teachers. For example:

> I wouldn't have a problem with it but I could see where there would be, but I wouldn't have a problem. (Home School Community Liaison Coordinator, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

> I would be open…but I definitely think some teachers would be very worried. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, community school, non-DEIS)

In terms of classroom teachers, despite some enthusiasm, those interviewed were largely against the idea of students being asked about teacher performance. Some examples of comments from teachers include the following:

> It could turn into something you don't want it to turn into. (Classroom teacher 1, two years of teaching experience, ETB school, non-DEIS)

> Oh, I don't think it would be positively received. (Classroom teacher 3, voluntary secondary school, twelve years of teaching experience, DEIS A)

> I would not like to go down that road. (Classroom teacher 1, twenty-eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

When it came to students, those interviewed were largely split into two groups; those in favour of being consulted and those constructing their teachers as the qualified experts. For some, being consulted on classroom practice was important to them:

> How we're getting taught... Different ways of learning. Some teachers just go by the one, they don't really vary it much so some students get a lot learned while other students not so much and its not really their fault. (Student 1, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> Teaching in general. Your tutors can just go "Is there any teachers who could be doing something better?" (Student 2, voluntary secondary school, Non-DEIS)

Others, however, were of the view that their teachers were the experts in the classroom and that students should not be judging their performances:

> Students being a judge of teaching. Like I would never imagine how it is to teach and how hard it is…how can students tell a teacher that's simply doing its job? (Student 3, community school, non-DEIS)

> You've spent years studying teaching and you're trying to implement it and people don't like it? (Student 4, community school, DEIS)

6.2 Contextualising the data

6.2.1 Are students consulted differently in different types of Irish post-primary schools?

The qualitative data suggest that classroom-level consultations are more common in ETB schools than in community schools and especially in voluntary secondary schools. In the case of voluntary secondary schools and community schools, and especially the former, there was very little evidence of classroom-level consultations taking place while the discourse of consultation was very strong in the ETB schools. Similarly, based on the qualitative data, different types of management-level consultations are taking place in different types of schools. The interviewing of students does not appear to be common in schools, whereas surveys are a more regular occurrence but more so in voluntary secondary schools. In other schools, surveys were used infrequently. To draw again on the qualitative data, this participant in an ETB school explained that a questionnaire is being developed:

> At the moment we're devising a questionnaire for parents on provision of learning support in Second Year. And were going to give a similar questionnaire to the students. we just want some feedback on their experiences of learning support. (Deputy principal 3, ETB school, non-DEIS)

Informal conversations were reported as being a common form of management-level consultation, both in the qualitative and the quantitative data but remarkably, there was very little mention of these conversations taking place in voluntary secondary schools during interviews, but for one exception:

> I've done focus groups. I've had a few informal chats with small groups of students. (Post-holder with responsibility for SSE, voluntary secondary school, non-DEIS)

Across the board, the differences between different types of schools and schools in different socio-economic settings were not actually significant according to the quantitative data. It is worth stressing, however, that despite strong contentions from the principal and deputy principals in one of the ETB case study schools that classroom-level consultations were embedded in the school culture, little evidence of this was found in the interviews with teaching staff. Thus, one way of interpreting the discrepancy between the qualitative and the quantitative data therefore is that principals are overestimating the rate of classroom-level consultations taking place in their schools. Previous studies have also encountered similar issues. For example, the DEAPS project which included five of the seven case study schools from this doctoral research and a separate questionnaire administered to principals relating to student voice and parent voice in SSE found that the quantitative data gathered from principals was more positive than the qualitative data gathered from other stakeholders via interviews:

> The quantitative data, in particular, show that school principals in Ireland support the involvement of parents and students in SSE, which is an important step in developing an ethos of stakeholder voice in schools. However, the qualitative data show that cultures and climates of, and commitments to, stakeholder voice have not been wholly created in Irish post-primary schools (Brown et al., 2020b, p.529)

Furthermore, a recent study on the participation of students in ETB schools by McCormack et al. (2019b) also shows how student voice can be rated more positively in questionnaires than during interviews. McCormack et al. (2019b) found that the quantitative responses received from students tended to show a strong level of student participation in aspects of school life, but that the focus groups conducted afterwards pointed to their more passive involvement. In relation to classroom practice, the qualitative data depicted a different landscape to the quantitative data:

> While students tended to agree that they are encouraged to be actively involved in lessons (n = 599, 87.1%), focus group participants indicated that this depended on the teacher, with some adopting student-centred approaches while others were more didactic in their teaching styles (McCormack et al., 2019b, p.8).

All things considered, I am inclined to lean towards the messages portrayed in the qualitative data, which dovetails with the conceptual framework as it is based on not only my previous experiences but academic literature. At this point, it is worth returning to my closing words in Chapter 3 when presenting the conceptual framework as a heuristic

device. It is stressed that the framework is not 'definitive'. Thus, the lack of any significant differences in the quantitative data is not in itself too significant as the framework does not claim significant differences:

> This framework should be considered as a heuristic device (Leshem and Trafford, 2007; Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2013) that will stimulate interest and encourage investigation and questioning (Braun et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2012). It is important to stress, however, that the heuristic device does not offer definitive accounts of 'how things are' but ways of thinking about 'how things may be' (Ball, 2017, p.7). It raises questions and sets out to provoke more critical thinking regarding how student voice plays out in Irish post-primary schools vis-à-vis classroom practice and serves as a starting point for research.

Moreover, as outlined in Chapter 4, this doctoral research is a 'partially mixed sequential dominant status design' (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009) where the emphasis is on its qualitative dimension. In being a qualitative-oriented and dominated study, more participants were actually interviewed than surveyed, and while the quantitative data is limited to the views of one group of stakeholders, the qualitative data hears from all key stakeholder groups: principals, deputy principals, post-holders, classroom teachers, and students. For these reasons, the data emanating from the qualitative part of the study carry the most weight and cannot be overlooked or discarded. Thus, my own contention, is that although the differences between schools might not technically be significant, ETB schools are arguably more advanced than both voluntary secondary schools and community/comprehensive schools in terms of classroom-level consultations, and different forms of management-level consultations are taking place in different schools.

6.2.2 Are students consulted differently in Irish post-primary schools in different socio-economic contexts?

In terms of the socio-economic context of schools, classroom-level consultations appeared to be so minimal in the voluntary secondary schools and community schools that it is not possible to decipher any difference between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools in terms of their current practices. However, the community school with DEIS status stands out because, relative to the non-DEIS community school, school management expressed a strong interest in improving the current levels of consultations and some post-holders and classroom teachers appeared to be somewhat more engaged

with student voice discourses after previously working in other jurisdictions. In the words of the deputy principal,

> In terms of in the classroom then, in terms of how the lessons are taught or the particular style, that's something again we want to work on because myself and the principal are a bit anxious about moving…With new teachers coming in, they might bring in some methodologies that haven't been used in this school before, and with the principal coming from her previous school, she wanted to bring these methodologies in but bring them in at a slow, easy pace to get people used to it and to get the students involved as well…Our staff are quite a young staff, we lost quite a lot of teachers over the years and I always find that the younger staff coming in, I think there's a lot of, they come in with a lot of ideas in terms of student voice because some of them would have been involved in councils in their own schools so they're already familiar with it. Some of them would have worked abroad, particularly in England, so they're coming in with a sense of bringing something that they've experienced….The old staff; there's only a few left. I don't think there's any resistance to it. There might not be an active engagement from some members but there certainly wouldn't be an active resistance to it. (Deputy principal, community school, DEIS)

It is when the ETB schools are taken into account that the greatest difference between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools can be seen. While senior leaders in both ETB schools put a strong emphasis on classroom-level consultations being embedded in the culture of the schools, the interviews with classroom teachers in the ETB school without DEIS status revealed that this was not necessarily the case. Even the post-holder interviewed in this school gave the impression that student voice was marginal in this sense by making an attempt at suggesting that students were consulted in their classrooms:

> Not that I'm aware of. Maybe in an inspection…Maybe it's done informally, assessment for learning. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, ETB school, non-DEIS)

Based on the interviews in the ETB school with DEIS status, however, classroom-level consultations were clearly evident and there appeared to be a genuine culture of consultation, but one that still had room for improvement and was being built upon. One post-holder explained the situation:

> I think some teachers will still just teach the way they like to teach, which may not necessarily work for the class and that's why in my post I'm asking and encouraging teachers to use different strategies because I know from the student voice that's what they're looking for but it's still not happening in every classroom. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

In this regard, in terms of the qualitative data, both the community school and the ETB school serving disadvantaged areas appear to be more enthusiastic about and proactive in the area of classroom-level consultations.

6.2.3 What students focus on in management-level consultations

The volume of concerns expressed about the capacity of students to judge the quality of teaching by classroom teachers in DEIS schools during the collection of qualitative data were striking. In these schools many teachers were sceptical about how students could depersonalise the process and they were very conscious of how the behavioural difficulties they often face could influence students' perceptions of them. Here is a selection of comments from teachers in DEIS schools:

> Some students would resent certain teachers. Would resent certain teachers just because of certain experiences they've had in the classroom with them or just negative experiences they've had with them in the past. (Classroom teacher 1, eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> I think a lot of the time with students who have a lot of behavioural problems, you don't get on with everyone so I don't know. (Classroom teacher 2, nine years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS A)

> I think they could be, in certain, but you would have to take the personal element out. (Classroom teacher 1, twenty-eight years of teaching experience, voluntary secondary school, DEIS B)

Indeed, in interviews with students in several schools, mainly but not limited to schools with DEIS status, the students themselves acknowledged that teacher-student relations can cloud and blur students' judgments. On the other hand, in most of the non-DEIS schools, students were very aware of and conscious of teachers' professional status, and how their preferred teaching styles can be determined by the pressures of external examinations such as the Leaving Certificate. It would appear that these students prioritise teaching over relationships when they discuss classroom practice:

> There's a big gap between the old-school teachers and the new-school teachers. The teaching styles are different. Most older teachers, not older in a bad way, they use the book more. Younger ones tend to use more technology, I guess a more interesting way of teaching, but I prefer the old-school teachers really… When it's exam years like 3rd Year, 6th Year, you don't want to be playing Kahoot in class! You actually want to do revision stuff. (Student 3, community school, non-DEIS)

> Newer teachers seem to try way too hard to incorporate technology and try new things, which is fine. Like, there's times when it benefits but…(Student 1, community school, non-DEIS)

6.2.4 How management-level consultations are experienced by staff

As mentioned above, the staff members interviewed had very little awareness of student voice's potential to act as a form of surveillance. While some staff members were conscious of how student voice can be used as a form of surveillance in their schools, overall, most participants did not see this as being the case in their respective schools. Regardless of how cognisant staff members are of any surveillance via student voice, it is clear from both the qualitative and the quantitative data that management-level consultations can be and are being used as a way of monitoring teachers and a case can still be made for how it is experienced as top-down surveillance by some staff, while others are more receptive. While most staff members did not appear privy to this surveillance, many staff members were in full agreement that students were good judges of the quality of teaching in schools and not only were they open to the idea of students being asked about teacher performance, but many would welcome such a practice. Whereas classroom teachers had mixed reactions here, post-holders were almost unanimous in their positivity and at times even contrasted their relaxed positions with other staff members who they felt would be more anxious. Older teachers were often directly referred to as being less enthusiastic and more worried about student voice than younger teachers:

> It's very much a personal thing. I think younger staff see it as part and parcel of the career now and older staff, it's down to their personality. (Post-holder with responsibility for year group, community school, non-DEIS)

> I think definitely older staff would not be happy. I think younger staff, as I said teaching has changed, and I'm kind of in the middle, I'm not younger staff anymore, we'd kind of be more open to it and see the benefits of it and where I think older staff would feel threatened and undermined and again their professionalism is being questioned. (Post-holder with responsibility for wellbeing, ETB school, DEIS)

> I think you'd have massive objection from some staff. I know this might be generalising a little bit but I think you'd have more buy-in from newer members or younger members of staff who are probably more used to evaluation, reflection, assessment, all that. People that have been teaching for years and they've never had anyone come near them and don't let anybody into their classroom—now that's gone a lot…that's a whole culture change in a school and in a society so that could take a whole cycle of staff for that to be

> embedded but I'd say there would be a lot of resistance at the beginning. (Classroom teacher 1, ten years of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

Indeed, based on the interview data, there were strong views that post-holders and teachers towards the beginning of their careers are generally open to and welcoming of management-level consultations, while more experienced classroom teachers are considerably more reluctant and restless.

6.3 Additional surfacing concerns

In this section I highlight and discuss several concerns which have not passively emerged from the data (Clarke and Braun, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2019a; Braun et al., 2019b) as if they were already sitting there waiting to be plucked out. Instead, these concerns are the products of my interpretative work. While these concerns are not the main focus of this research, and did not making the final cut as themes to be presented in the findings, they are perhaps worthy of further attention, and are flagged here as as topics that should merit further exploration.

6.3.1 Students are being used as data sources

Management-level consultations are clearly being used in Irish post-primary schools and while few will disagree that more student voice is needed in Irish schools, we should perhaps be concerned about how this voice is being used. As with the work of Charteris and Smardon (2019a), the data presented here highlight how voice work is used for a range of purposes, including quality control and sources of information. The quantitative and qualitative data show that management-level consultations are being used in the form of questionnaires, interviews and informal conversations but the nature and manner of these exchanges very often position students as informants. For example, post-holders surveying students to check up on teaching practices, a principal interviewing students before they graduate, and open-door policies operated by senior leaders is indicative of a one-way line of communication that is used for surveillance. While it must be acknowledged that management-level consultations are often undertaken in the interests of inclusion and with intentions of empowerment (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a), discourses that position students as consumers, data sources and resources for quality control can miss the emancipatory potential of voice (Charteris and Smardon, 2019b). To return to the 'Models and levels of student voice' outlined in Chapter 2, it appears that

that the management-level consultations in Irish post-primary schools are positioning students as data sources (Fielding, 2012) for information and for quality control (Lodge, 2005; Charteris and Smardon, 2019a) in that students are passive providers of information. In Hart's (1992) terms, it is a form of 'manipulation' whereby students appear to be consulted but not reported back to or updated on how their information was used.

6.3.2 Some teachers are stigmatised

Particularly in schools where student voice is quite active such as the ETB school with DEIS status, some teachers can be stigmatised if they are not deemed to be on board with student voice. Ball et al. (2012, p.41) explain that teachers are often thought of as 'good' people doing 'good' work, which can go some way in encouraging them to carry on working and innovating, even in stressful circumstances:

> A school that can cultivate and draw on this kind of emotional capital will have a different capacity for policy enactment than an institution which does not inspire loyalty or commitment in its staff.

Those advocating and endorsing student voice might praise their colleagues' use of student voice practices and principles while positioning those seen as reluctant as slowing down the 'progress' of a school's strategic planning goals (Black and Mayes, 2020). In many of today's schools, certain narratives of leadership, performance and responsiveness to consumer needs are seductive and position alternative ideas and practices as oppositional to effectively meeting children's 'needs' (Hughes et al., 2020, p.277). We see this in the ETB school with DEIS status where many teachers have bought into the school's culture of and vision for student voice and position their less enthusiastic colleagues as other. In the words of one teacher,

> It's them (students) learning at the end of the day. Whatever they feel they're learning better they need to do. There's no point coming in and saying we're going to just take notes for 40 minutes which a lot of teachers do. That's not how everyone learns so it's good to try things. It's them learning so they should be the ones saying what works for them and that's the way it should be done. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS

Perryman et al. (2017, p.750) remind us that policies can be enacted at ground level and can come to be perceived as belonging to everyone and part of 'obvious good practice'. Such policies can be 'common sense' (Sullivan et al., 20200) and founded on uncritical assumptions about 'doing what works' (Wilkins et al., 2020) but to veer away from the expected and accepted norms can see outliers classed as 'eccentric, if not outrageous' (Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b, 2006). Similarly, to be seen as not performing runs the risk of being categorised as one of the 'bad apples' (Page, 2016, 2017a, 2017b) and labelled as 'irresponsible' or 'unprofessional' (Ball, 2016). As Moore and Clarke (2016) explain, the promotion of professionalism as both a good and essential characteristic of the 'effective teacher' in the 'effective school' also involves either the explicit or implicit promotion of unprofessionalism. In schools where students' input and participation are high on the agenda, those 'unconvinced or unwilling to adopt student voice remain outside this normative practice and the forms of belonging it implies' (Black and Mayes, 2020, p.1073).

The greatest stigma, however, relates to concerns about evaluation. There were many post-holders and classroom teachers who were not only relaxed but evening welcoming towards evaluation and accountability, a trend that is now being apparent in countries around the world such as England, (Perryman et al., 2017), America (Holloway, 2019), and Australia (Sullivan et al., 2020). Not only were these participants favourably disposed towards having their own work scrutinised and judged, but they often openly contrasted their attitudes with the anxieties of others when discussing the prospect of students being consulted on teacher performance. Here, there is a perception that those willing to submit to surveillance and audit are 'good', while those resisting are 'bad' (Holloway, 2019) and 'inherently untrustworthy' (Page, 2018). In the ETB school with DEIS status there was a view that a fear of evaluation was indicative of complacency (Holloway and Brass, 2018). Some strong comments were made by school staff:

> I can hear voices in my head of people saying 'Oh, that's it, I'm finished in this career' or 'The students are taking over', anarchy and this and that. They wouldn't quite see the benefits of it because people are reluctant to change, people don't like change… I know some staff would have done it themselves. They give out a survey at the end of the year to do their own performance appraisal with their students and look at the feedback. That does happen but not for everybody obviously. And maybe it's the people who need it don't do it. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

> I would feel nervous as well if I knew that students could judge me teaching them and complain about me if they didn't like it. I think all teachers would be a bit nervous about that but unless you're not confident in your ability, or you're too lazy, you wouldn't have a problem with it. And I think some teachers, obviously, are so they would have a problem with it. Teachers that would have a problem with that are teachers who aren't confident in their teaching or they're not willing to put in the work that they know they need to do. (Classroom teacher 2, one year of teaching experience, ETB school, DEIS)

While it is concerning to see how some teachers are demonised, the danger is that such a culture could create 'conditions where teachers who do not comply with the evaluation mentality are framed as lazy, scared, or defiant' (Holloway, 2019, p.186). Indeed, student voice can bring creativity and satisfaction to some teachers while bringing 'blame, shame and anxiety' to others (Black and Mayes, 2020, p.1073).

6.3.3 There is 'a hierarchical generational division' between young teachers and old teachers

Connected to the stigmatisation of some teachers is the tendency to dichotomise young teachers and old teachers. As Black and Mayes (2020, p.1073) recently found, staff members

> not fully adopting the principles and practices of student voice are suggested to be resistant or uncomfortable. There is an insinuation that these are older teachers who are not only out of touch with newer pedagogies, but whose identities as teachers are 'set' or rigid by comparison with the 'open' or innovative identities of those teachers who champion student voice within the school.

The age of teachers appears to be a factor, or at least is perceived by others to be a factor, in terms of teachers facilitating classroom-level consultations and their reactions towards management-level consultations. A common trend in schools, and especially in schools where student voice is most active, is the positioning of young teachers as being enthusiastic about student voice and older teachers as being far less so:

> The younger teachers are brilliant at it because that's where they're coming from and it's about bringing that across the board to every classroom. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

> It's only younger teachers seem more open to the idea of the students telling how we like to be taught whereas the older members of staff are more set in

> their ways and this is what has worked for them for so many years. (Student 3, ETB school, DEIS)
>
> The last ten years there's been a huge amount of retirements. We have a lot of kind of younger staff coming through so I think absolutely, they are receptive and they are open. (Principal, community school, DEIS)

This is not simply a case of younger teachers pointing to the different outlooks of 'the older generation of teachers' (Wilkins, 2011, p.401) but collective staff bodies, including senior school leaders and managers, dichotomising young teachers and their more experienced colleagues. While the DEAPS project found that many staff members were indeed of the view that demography and experience played a decisive role in determining how open or reluctant teachers were to involving parents and students in SSE (see Brown et al., 2020b), the data presented here point to how this perception extends to student voice in relation to classroom practice. While there might be room for some teachers to improve in terms of their engagement with and attitudes towards student voice of most concern is what Spicksley (2021, p.18) refers to as 'a hierarchical generational division' between young teachers and experienced teachers. For example, in these accounts there is the construction of both the 'brilliant, active young teacher' and the 'passive and deficient' experienced teacher (Spicksley, 2021, p.18).

6.3.4 The voices of students in disadvantaged contexts are positioned differently to the voices of more privileged students

Finally, while there were no deficit perspectives per se, and the remarks made were not meant to insult, in DEIS schools it was noticeable that some references along the lines of 'students like ours' were sometimes made (Braun et al., 2011). For example, comments from staff featured in the presentation of data in Chapter 5 include the following:

> Our pupils are very vocal. If they feel that something isn't right they will make it known. They are not holding back. They will go straight to their year head. (Classroom teacher 2, fourteen years of teaching experience, community school, DEIS)
>
> As students, as teenagers, they can be a bit hot-headed. (Post-holder with responsibility for teaching and learning, ETB school, DEIS)

I am conscious of how students from non-privileged backgrounds are separated and segregated from their more affluent peers both within and between schools (see Skerritt, 2020b) and how schools serving disadvantaged areas in particular can be demonised and pathologised (Reay, 2004, 2007, 2013). In Ireland, there can be a 'ghettoisation' of DEIS schools (McCoy et al., 2012) and thus, I am concerned that students in these schools can be further disadvantaged based on their non-middle-classness, that they can be victims of structural violence via oppression and discrimination through stereotyping (Charteris and Smardon, 2019a), and that their views do not hold the same weight as students from more privileged backgrounds. As Pearce and Woods (2019, p.121) explain,

> a particular challenge in voice work is to include students whose voices may be difficult to hear because they are in a minority; they are difficult to understand; they are silenced in and out of school, by choice or by hegemonic or coercive forces; or even because the voices are aggressive, rude or obnoxious (Cook-Sather, 2014; MacBeath, 2006; Taylor & Robinson, 2009).

6.4 Remaining optimistic

After analysing and presenting the data, and taking into account the additional concerns outlined in the preceeding section, a stance that resonates with me to a certain degree is the feeling of McCormack et al. (2019b, p.12) when in concluding their student voice research in ETB schools they disclose that:

> Our optimistic and pessimistic sides battled over the presentation of these results. In the end the optimist won.

Students in Irish post-primary schools are now being consulted in classrooms, although to very different extents, with some schools being far more advanced in this area than others. Even within the schools where this consultation is not widespread, some teachers are using and valuing student voice. In any case, the use of student voice in classrooms, or classroom-level consultations, is a welcome development in Irish schools and represents a significant cultural change and one that must continue to be built upon. In this regard, there is reason to be optimistic. On the other hand, however, while some senior leaders might disagree with this point, it is difficult to extend this optimism to the management-level consultations that are occurring in Irish post-primary schools as these consultations tend to exclude teachers, use students as data sources, and act as subtle forms of surveillance. There is potential for classroom-level consultations to present both

teachers and students with opportunities and possibilities in their classrooms, once it does not represent 'a move away from a model of professional autonomy where teachers make their own decisions about teaching quality' (Bragg, 2007a, p.351), lead to a construction of teachers as technicians (Mayes et al., 2021), or produce 'surface compliance' (Taylor and Robinson, 2009). Management-level consultations are likely to be detrimental to genuine and meaningful classroom-level consultations if they drive particular school-wide discourses and derive data from students to monitor teachers.

Any use of student voice as part of performance reviews would likely compound these issues. While some teachers might value this, others are likely to struggle to not only provide the most suitable and inspirational practices to their students but struggle with their professional growth and confidence (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2020). Student voice practices can be emotionally challenging for some teachers (Black and Mayes, 2020) and negative feedback from students could be of particular harm to those with weaker senses of teaching efficacy (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2020). At present, there are no indications in Ireland that performance reviews that would make use of student voice are to be expected, but what is in the pipeline via the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill are stronger complaints procedures. While the next cycle of SSE remains to be announced, it is likely that student voice will be a key feature. Thus, in coming to be associated with not just evaluations but complaints, it is not unthinkable that student voice in Irish schools could at some point in the future feature as part of performance reviews.

Nonetheless, there are positive signs and signs of hope vis-à-vis classroom-level consultations that point towards an optimistic future. It is here, that future student voice work in Irish post-primary schools should concentrate on. Looking ahead, classroom-level consultations, and not the management kind, should be the focus; depending on schools' starting points, these consultations should be developed, progressed, and consolidated. Different schools are currently at different stages of this journey but by prioritising open and transparent dialogue between teachers and students devoid of scrutiny or surveillance, it is my view that schools can work towards achieving genuine and meaningful conversations which can open up endless opportunities for teaching and learning.

6.4.1 A possible way forward

To help move classroom-level consultations forward, the literature suggests that one possible way doing this is through that is known as 'lesson study'. Lesson study originates from Japan (Fernandez, 2002; Dudley, 2005; Lewis et al., 2006) but has attracted attention around the world in recent years, and particularly in the United States and England. Although many variations of lesson study are now in existence, Ni Shuilleabhain and Bjuland (2019, pp.435-436) explain how lesson study is a form of teacher collaboration and learning based on a series of sequential phases:

> In the first phase participating teachers study the curriculum and collaboratively deliberate and discuss a goal and topic for the cycle. Over a number of weeks the group designs a detailed research lesson and proposes a research question related to pupil learning. Following the planning phase one member of the group teaches the research lesson while others observe and collect data on pupil learning. Finally, the teachers reflect collectively on the research lesson, utilising data generated during their observations. The group can then choose to re-design and re-teach the research lesson or conclude the cycle by reporting on their learning.

Writing a decade ago, Dudley (2011) asserted that there is evidence that lesson study can improve teaching, learning and pupil learning outcomes in a range of school contexts. Indeed, recent studies support this claim by concluding that that lesson study 'holds significant promise for teacher education as a means of facilitating professional growth for beginning teachers as well as for continuing teacher education (Kriewaldt, 2012, p.40), that it 'is a worthwhile professional development exercise that brings about significant teacher change while having a positive impact on student learning' (Samaranayake et al., 2018, p.275), and that engagement in lesson study produces 'a positive impact on teachers' rethinking their teaching practice, attitudes to students and their learning, collegiality, and professional self-identification' (Khokhotva and Albizuri, 2020b). While these studies were conducted in Australia, the United States, and Kazakhstan, respectfully, there is a trail of positive findings emerging in Ireland too. Although small-scale and specifically concerned with mathematics education, it has been reported that through lesson study teachers are incorporating and developing new pedagogical practices (Ni Shuilleabhain and Seery, 2018) and maintaining teacher professional communities (Lewanowski-Breen et al., 2020).

The lesson study literature in recent years has started to highlight how students can be involved in lesson study (see for example Dudley, 2011; Kriewaldt, 2012; Tamura and

Uesugi, 2020). Writing as a practising teacher in England, Hall (2014, p.18) highlights the benefits some school staff found through student voice:

> Involving the students in the process and gaining their views has helped shape a deeper understanding of the way they learn and given useful insight into future planning. One teacher perceptively observed, "It has also been useful having the opportunity to ask the students themselves how they perceive the lesson and the particular activities we have created; this is often different to how you as a teacher perceive it. This has informed our next lesson which has made it so worthwhile as it has been an organic process rather than a static, trial and error one".

Based on research conducted in Kazakhstan, Khokhotva and Albizuri (2020b) have reported that lesson study has the potential to transform teachers' views on student voice:

> listening to student voice in Lesson Study acts as an important catalyst for teachers to start questioning their taken-for-granted beliefs about students' agency and potential to inform classroom decision-making. Specifically, participants realised that provided that a safe classroom environment is ensured and student's voice is encouraged, the students feel ready to provide feedback and suggest constructive ideas on how to improve teaching and learning in their classroom. In the context of this study, the teachers realised the existing gap between their generation and the so-called Generation Z (Cilliers, 2017) and, encouraged by the inquiry-based Lesson Study framework, dived deeper into readings about the characteristics of this generation. This awareness prompted teachers to create new teaching resources tailored to students' needs, interests and lives, as in case of an original handout dedicated to students' admired celebrity. Thus, it could be concluded that Lesson Study encouraged teachers to welcome student's voices, learn from them, and adapt their teaching to students' needs and motivation.

Writing elsewhere, Khokhotva and Albizuri (2020a) put forward the view that student voice in lesson study has the potential to challenge historically and culturally constructed professional identities and transform teachers' practices and rigid beliefs. Similarly, research in England by Warwick et al. (2019, p.451) reports that systematically including student voice in lesson study can help teachers consciously view the classroom experience from the perspective of students, 'sometimes challenging teacher assumptions around the learner experience of lessons'.

Lesson study could possibly be a useful mechanism for embedding classroom-level consultations in Ireland. As researchers in other countries purport, lesson study can be transformational, even in contexts where student voice is minimal (Khokhotva and Albizuri, 2020a) and where teachers can be deeply wary of other teachers being in their classrooms and where lone practice, can discourage risk-taking or the 'disclosure' of professional learning needs (Dudley et al., 2019). Lesson study could be one way of shifting teachers' practices from more individual to more collegial activities and focusing more on processes of learning than how teachers are teaching (Kriewaldt, 2012).

6.5 Suggestions for future research, policy, and practice

In bringing this doctoral research to a close, I am mindful of Prof Stephen Ball's views, expressed in an interview with Mainardes and Marcondes (2009), on solutions and conclusions in research:

> lots of people have lots of solutions which don't seem to actually have much impact in the real world. And very often in academic work conclusions are a kind of form of performativity; you perform conclusions, as a way of demonstrating the value of your text. Your personal value-added to the grand enlightenment project. It would be more honest and realistic and useful if more researchers and academics would take a modest position, and try and build on, develop gradually accrete, accumulate work that provided a body of ideas from which then people could then draw on in relation to practice. But instead every body wants "conclusions', they want clarity, certainty and closure. They want to make themselves relevant. They want to make themselves commensurable within the normativities of research performance.

Perhaps it would be naïve of me to end a piece of doctoral research in such a novel area by providing rigid recommendations:

> I never feel I get to the point where I have any recommendations to make, other than, 'maybe we should try and think about this better'. And usually what I'm trying to do is deconstruct the common sense which is currently being used rather than to offer some kind of new common sense (Prof Stephen Ball, interviewed by Mainardes and Marcondes 2009).

Thus, I do not put forward concrete recommendations per se, but some suggestions for future research, policy and practice to consider.

6.5.1 Suggestions for future research

The whole area of the use of student voice in relation to classroom practice is one that is simply in need of more research. While this doctoral research provides novel insights, it is important that researchers build on this and accumulate an extensive body of knowledge. This includes research that focuses on different groups of schools and socio-economic contexts as I have done, as well as research of a narrower scope that homes in, for example, either one of these aspects, or both if less school types or less stakeholder groups are included. The point I am making here is that until now we have known very little about student voice in relation to classroom practice in the Irish context. Relatively speaking, we still know very little but future research can address and ameliorate this. It is important that researchers, from doctoral researchers to established professors, now add to this piece by replicating my approach or focusing on aspects of it.

While I stress the importance of context it has not been possible to cover all bases and perhaps this can be factored into future studies. First, there is scope for future research to explore schools in terms of contextual conditions such as location (e.g. urban, rural etc.) and the composition of students (e.g. single-sex schools, co-educational schools etc.) beyond socio-economics. Second, there is a paucity of research that looks at student voice in the small but growing number of Educate Together schools, which could be an exciting area for scholars to turn to.

Regardless of the context being researched, it is advisable that all future research explicitly outlines the research context. Even if this context does not form part of the analysis as such, outlining the school type, socio-economic context and other contextual facets will enable others to make further interpretations of the data. There is a tendency for research in Ireland to outline that a certain number of 'post-primary' or 'second-level' schools were included in the research but specifying the context of the schools being studied would help advance our understanding of what happens inside particular schools.

While all relevant research will be welcomed, there are particular themes that would make for fruitful projects and valuable additions to the research literature. I suggest that future research, while being conscious of, sensitive to, and explicit in terms of context, could:

- Investigate why surveillance through student voice is taking place in schools and what is being done with the data obtained through this surveillance
- Study the awareness and ignorance teachers have of surveillance through student voice in light of the literature's guiding frameworks
- Establish what different stakeholders in schools constitute as 'good' teaching
- Explore ways to embed the practice of classroom-level consultations in schools
- Develop professional development programmes to assist teachers and schools in embedding classroom-level consultations in practice
- Assess the role lesson study can play in facilitating classroom-level consultations in schools
- Evaluate the potential for performance management reviews to emerge in the Irish context and the possible role of students within such reviews
- Examine the political and emotional effects of student voice on stakeholders in schools
- Analyse the views of a wide variety of teachers on student voice, such as older teachers, younger teachers, and teachers with experience in other jurisdictions
- Utilise insider research conducted by practising teachers, perhaps as part of professional doctorates, to gain strong insights into the cultural politics of schools in terms of a wide range of aspects of student voice work in schools·

6.5.2 Suggestions for future policy

While official guidelines and policy papers can give the impression to teachers that the introduction of democratic approaches such as student voice is easy and straightforward (Flutter, 2007), post-primary schools and the staff in them are not homogenous entities. They operate in various contexts, and policies and discourses will play out accordingly. Moving forward, it is advisable that cognisance of contexts be reflected in future student voice policy and discourse. It is worth policymakers taking the following into account:

- A clear emphasis on classroom-level consultations over management-level consultations in future policy is likely to be most beneficial
- Trust can be built, and fears, suspicions, cynicism, and resistance alleviated via open and transparent policymaking, in which care is not only taken in the policy approach but in the official discourse around it

- Consultations during the processes of policymaking could include appropriate levels of representation from (i) a wide variety of different stakeholders inside schools (ii) stakeholders in each of the different school types (iii) stakeholders in school types in a range of settings
- Support services, resources, and professional development programmes devised and provided by government departments and/or agencies could be tailored to meet the specific needs of different groups of schools and staff
- Government-commissioned research that draws on the insights and evidence of independent international experts could be pivotal in designing, inter alia, policy, professional development programmes, and resources

6.5.3. Suggestions for future practice

As this research has found, students are being consulted on classroom practice, to varying extents, in Ireland's post-primary schools. While I am of the view that the suggestions for future research and policy laid out above will be of benefit to schools going forward, in the interim I make the following suggestions for practice:

- Schools should continuously reflect on their consultations and consider what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they can improve dialogue with students
- Schools should concentrate on developing internal cultures of classroom-level consultations
- Schools should be mindful of diversity and empathetic towards students from all backgrounds
- Schools should minimise and restrict their use of management-level consultations
- Schools should work with teachers to ensure that teacher voice is not marginalised in the quest for student voice
- Schools should be cognisant of and sensitive to the needs of and constraints for different members of school staff in facilitating student voice

6.6 Final words

This study has shown how student voice in relation to classroom practice plays out differently in different schools, with contextual factors such as school patronage and

school socio-economic context holding strong influence. There are optimistic signs such as the classroom-level consultations taking place in some schools, but there are also some concerning indications that student voice could be used in less savoury ways in schools through management-level consultations. Indeed, while many stakeholders do believe that students can be good judges of the quality of teaching in schools, it would appear that many are not actually in favour of any future possibility of students being consulted on teacher performance in Irish post-primary schools. This study has moved towards a close by putting forward some suggestions for future research, policy, and practice and will hopefully bring about more critical thinking with regards to student voice and classroom practice in Irish post-primary schools, but of the researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, that this study will be of interest to, it is those involved in research that will need to take the lead and work towards producing a strong knowledge base. While I will continue researching and publishing on student voice, it is important that researchers draw on my heuristic device and build on my key findings, and work towards accumulating an extensive body of knowledge to enhance understandings of student voice. Thus, my final words here are for the research community: we must accumulate a body of student voice research that pays close attention to context.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Case Study Protocol for the DEAPS Project

Case Study Protocol

Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools (DEAPS) - www.deaps.net

Questions for staff interviews

- Information about interviewee: m/f, subject teacher, years of teaching experience, qualifications
- Experience of School Self Evaluation / Planning
    - Does your school have an explicit policy on SSE? Or an agreement within staff?
    - If yes, what are the main ideas?
    - Is this relevant for the inclusion of parents and students in the SSE process? In what respect?
    - Does your school have an explicit policy on the inclusion of parent and student voice? Or an agreement within staff?
    - If yes, what are the main ideas?

Parents

- To what extent are parents involved in SSE (Role, level of engagement, stage)?
- To what extent would you like to see parents engage in an SSE cycle?
- What factors affect their involvement?
- What are the challenges for involving parents?
- Are parents and students from varying socio-economic backgrounds reacting and participating differently to SSE?
- What impact has the inclusion of parents in SSE had on your school? (Which areas e.g. teaching and learning?; Positive/Negative)

Students

- To what extent are students involved in SSE (Role, level of engagement, stage)?
- To what extent would you like to see students engage in an SSE cycle?
- What factors affect their involvement?
- What are the challenges for involving students?
- What impact has the inclusion of students in SSE had on your school? (Which areas e.g. teaching and learning?; Positive/Negative)

Supports

- To what extent do you feel the school has the expertise/capacity to include parent and student voice in SSE?
- Are you satisfied with/confident about the set of procedures that are in place to include parent and student voice in SSE?
- Is there material for school staff which is helpful for the inclusion of parents and students in SSE?
- Who is providing/producing this material?
- Are there other support measures (e.g. professional development, consultants etc.) which are helpful for the inclusion of parents and students in SSE? Who is providing / producing support measures?

Closing Statements

- In general, do you think that the knowledge and competences of parents and students are used effectively for the purpose of SSE?
- How can schools best include parents and students in SSE?
- Do you want to add anything that hasn't been already been covered?

Questions for student group interviews

- Information about interviewees (collect during sampling, not in group interview): m/f, rough indicators for [different in different countries], function: student representative
- Do you feel that your voice is included in what happens in your school (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?
- Are you consulted on decisions that may have an effect on you (e.g. how to make the school better)?
- What issues do you think that you should be consulted on (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?
- What are the good sides and the awkward sides of sharing your opinions on decision making in your school?
- Have you heard about Evaluation of your school?
- Do you participate in activities that evaluate the school? Are you encouraged to participate in these activities?
- Can you give some examples?
- Is the school interested in what you have to say?
- Does the school respect what you have to say?
- Do you want to add anything that hasn't been already been covered?

Appendix B: Case Study Protocol for the two Additional Schools Visited

Case Study Protocol

Project Title:	Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms
Researcher:	Craig Skerritt, Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection, Dublin City University
Contact Details:	Craig Skerritt email: craig.skerritt2@mail.dcu.ie

Tentative questions for principal and deputy principal interviews

- Information about interviewee:
  - male/female/other
  - years of experience

- Experience of SSE and student voice
  - How active is SSE in this school?
  - How engaged are the staff in SSE?
  - Does this school have a clear SSE policy?
  - Would staff be aware of the SSE policy?
  - Are students afforded a role in the SSE policy?
  - To what extent are students involved in SSE?
  - How active is student voice in this school?
  - Are staff supportive of student voice in this school?

- Student voice in the classroom
  - Do teachers use student voice in their classrooms? In what ways?
  - Do you believe that teachers should consult students on classroom practice?
  - Do students want to be consulted by their teachers?
  - Do you feel that students can be a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools?
  - What are the benefits of teachers using student voice in their classrooms?
  - What are the negatives of teachers using student voice in their classrooms?
  - What are the challenges of teachers using student voice in their classrooms?

- Thoughts on management consulting students on classroom practice
  - Do management consult students on classroom practice in this school?
  - Do you think that students should be consulted by management about classroom practice?
  - Do students want to be consulted by management?
  - What positives are there to consulting students?
  - What negatives are there to consulting students?
  - Are there barriers that prevent you from consulting students on classroom practice?
  - Do you think that you can rely on students' feedback about teachers?
  - How do staff feel about management consulting students on classroom practice?

- How do you feel about consulting students?
- When students discuss their lessons with you, would they ever name teachers?
- Would you ever ask students about teachers?
- Do you think that it is appropriate to consult students about teachers?
- What do you do with the information gleaned from consultations with students?

- Closing statements
  - To sum up, what are your thoughts on student voice being used in the classroom?
  - Does student voice have a bright future in Irish classrooms?
  - Do you want to add anything that hasn't already been covered?

Tentative questions for post-holder and classroom teacher interviews

- Information about interviewee:
  - male/female/other
  - subject(s) taught
  - years of teaching experience
  - position (e.g. classroom teacher)

- Experience of SSE and student voice

  - How active is SSE in this school?
  - How engaged are the staff in SSE?
  - Does this school have a clear SSE policy?
  - Would staff be aware of the SSE policy?
  - Are students afforded a role in the SSE policy?
  - To what extent are students involved in SSE?
  - How active is student voice in this school?
  - Are staff supportive of student voice in this school?

- Experience of student voice in the classroom
  - Do you use student voice in your classroom? In what ways?
  - What experiences have you had with student voice in your classroom?
  - Do you believe that students should be consulted on classroom practice?
  - Do students want to be consulted?
  - Do you feel that students can be a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools?
  - What are the benefits of using student voice in your classroom?
  - What are the negatives of using student voice in your classroom?
  - What are the challenges of using student voice in your classroom?

- Thoughts on management consulting students on classroom practice
  - Outside of your lessons, what ways are students consulted on classroom practice in this school?
  - Do management consult students on classroom practice?
  - Do you think that students should be consulted by management about classroom practice?
  - Do you think it is appropriate for management to consult students about classroom practice?

    - Do you think that management can rely on students' feedback about teachers?
    - How do you feel about management consulting students on classroom practice?

- Closing statements
    - To sum up, what are your thoughts on student voice being used in the classroom?
    - Does student voice have a bright future in Irish classrooms?
    - Do you want to add anything that hasn't already been covered?

Tentative questions for student group interviews

- Do you feel that your voice is included in what happens in your school (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?
- Are you consulted on decisions about the school (e.g. how to make the school better)?
- Is the school interested in what you have to say?
- Does the school respect what you have to say?
- What issues do you think that you should be consulted on (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?
- In your lessons, do teachers ask you for feedback on how you think lessons are going?
- In what ways are you asked for feedback (e.g. orally, surveys)?
- What are the good sides and the awkward sides of sharing your opinions?
- Do you think students are a good judge of what makes a good teacher?
- Does the principal or any senior staff members ever ask you about your lessons?
- Do you think that students should be consulted on their lessons?
- How do you feel when you are asked about your lessons?
- What are the good sides and the awkward sides of sharing your opinions?
- If you are asked about your lessons, do you get asked about your teachers?
- Do you want to add anything that hasn't been already been covered?

Appendix C: Principals' Invitation to Participate in Case Study Research (for the two Additional Schools Visited)

Invitation to participate in a research project
Plain Language Statement

Project Title:	Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms
Researcher:	Craig Skerritt, Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection, Dublin City University
Contact Details:	Craig Skerritt email: craig.skerritt2@mail.dcu.ie

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Dear Mr/Ms X,

My name is Craig Skerritt and I am currently undertaking research on stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms. This research is part of a PhD being funded by Dublin City University. As this is an unexplored area in Irish education, this research is particularly interested in exploring how student voice is enacted in schools, especially at the classroom level, and if there is a difference in how student voice plays out in schools based on school patronage and/or socio-economic setting.

I will be visiting schools to interview stakeholders (i.e. principals, teachers and students) about their experiences and perceptions of student voice. Thus, as a post-primary school principal you are now being invited participate in this stage of the research by hosting me in your school for a one-day visit. A one-day visit to your school would involve me interviewing:

- eight staff members (ideally to include if available: the principal, staff members with special functions for School Self-Evaluation, Student Engagement, and a proportionate sample of classroom teachers based on years of teaching experience) to be interviewed either individually or in pairs
- six to eight students to be interviewed together as a group

In considering this invitation you should be aware that:

- Participation is completely voluntary, and you are not obliged to take part.
- There is no direct benefit for you in participating in the research.
- Participation involves no risk for you beyond those of everyday life - the probability of any harm or distress being caused by this research is no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine everyday administrative activities.
- Maintaining your anonymity is of the highest importance and at no stage during the research will you, your school, or your school's location be mentioned.
- Confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e. it is possible for data to be subjected to freedom of information claims, and if there are child protection concerns, or other safeguarding issues relating to adults, the researcher has a responsibility to disclose this information to the appropriate person and/or body.
- All data gathered from you will be stored in a secure location by the researcher
- The findings from this research will be published in the first instance in a PhD thesis which will be stored in Dublin City University's library. It is also intended that sections of the thesis will then be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or books. Upon

publication, these texts will be advertised on Twitter at @CraigSkerritt and free copies will be available to interested parties upon request.

- You can, up until publication, decide that you would like to withdraw from the process (in this event, all data collected from you will be destroyed and not used).
- All data collected from you will be deleted and destroyed upon the completion of the project in 2025.

Interviews would take approximately 30 minutes and would be audio-recorded but the information collected would be anonymised. Attached you will find the case study protocol which shows the general information I am interested in collecting and the questions that I would be grateful to ask participants.

If you wish to contact an independent person, please contact The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000. Email: rec@dcu.ie

I would be delighted if you agree to your school being involved in this research.

Yours Sincerely

Craig Skerritt

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement for School Staff (for the two Additional Schools Visited)

Interviews

Plain Language Statement for staff

Project Title:	Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms
Researcher:	Craig Skerritt, Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection, Dublin City University
Contact Details:	Craig Skerritt email: craig.skerritt2@mail.dcu.ie

My name is Craig Skerritt and I am currently undertaking research on stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms. This research is part of a PhD being funded by Dublin City University. As this is an unexplored area in Irish education, this research is particularly interested in exploring how student voice is enacted in schools, especially at the classroom level, and if there is a difference in how student voice plays out in schools based on school patronage and/or socio-economic setting.

This research involves a nationwide survey of post-primary school principals, and me visiting schools to interview stakeholders (i.e. principals, teachers and students) about their experiences and perceptions of student voice being used in relation to classroom practice. Ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee and by participating in this research (i.e. being interviewed) you should be aware that:

- Participation is completely voluntary, and you are not obliged to take part.
- There is no direct benefit for you in participating in the research.
- Participation involves no risk for you beyond those of everyday life - the probability of any harm or distress being caused by this research is no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine everyday administrative activities.
- Maintaining your anonymity is of the highest importance and at no stage during the research will you, your school, or your school's location be mentioned.
- Confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e. it is possible for data to be subjected to freedom of information claims, and if there are child protection concerns, or other safeguarding issues relating to adults, the researcher has a responsibility to disclose this information to the appropriate person and/or body.
- All data gathered from you will be stored in a secure location by the researcher
- The findings from this research will be published in the first instance in a PhD thesis which will be stored in Dublin City University's library. It is also intended that sections of the thesis will then be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or books. Upon publication, these texts will be advertised on Twitter at @CraigSkerritt and free copies will be available to interested parties upon request.
- You can, up until publication, decide that you would like to withdraw from the process (in this event, all data collected from you will be destroyed and not used).
- All data collected from you will be deleted and destroyed upon the completion of the project in 2025.

Interviews will take approximately 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded but the information collected will be anonymised.

If you wish to contact an independent person, please contact The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000. Email: rec@dcu.ie

Kind regards,
Craig Skerritt

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form for School Staff (for the two Additional Schools Visited)

Informed Consent Form for Staff

i) Project Title
Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms

ii) Clarification of the purpose of the research
I am visiting schools to hear about how stakeholders (i.e. principals, teachers and students) feel about students being asked about their experiences in Irish post-primary school classrooms.

iii) Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement
Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes/No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	*Yes/No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	*Yes/No*
I am aware that our discussion will be audiotaped	*Yes/No*

iv) I do not have to participate in this class discussion if I do not want to. I can withdraw from the process at any stage up until publication.

v) Confidentiality of data
My name will not be recorded or revealed at any stage. The researchers will be the sole people with access to the data and my school will be given a false name. Recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project.

vi) Signature
I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Plain Language Statement for Students (for the two Additional Schools Visited)

Interviews
Plain Language Statement for Students

Project Title:	Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms
Researcher:	Craig Skerritt, Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection, Dublin City University
Contact Details:	Craig Skerritt email: craig.skerritt2@mail.dcu.ie

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You are invited to participate in a research project. You will be involved in a chat about your experiences of having your voice heard in the classroom. I will be visiting your school to talk to the principal, some teachers, and some students. For you this will involve meeting me (the researcher) in a group (i.e. 6-8 students) environment. I will ask the group a few questions and would listen carefully to your experiences and opinions.

The research is particularly interested in how students feel about being asked about their experiences in Irish post-primary school classrooms. The following are the kinds of questions the group will be asked:

- **Do you feel that your voice is included in what happens in your school (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?**
- **Are you consulted on decisions about the school (e.g. how to make the school better)?**
- **Is the school interested in what you have to say?**
- **Does the school respect what you have to say?**
- **What issues do you think that you should be consulted on (e.g. the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom)?**
- **In your lessons, do teachers ask you for feedback on how you think lessons are going?**
- **In what ways are you asked for feedback (e.g. orally, surveys)?**
- **What are the good sides and the awkward sides of sharing your opinions?**
- **Do you think students are a good judge of what makes a good teacher?**
- **Does the principal or any senior staff members ever ask you about your lessons?**
- **Do you think that students should be consulted on their lessons?**
- **How do you feel when you are asked about your lessons?**
- **What are the good sides and the awkward sides of sharing your opinions?**
- **If you are asked about your lessons, do you get asked about your teachers?**
- **Do you want to add anything that hasn't been already been covered?**

The discussion will take about 30 minutes and will be audio recorded by the researcher but your name and your school will not be revealed when the research is published. The audio recording will be used so that I can record what was said and can listen back to it at later times to analyse. I will store the recording of the discussion very carefully so that only the researchers involved in the project can hear it. Your name or your school's name will not be revealed or made public.

Ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. It is completely up to you as to whether you want to be involved in this discussion. In considering this invitation you should be aware that:

- Participation is completely voluntary, and you are not obliged to take part.
- There is no direct benefit for you in participating in the research.
- Participation involves no risk for you beyond those of everyday life - the probability of any harm or distress being caused by this research is no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine everyday administrative activities.
- Maintaining your anonymity is of the highest importance and at no stage during the research will you, your school, or your school's location be mentioned.
- Confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e. it is possible for data to be subjected to freedom of

information claims, and if there are child protection concerns, or other safeguarding issues relating to adults, the researcher has a responsibility to disclose this information to the appropriate person and/or body.

- All data gathered from you will be stored in a secure location by the researcher
- The findings from this research will be published in the first instance in a PhD thesis which will be stored in Dublin City University's library. It is also intended that sections of the thesis will then be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or books. Upon publication, these texts will be advertised on Twitter at @CraigSkerritt and free copies will be available to interested parties upon request.
- You can, up until publication, decide that you would like to withdraw from the process (in this event, all data collected from you will be destroyed and not used).
- All data collected from you will be deleted and destroyed upon the completion of the project in 2025.

If you wish to contact an independent person, please contact The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000. Email: rec@dcu.ie.

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Skerritt

Appendix G: Informed Consent Form for Students (for the two Additional Schools Visited)

Informed Consent Form for Students

i) Project Title
Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms

ii) Clarification of the purpose of the research
I am visiting schools to hear about how stakeholders (i.e. principals, teachers and students) feel about students being asked about their experiences in Irish post-primary school classrooms.

iii) Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement
Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes/No*
I have read the questions that will be discussed in class (or had them read to me)	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes/No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	*Yes/No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	*Yes/No*
I am aware that our discussion will be audiotaped	*Yes/No*

iv) I do not have to participate in this class discussion if I do not want to. I can withdraw from the process at any stage up until publication.

v) Confidentiality of data
My name will not be recorded or revealed at any stage. The researchers will be the sole people with access to the data and my school will be given a false name. Recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project.

vi) Signature
I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix H: From Initial Codes to Defined and Named Themes

Generating initial codes	*Sorting codes into themes*	*Reviewing and refining themes*	*Defining and naming themes*
• Formal • Informal • Classroom level • Management level • Instigated by staff • Instigated by students • Positive • Negative • Confirmed surveillance • Hidden surveillance • Potential surveillance • Management monitoring teachers • Teachers monitoring teachers • Teachers monitoring themselves • Lack of consultation • Lack of knowledge • Reliable sources • Unreliable sources • Age of students • Career stage of teachers • Resistance • Reluctance • Morale	• Consultations on classroom practice • Management-monitoring teachers • Students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools • Consultations on teacher performance • Demographics • Vilifications	• How students are consulted on classroom practice • Management-level consultations as a tool and technique for monitoring teachers • Students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools • Management consulting students on teacher performance	• How students are consulted on classroom practice o Classroom-level consultations: consulting students in lessons o Management-level consultations: questionnaires issued to students o Management-level consultations: interviewing students o Management-level consultations: informal conversations with students • Management-level consultations as a tool and technique for monitoring teachers o The use of questionnaires o The use of interviews o The use of informal conversations • Students as judges of the quality of teaching in schools o The views of senior leaders o The views of teachers with posts of responsibility o The views of classroom teachers o The views of students • Management consulting students on teacher performance o The views of senior leaders o The views of teachers with posts of responsibility o The views of classroom teachers o The views of students

Appendix I: Principals' Invitation to Participate in Survey Research

Invitation to participate in a research project
Plain Language Statement

Project Title:	Stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms
Researcher:	Craig Skerritt, Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection, Dublin City University
Contact Details:	Craig Skerritt email: craig.skerritt2@mail.dcu.ie

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My name is Craig Skerritt and I am currently undertaking research on stakeholders' views on student voice in Irish post-primary school classrooms. This research is part of a PhD being funded by Dublin City University. As this is an unexplored area in Irish education, this research is particularly interested in exploring how student voice is enacted in schools, especially at the classroom level, and if there is a difference in how student voice plays out in schools based on school patronage and/or socio-economic setting.

This particular stage of the research involves surveying principals about their experiences and perceptions of student voice. Thus, as a post-primary school principal you are now being invited to take part in an online questionnaire about principals' views on student voice. The questionnaire should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. In addition, you should be aware that:

- Participation is completely voluntary, and you are not obliged to take part.
- There is no direct benefit for you in participating in the research.
- Participation involves no risk for you beyond those of everyday life - the probability of any harm or distress being caused by this research is no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine everyday administrative activities.
- Maintaining your anonymity together is of the highest importance and at no stage during the research will you, your school, or your school's location be mentioned.
- Confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subjected to freedom of information claims.
- All data gathered from you will be stored in a secure location by the researcher
- The findings from this research will be published in the first instance in a PhD thesis which will be stored in Dublin City University's library. It is also intended that sections of the thesis will then be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or books. Upon publication, these texts will be advertised on Twitter at @CraigSkerritt and free copies will be available to interested parties upon request.
- You can, up until publication, decide that you would like to withdraw from the process (in this event, all data collected from you will be destroyed and not used).
- All data collected from you will be deleted and destroyed upon the completion of the project in 2025.

If you would like to find out more about this project you can contact me directly via email. If you would like to contact an independent person, please contact the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000. Email: rec@dcu.ie.

Kind regards,

Craig Skerritt

Appendix J: Test Statistics

Frequencies: DEIS status

Does your school have DEIS status?		N
This school's SSE policy is written down and available for stakeholders to read and refer to	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
SSE is seen as being a collaborative effort involving all staff	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Students are assigned a clear role in this school's SSE policy	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students play an important role in SSE	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students are consulted on a wide range of issues (e.g. teaching and learning, school policies, school activities)	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Students are consulted on academic issues (e.g. teaching and learning)	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students are consulted on non-academic issues (e.g. uniform policy, structure of the school day, clubs and societies etc.)	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students want to be involved in SSE	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students meaningfully contribute to SSE	Yes	25
	No	67
	Total	92
Students' involvement in SSE is dependent on their age and/or year group	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The student council is active in the school	Yes	25
	No	67
	Total	92
The student council plays an active role in SSE (e.g. being consulted on both academic and non-academic issues)	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The student council plays an important role in SSE	Yes	26
	No	66
	Total	92
The students involved in SSE are predominantly from the student council	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students are consulted on teaching and learning issues in this school (e.g. how students like to be taught and how they feel they learn best is taken into account)	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Teachers ask students for feedback on their teaching	Yes	26
	No	68

	Total	94
Teachers ask students for feedback on how they are learning	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Management (principal and/or leadership team) ask students for feedback on teachers' teaching	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Management (principal and/or leadership team) ask students for feedback on how they are learning	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students want to be consulted on teachers' teaching	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students want to be consulted on their learning	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students enjoy being consulted on teachers' teaching	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students enjoy being consulted on their learning	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Students are a reliable source of information on teaching issues	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Students are a reliable source of information on learning issues	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Surveys/questionnaires	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Individual interviews	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Focus group interviews	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Informal conversations	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Other techniques	Yes	14
	No	35
	Total	49
Students give fair feedback on teachers' classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
I trust students' feedback on teachers' classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students are a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students are a good judge of the quality of leadership in schools	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94

Students are a reliable source of information when evaluating the quality of teaching in schools	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Students name individual teachers when discussing their lessons	Yes	26
	No	66
	Total	92
I ask students about individual teachers when discussing their lessons	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Ensuring student voice is heard in the school	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Improving students' experience of school	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Making the school a more democratic and inclusive institution	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The inspectorate expects schools to consult with students	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The governing body/patron expects the school to consult with students	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Holding teachers accountable for their performances	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Monitoring teacher performance	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Holding senior leaders accountable for their performances	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Monitoring senior leaders' performances	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Encourage students to talk to teachers (if there are concerns)	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Formally discuss students' feedback with teachers	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Informally discuss students' feedback with teachers	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Formally discuss students' feedback with school management/leadership team	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Informally discuss students' feedback with school management/leadership team	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Keep feedback on file for your own record	Yes	26

	No	68
	Total	94
Gather data from additional sources e.g. more students	Yes	26
	No	66
	Total	92
Hold follow-up conversations with students	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Observe teaching and learning in classrooms	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
Reconsider/revise various school policies	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
The patronage of a school influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The socio-economic status of a school influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The leadership of a school influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The patronage of a school influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The socio-economic status of a school influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The leadership of a school influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
School size influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
School size influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
I support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
I feel comfortable consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
I am enthusiastic about consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
I actively consult students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Teachers in this school support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
	Yes	26
	No	68

Teachers in this school feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Total	94
Students in this school support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting them on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students in this school feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
CPD is useful for preparing schools on how to consult students on classroom practice	Yes	26
	No	66
	Total	92
I do not support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
I do not feel comfortable consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	67
	Total	93
I am not enthusiastic about consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Teachers in this school do not support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	66
	Total	92
Teachers in this school do not feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students in this school do not support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting them on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Students in this school do not feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Time constraints prevent management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Teacher resistance/opposition to student voice prevents management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
Union involvement prevents management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The school's socio-economic status hinders management (principal and/or leadership team)from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	26
	No	68
	Total	94
The school's governing body/hinders management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Yes	25
	No	68
	Total	93

Frequencies: school type

Which best describes your school?		N
This school's SSE policy is written down and available for stakeholders to read and refer to	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
SSE is seen as being a collaborative effort involving all staff	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	25
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
Students are assigned a clear role in this school's SSE policy	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students play an important role in SSE	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are consulted on a wide range of issues (e.g. teaching and learning, school policies, school activities)	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
Students are consulted on academic issues (e.g. teaching and learning)	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are consulted on non-academic issues (e.g. uniform policy, structure of the school day, clubs and societies etc.)	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26

	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students want to be involved in SSE	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students meaningfully contribute to SSE	Voluntary secondary school	46
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
Students' involvement in SSE is dependent on their age and/or year group	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The student council is active in the school	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	25
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
The student council plays an active role in SSE (e.g. being consulted on both academic and non-academic issues)	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The student council plays an important role in SSE	Voluntary secondary school	46
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
The students involved in SSE are predominantly from the student council	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18

	Total	92
Students are consulted on teaching and learning issues in this school (e.g. how students like to be taught and how they feel they learn best is taken into account)	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Teachers ask students for feedback on their teaching	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Teachers ask students for feedback on how they are learning	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Management (principal and/or leadership team) ask students for feedback on teachers' teaching	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
Management (principal and/or leadership team) ask students for feedback on how they are learning	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students want to be consulted on teachers' teaching	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students want to be consulted on their learning	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92

Students enjoy being consulted on teachers' teaching	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students enjoy being consulted on their learning	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are a reliable source of information on teaching issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are a reliable source of information on learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	17
	Total	91
Surveys/questionnaires	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Individual interviews	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Focus group interviews	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Informal conversations	Voluntary secondary school	48

	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Other techniques	Voluntary secondary school	23
	ETB School	17
	Community/comprehensive school	8
	Total	48
Students give fair feedback on teachers' classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
I trust students' feedback on teachers' classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are a good judge of the quality of teaching in schools	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are a good judge of the quality of leadership in schools	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students are a reliable source of information when evaluating the quality of teaching in schools	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
Students name individual teachers when discussing their lessons	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	24

	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
I ask students about individual teachers when discussing their lessons	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Ensuring student voice is heard in the school	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Improving students' experience of school	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
Making the school a more democratic and inclusive institution	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The inspectorate expects schools to consult with students	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The governing body/patron expects the school to consult with students	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18

	Total	92
Holding teachers accountable for their performances	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
Monitoring teacher performance	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Holding senior leaders accountable for their performances	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Monitoring senior leaders’ performances	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Encourage students to talk to teachers (if there are concerns)	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Formally discuss students' feedback with teachers	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Informally discuss students' feedback with teachers	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92

Formally discuss students' feedback with school management/leadership team	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Informally discuss students' feedback with school management/leadership team	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Keep feedback on file for your own record	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Gather data from additional sources e.g. more students	Voluntary secondary school	46
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
Hold follow-up conversations with students	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Observe teaching and learning in classrooms	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Reconsider/revise various school policies	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
The patronage of a school influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48

	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The socio-economic status of a school influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The leadership of a school influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The patronage of a school influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The socio-economic status of a school influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The leadership of a school influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
School size influences the ways that students are consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
School size influences how staff and students feel about students being consulted on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26

	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
I support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
I feel comfortable consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
I am enthusiastic about consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
I actively consult students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Teachers in this school support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Teachers in this school feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students in this school support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting them on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18

	Total	92
Students in this school feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
CPD is useful for preparing schools on how to consult students on classroom practice	Voluntary secondary school	46
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
I do not support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
I do not feel comfortable consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91
I am not enthusiastic about consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Teachers in this school do not support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	47
	ETB School	25
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	90
Teachers in this school do not feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92

Students in this school do not support the idea of management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting them on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Students in this school do not feel comfortable with management (principal and/or leadership team) consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Time constraints prevent management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Teacher resistance/opposition to student voice prevents management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
Union involvement prevents management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The school's socio-economic status hinders management (principal and/or leadership team)from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	26
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	92
The school's governing body/hinders management (principal and/or leadership team) from consulting students on teaching and learning issues	Voluntary secondary school	48
	ETB School	25
	Community/comprehensive school	18
	Total	91

Scale: The Use of Student Voice for Classroom-level Consultations

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	94	98.9
	Excluded[a]	1	1.1
	Total	95	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.873	2

Scale: The Use of Student Voice for Management-level Consultations

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	93	97.9
	Excluded[a]	2	2.1
	Total	95	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.816	5

Scale: The Use of Student Voice for Various Purposes

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	92	96.8
	Excluded[a]	3	3.2
	Total	95	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.685	6

Scale: Students as Judges of the Quality of Teaching in Schools

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	92	96.8
	Excluded[a]	3	3.2
	Total	95	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.874	4