

Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021

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Declaration

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

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Date: 23rd August 2024

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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

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I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I grew up surrounded by teachers. I could read and write before I went to school. I owe a lot to my mam for that. I was disappointed there was no homework on day one of Junior Infants. I had it sussed in Senior Infants when I wrote “when I grow up, I want to be an Irish dancing teacher and a primary teacher on the side”. I took the scenic route to teaching. I realised my dream, but roles were reversed. For the first six years of teaching I taught Irish dancing part time.

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List of abbreviations and terms used in the thesis

BOM	Board of Management
CAMHS	Child and Adult Mental Health Services
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Management Association
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
DCU	Dublin City University
DE	Department of Education formerly referred to as DES – Department of Education and Skills until 2020.
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DP	Deputy Principal
EPV	Extra Personal Vacation
ESCI	Education Support Centres Ireland
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison Co-Ordinator
HSE	Health Service Executive
IEP	Individual Education Plan
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NVivo	NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDST	Professional Development Support Service for Teachers
PL	Professional Learning
PLC	Primary Language Curriculum
PMC	Primary Maths Curriculum
PST	Professional Support Team
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SET	Special Education Teacher
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TA	Thematic Analysis
TC	Teaching Council
TRSR	Teacher Resilience Self-Reflection
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning

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Abstract

Teacher Resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021

Julie Ann Fleming

This study examines the resilience of teachers (mainstream class teachers and special education teachers) and principals at primary level from 2016-2021. The study builds on research carried out by the INTO (2015) on the workload, stress and resilience of primary teachers which concluded that respondents found teaching more stressful and demanding in the previous five years. Acknowledging the many systemic changes that have occurred in the period from 2016-2021, this study ascertained how participants demonstrated resilience through these changes, what supported or fostered resiliency for them, their understanding of resiliency, the impact of leadership on resiliency and suggestions for strategies to build career wide resiliency in teaching and leading. At the heart of this study is the value of the participants' lived experience.

While much has been written about teacher resilience from an Irish and international context, previous research concentrated on initial teacher education and early career teachers and this study fills the void in relation to sustaining career wide resiliency. Using a mixed methods approach, initial questionnaires were shared with six participating case study schools, followed by semi-structured interviews. Subsequent national questionnaires were then shared. The combined data sources include the views of 137 participants, from newly qualified teachers to teachers teaching in-excess of 31 years. This research was conducted from April-July 2021 and permitted for a broad range of experiences to be accounted for.

Key findings demonstrate teacher resilience was impacted by systemic changes, but not all systemic changes impacted equally. Factors that supported resilience include: Droichead (Teaching Council, 2017), seen as a positive influence; support from leadership and relationships and collegiality within school settings. Inhibiting factors highlighted include: the lack of professional learning for specialised settings; time for collaboration; teacher isolation during Covid-19 and a lack of understanding of special educational needs. Teachers were clear on their identified preferences for future professional learning, notably in the areas of wellbeing and special education. Implications for policy and practice concentrate on the collaborative and sustained professional learning experiences teachers found beneficial to their resilience.

Chapter One: Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the resilience of primary school teachers comprising mainstream class teachers and special education teachers (SETs) and principals whose working contexts have been impacted by multiple systemic level changes from 2016-2021. The research is situated in an evolving climate where teachers and principals are required to adapt and change practices in response to policy development, the implementation of initiatives from the Department of Education (DE), formerly referred to as the Department of Education and Skills up to 2020 (DES) and other educational stakeholders such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Teaching Council (TC), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and amidst the uncertainty around the global pandemic of Covid-19.

This chapter outlines the context of the emergence of teacher resilience as a concept and area of research. It begins with an overview of resilience, introduces definitions of teacher resilience used in this study and sets the context for the educational changes experienced by participants. Subsequently, the identification of the research topic is presented. Following this, the rationale for the study is examined and the research questions and aims are introduced. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the thesis layout.

1.2 Understanding resilience

Although the focus of this research is on teacher resilience, the context will be situated by examining in the first instance the construct of resilience. Resilience, understood as the concept of bouncing back in the face of adverse circumstances is a generally accepted definition dating back to the 1970s. Much of the focus at this particular stage was on the resilience of children (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012; Gu and Day, 2013; Gu, 2018). The psychological understanding of adapting to circumstances amidst challenging environments accredited to Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990), leads to the concept of resilience in terms of education. This has been explored since the 1990s, where the introduction of a number of programmes was developed for teachers to use in supporting children to be resilient (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012). From the 2000s resilience was understood as a complex and

“multifaceted” construct (Peixoto *et al.*, 2018). Resilience as a “dynamic process” (Gu and Day, 2007, p. 1305) between a person and the environment (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012) shows a research shift from resilience being viewed as solely a personal quality (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019). Resilience is therefore viewed as a “dynamic interaction of risk and protective factors” whose origins may be with the individual or the environment (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019, p. 118) or a combination of both. Resilience is viewed as both a multidimensional and a developmental construct (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012, 2016a; Peixoto *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the concept of resilience can be described as both an individual and collective characteristic (Wilcox and Lawson, 2017, p. 189). The question of whether resilience is always adaptive and therefore seen as positive by and large or can be understood to have negative aspects is raised by Mahdiani and Ungar (2021). They argue for a more contextualised appreciation of resilience as a concept and draw comparisons with resilience and vulnerability. Gu and Day (2013) conclude that resilience is a phenomenon influenced by “individual circumstance, situation and environment” involving complex components (p. 25). The capacity to be resilient is influenced by and associated with psychological, emotional, behavioural and cognitive functioning (Day and Gu, 2014). The following section will examine the concept of teacher resilience in the literature over time.

1.3 Defining Teacher Resilience

Literature relating to teacher resilience has emerged in the past thirty years and ongoing debate around an agreed definition prevails (Botou *et al.*, 2017; Schussler *et al.*, 2018). The concept of teacher resilience has gathered momentum since the 2000s in countries where there is a high rate of attrition among teachers (Scheopner, 2010; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012). In comparison to resilience research on children, resilience in adults both empirical and conceptual, and in particular in relation to teachers, is still at an early stage (Gu, 2018). Teacher resilience concerns an individual’s capacity to “maintain positive attributes in the face of a range of challenges, pressures and demands”, which are associated with their work (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018, p.17). Teachers are faced with constant intellectual and emotional challenges which gives rise to the term “everyday resilience” (Day and Gu, 2014, p. 20). Teacher resilience in the context of this study is envisaged as the capacity to continue to maintain and sustain a sense of commitment and agency in teaching throughout different career phases and in

ever changing environments (Gu and Day, 2013). Teacher agency is associated with professional learning (PL), school reform and school improvement (Imants and Van der Wal, 2019). Teacher agency as understood by Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2015) is viewed as an action, reliant on the constraints and possibilities of cultural, relational and material influences. The combination of capacity and actions for teacher agency are considered by Hadar and Benish-Weisman (2019). Agency in the Irish primary school context is associated and advocated for under systemic changes which came about during the focus of this study (2016-2021) and will be expanded upon in relation to educational and systemic changes.

The notion of various career phases and ever-changing environments is scrutinised in the literature review, where calls for career wide resiliency studies are made by many prominent contributors to this area (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Gu, 2018). Mansfield *et al.* (2012) make the case that there are “limited explanations of how teachers view resilience in the context of their profession or at particular career stages” (p. 358). The viewpoint of more experienced teachers remains unknown and in their recommendations for future research they suggest incorporating additional methods of data research such as in-depth interviews and comparing understandings of resilience in various contexts and at different career stages. The concept of sustaining teachers is advanced by Mansfield *et al.* (2016a) to consider the social and cultural contexts of the teacher’s work. Gu (2018) lists four propositions for sustaining resilience and quality in teaching. These include the context of schools and school leadership to develop and nurture teachers and their capacities, mutual empowerment through collegial relationships, combining pedagogy with students’ needs and subject specific knowledge and creating school wide responsibility in the “multiple-level education system” to build and sustain teachers’ potential to be resilient (p. 28). This social-ecological understanding of resilience shows the developments acknowledged in this multifaceted concept (Peixoto *et al.*, 2018). The main area of focus of this study considers the educational changes that have been introduced in the Irish primary context from 2016-2021 and how they impacted on career wide resiliency across the three teaching roles in mainstream primary schools: principals, mainstream class teachers and SETs

1.4 Systemic changes

Systemic changes in education are thought of as modifications or paradigm shifts, whereby the first instance would include fixing a system or part of it, and in the

second instance potentially replacing the system entirely (Reigeluth, 1994). The imperative for systemic change in the 1970s was due to entering the information age and the need for a reform or shift in education was sought in order to benefit the educational needs of society. Substantive and comprehensive change is necessary for improvements and evolutions to occur in schools. However, creating readiness for systemic change interventions necessitates enhancing a climate for change (Adleman and Taylor, 2007).

Fullan (2007) advocates for the Triple I model of change which has three phases: initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. The goal of institutionalisation however takes time and depends on the successful implementation of the previous components. The first phase establishes the need for change, the second establishes a coalition to champion the change process, a shared vision, with clarity around expectations and consistency and how the innovation can be sustained. In implementing any new programme or policy, Fullan (2015) comments there are at least three possible components or dimensions at stake: the use of new or revised materials; the use of new teaching approaches and the alteration of beliefs (p. 28). The third dimension is linked to the deep learning referenced by Hattie (2009; 2012) where he discovered a large discrepancy between surface learning and deep learning and promoted the development of the latter. In order to find and experience intrinsic meaning in schools, Fullan (2015) proposes integrating digital technology and learning which has increasingly developed to various extents across schools. Some schools adopted digital platforms such as Aladdin and Databiz to record attendance, assessments, student information and communicate information with parents prior to Covid-19. Additional platforms such as Seesaw and Google Classroom have been used to prescribe and grade homework, as classroom management tools, for pupil self-assessment purposes, to communicate with parents and involve them more in the educational welfare of their children. Circular 10/2013 (DES, 2013) provides grants to schools to enable the purchase of specialist equipment which is deemed essential in supporting pupils with physical disabilities or communicative or sensory disabilities that inhibit their speech or written work to allow pupils access the curriculum. However, supporting reports from professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists are necessary as part of the process. While all schools have access to digital technology, the *Digital Strategy for*

Schools to 2027 advocates for the effective use of digital technology as a seamless part of teaching, learning and assessment as a key goal (DE, 2022a, p. 5).

The emotions of teaching and educational change are commented on by Hargreaves (2005) who forewarns that one of the most fundamental aspects of educational change – the emotional dimension - is often ignored. He calls for educational change strategies and reform efforts to address the emotional dimensions of teaching and learning which permeate the relationships teachers have within schools. As noted by Fullan (2015, p. 67): “Educational change is technically simple and socially complex”. This means once educational change is viewed as a change process, rather than an event or occurrence, where the emotional dimension is also considered, it can occur in a continuous, interactive way as outlined in Figure 1.1. The timeframe for the process to occur, from initiation to institutionalisation is lengthy and can take two-four years at least. Sustaining educational change as more initiatives and policies are introduced, often with limited professional learning (PL) for teachers, or with restricted access to teachers in certain roles in the case of special educational needs (SEN) courses, has proven challenging in the Irish setting. Additional investments to bring about whole staff PL would not only build the capacity of educators but would also have a positive impact on the resilience of teachers and leaders and is therefore necessary in the context of systemic changes.

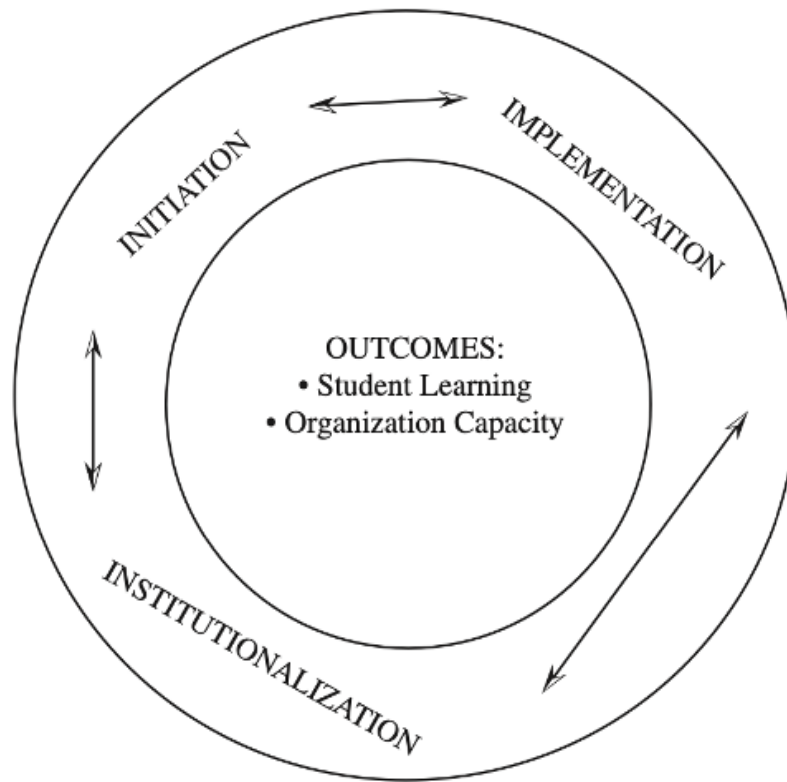


Figure 1.1 Simplified overview of the change process – triple I model (Fullan, 2015)

1.4.1 Systemic changes in this study

Systemic changes considered for the purpose of this research study can be understood as four pillars: legislative, curricular, DE policy documents and TC policy directive. The DE policy documents pillar has two subcategories, DE directives and DE policy guidelines. Certain changes such as the Special Education Teaching Allocation’ (DES, 2017a), more commonly known as the SET model is national policy and impacts schools at a school wide level, due to individual school’s distribution of SETs based on the level of need within classes; regionally, where schools combine hours to form cluster posts for SETs a local level and nationally, as the SET model impacts all primary schools and to compare SET guidelines and provision with other jurisdictions. The systemic changes during the 2016-2021 period presented as four pillars in Table 1.1 below, constitute in the first instance legislative development such as the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 (Government of Ireland). The biggest curricular change was the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC), by the NCCA

in 2016, revised in 2019. DE policy documents include DE directives such as the SET model, (DEIS, 2017a) and this national policy document had an immediate impact on schools, as too did the School Self Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 (DES, 2016a), and Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections (DES, 2017b; DE 2020a). DE policy guidelines in relation to wellbeing, the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DES, 2018b) and digital strategy did not put the same immediate pressure on schools and yet have become imbedded and a greater awareness of the importance of wellbeing has become part of both national policy and professional learning (PL). Examples of the systemic changes considered for the purpose of this study are presented in table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 – Pillars of systemic change 2016-2021

Legislative	Curricular	DE policy documents	TC policy directive
		DE directives	
The Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 (Government of Ireland)	Primary Language Curriculum (PLC), (NCCA, 2016; 2019)	School Self Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 (DES, 2016a)	Droichead (TC, 2017)
		Special Education Teaching Allocation (DES, 2017a)	
		Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections (DES, 2017b; DE 2020a)	
		DE policy guidelines	
		Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 (DES, 2015)	
		Digital Strategy Action Plan (DES, 2018a)	
		Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DES, 2018b)	

It is important to consider the wider teacher educational policy context and acknowledge the range and breadth of systemic changes during the 2016-2021 time frame. One such changing policy context is the space led by the TC connecting initial

teacher education (ITE), with induction and lifelong learning again contributing to changes in PL. Droichead (TC, 2017) derived from the Irish word for bridge, was introduced on a phased basis from 2016, and is now mandatory in primary and post primary schools as the sole induction route for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) since the 2020/21 school year. While Droichead was piloted and introduced in a gradual phased basis depending on school size, from its inception it was met with controversy, with many teachers, principals and indeed the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) raising questions about the rollout and increased workload that Droichead would create for schools (INTO, 2016; O' Sullivan and Conway, 2016). It was designed to be a supportive, non-evaluative approach to enable teachers, and specifically NQTs, navigate their learning path through early career challenges. Droichead replaced the inspectorate model, whereby NQTs would have been visited by a DE inspector typically two-three times during their first year teaching. Colleagues on the Professional Support Team (PST), usually but not necessarily the principal and one or two other experienced teaching staff members work to support the NQT. The PST provide opportunities for observation of an experienced teacher and observation of a NQT by a PST member – typically three times during the process which is of at least 60 consecutive days duration in a continuous employment contract. The Droichead process guides NQTs with professional school based learning which is comprised of multiple strands including: engagement with the PST team, observing other experienced teachers, being observed by PST members, having professional conversations which may be formal or informal by nature and incorporating portfolio based learning using Taisce (TC, 2017). Taisce, which comes from the Irish word treasure chest, is used to build a repertoire of resources to support NQTs with their teaching. This aspect is complemented by additional professional learning activities, including one cluster meeting per term typically facilitated through the Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) by Oide facilitators and participation at another workshop or webinar or professional learning opportunity.

Full registration with the TC is dependent on engaging and completing the Droichead process. The TC commissioned Marino Institute of Education and Trinity College Dublin to research teachers' experiences of Droichead in 2018. The *DEEPEN* report examined the lived experience of the Droichead process from the perspectives of NQTs, members of the PST and principals, some of whom were, and some were not members of the PST in their school. The collaborative aspect of Droichead was

highlighted in the positive findings. These emphasised a need for a whole school holistic and inclusive approach to implementing and facilitating Droichead. More than half of the PST members felt their involvement in Droichead had enhanced collaborative efforts (Uí Choistealbha *et al.*, 2021).

Droichead is viewed as one of three professional learning stages by the TC. The first stage is Céim (Irish word for step), for ITE. There are two ITE routes for primary teaching in Ireland (TC, 2023). These include a four year undergraduate degree, the Bachelor of Education or a two-year postgraduate Professional Master of Education. Prior to this, the postgraduate route was known as the eighteen month long Graduate Diploma in Education, which was similar to the one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in other jurisdictions.

Cosán (TC, 2016a) (Irish word for pathway) was introduced in an attempt to formalise career wide teacher professional learning. The concept behind Cosán is that teachers would provide evidence of participation in PL in order to remain registered as teachers (TC, 2016a). At present there is no mandatory PL required for promotion or annual registration with the TC, however the TC website indicates the planned systemwide implementation of Cosán by 2027. It is widely acknowledged that Cosán is a complex policy and this is evidenced by the time it has taken to move from policy development to enact the policy (King, Brennan and Gorman, 2023).

1.4.2 The role of Covid-19 in terms of systemic changes in education

During this time teachers nationally and internationally also faced the complexities of the Covid-19 pandemic. This saw schools in Ireland close from the 12th March 2020 until they re-opened for the new school year in late August/early September 2020. Schools did not cease to operate during this time, rather teaching moved online in an unprecedented move which challenged the wellbeing and resilience of even the most experienced teachers in all roles and school leaders. Lemon and McDonough (2023) explore the dimensions of teacher resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic acknowledging the remote periods of teaching, often as an isolated occurrence using new pedagogical approaches and grappling with new platforms and communication inequalities. They acknowledge the “significant impacts” to teachers’ lives and work (2023, p. 1). In the Irish context, schools adopted differing policies as to

how the remote learning period would prevail. The urgency to move to remote teaching and learning from an international perspective is discussed by van der Spoel *et al.*, (2020) and Panos-Castro, Arruti and Korres (2022). The expectations, experiences and challenges faced by teachers are discussed in these studies. The issue of teachers having appropriate PL to support pupils' digital competency is raised (Panos-Castro, Arruti and Korres, 2022).

In the Irish context, accessing and supporting pupils' learning entirely through digital platforms was new for teachers. Many schools had previously used digital platforms such as Class Dojo or Aladdin for communication between home and school and as a class management tool. Schools assigned daily or weekly work using various platforms such as Class Dojo or Aladdin and some schools opted to use Microsoft Teams or Zoom to conduct interactive lessons. As pupils, teaching staff, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and principals returned to school buildings in Autumn 2020 there were many changes afoot in Irish primary classrooms as per the publication of *Reopening Our Schools: The Roadmap for The Full Return to School* (Government of Ireland, 2020) along with a substantial financial package of €376 million. Each school also had to have a *Covid-19 Response Plan* in place as directed by the DE (DE, 2020b; 2021a).

The pandemic affected different schools and areas in a variety of ways. The measures put in place to ensure the minimisation of the impact on teaching and learning ensured where pupils and teachers had to isolate or return to working remotely for designated periods of time, continuity of teaching prevailed. Schools closed in December 2020 for the Christmas closure and did not reopen for on-site school education at primary level until February/March 2021 depending on the class level in schools. A gradual phased return was employed nationwide. From January 2021 teachers re-engaged with remote teaching and learning with their classes and this ceased once class groupings returned to school. However, homework continued for the most part to be administered and corrected via the online platforms. As a whole, education through the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes for teachers often accompanied by an intensified workload (Allen *et al.*, 2020; Lemon and McDonough, 2023). It was necessary to address the impact of Covid-19 on teachers' resilience in this study. However, it was considered as one of the challenges faced by teachers in the context of systemic changes. The section that follows will address the rationale for the study which is twofold, personal and professional beginning with the professional piece.

1.5 Rationale for this Research

1.5.1 Professional Rationale

Research on teacher resilience at primary level during periods of systemic changes is limited in the Irish context. Day and Gu (2014) point out that “promoting much needed resilience in times of change remains an overlooked and under-researched area” (p. 17). The process of building, sustaining and renewing teacher resilience is very relevant given the recent changes in primary education since the INTO report *Workload, Stress and Resilience of Primary Teachers: Report of a Survey of INTO members* (INTO, 2015). This publication examined the role of teacher resilience in the context of workload, stress and resilience of primary teachers and identified sources of stress and burnout over the previous five years. The respondents’ position in schools led to some discrepancy in relation to the experience of stress and time for planning and PL opportunities were also raised. Almost three quarters of principals who participated in the 2015 study (INTO, 2015) reported that their role had become more stressful in the previous five years.

The systemic changes in the Irish primary context from 2016-2021 as outlined above justify a re-examination of teacher resilience, and identification of what builds and sustains resilience throughout different career phases. A subsequent report by the INTO, *Teacher Workload: INTO Research Report* (INTO, 2022), sought to build on the identified sources of workload and stress from the previous report and offer solutions as well as factoring in new sources since the publication of the last report. The 2022 INTO report had four phases; phase one was workshop based, with eight workshops held in 2019. Phase two was a questionnaire based on phase one with suggested solutions to elicit interest among members, 1,178 principals completed the principal questionnaire and 4,262 teachers responded to the teacher survey on workload. Phase three involved a focus group discussion with members and the preparation of recommendations; phase four finalised the suggestions from the project. The present study differs, in that the views of case study participants are sought in the questionnaire and expanded on further through the semi-structured interviews with the same participants. This allows for an in-depth analysis of the opinions of primary teachers (both mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals across six school types. As the questionnaires in both (INTO, 2022) and the present study were circulated in 2021 this allows for comparison to be made between the two studies. Understanding how systemic changes impact on career

wide resiliency and what fosters or inhibits resilience for teachers and principals is necessary to sustain teachers and leaders. The need for the present research stems from the researcher's vision of building resiliency as an integral part of career wide teaching. Eliciting what teachers and principals think could be enhanced about the current system will establish suggestions for future improvement for when change initiatives are proposed and implemented. Much of the literature currently available in the area of teacher resilience, focuses on ITE and early career resiliency in the induction phase.

1.5.2 Personal Rationale

As a primary teacher, I have supported and engaged with NQTs as a member of the Droichead PST in my school since 2018. Prior to this I informally supported new colleagues during my time teaching in Cork. As a member of the PST, I worked predominantly with NQTs but also more experienced teachers who returned to Ireland to live and work having emigrated and taught abroad after their ITE. In a similar role, I worked prior to Covid-19 as a facilitator in a local education centre for the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), delivering a suite of workshops to NQTs in their induction year. Through informal discussions, respecting the privacy of schools and settings it became apparent that schools varied in their approaches to mentoring NQTs with varying levels of support, this deepened my interest in induction and mentoring.

Through my part-time work lecturing and tutoring on special education PL courses over the past four years, I noticed that participants held a shared desire to collectively build capacity for effective teaching and learning in their various settings. As chairperson of Dyslexia Specialists Ireland (DSI) from 2019-2021, I established sub-committees to afford members with specialist interests in assessment, developing the organisation's social media and website traffic and creating and delivering PL, to reform and rebrand the initial vision of the group. Through lengthy conversations with various organisations and charities, I experienced different leadership styles and saw the importance of clear lines of communication. This gave me the confidence to share my knowledge with the staff of my own school to develop our collective understanding and knowledge base in areas such as literacy, inclusive and special education and assessment. This experience made me aware of the challenges of implementing the plethora of new policies and initiatives in schools.

In a personal capacity, I have taught from Junior Infants to Sixth Class in a range of educational settings for the past fifteen years. During this time, I have taught alongside some inspiring teacher leaders as a mainstream class teacher and a SET. The professional opportunities to reflect and re-evaluate my own teaching afforded to me by completing my Masters in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) opened up another world of teaching. Teaching in various settings, in a range of school types and contexts brought a realisation of the different cultural idiosyncrasies that exist in schools. Teacher expectations, experience, opinions on education, school culture and educational reform varied also. Experienced colleagues spoke of the benefits of encountering first-hand how different schools operate and are led. This sparked the idea of career wide resiliency, and how at different life and career stages, teachers and leaders experience challenges which impact on their ability to demonstrate resilience. The social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure as indicated by Day and Gu (2014) as three aspects that foster resilience, differed between schools and inspired my idea to conduct this study across different school types to provide a broad scope for respondents and in turn a substantive research base.

The trajectory and opportunities in teaching are evolving and what once was a vocation spent probably in one setting, is changing. Movement of teachers due to living arrangements and family circumstances has impacted the job application process in recent years. DE statistics show there were 38,604 primary teachers employed by the DE in the 2020/2021 school year (DE, 2021b). Teacher shortages and the cost of living crisis are impacting on the delivery of primary education in urban settings such as Dublin in 2023. This has become a bigger challenge for principals since the study began. A recent survey conducted by the INTO, in conjunction with the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) indicated in November 2023, there were 809 unfilled permanent, fixed-term and long-term substitute teachers among the schools who responded to the survey (INTO, 2023). A welcomed announcement from the TC in November 2023 indicated that for the remainder of the 2023/24 school year and the duration of the 2024/25 academic year, primary NQTs employed on supply panels or in principal release time posts can complete the Drochead process in these settings which was not possible previously. This was in an attempt to fill many of these positions which have been unfilled to date this year.

Additional teaching posts generated by the revised SET model, (DES, 2017a) and the increase in special autism classes to meet the growing number of students diagnosed with autism has led to more teaching positions in schools with an increase in population arguably a factor also. There has been an increase in speech and language, early intervention and multiple disabilities classes which has impacted on patterns of movement in the teaching profession with experienced teachers opting to relocate, move home from abroad or take on new roles within schools. Data from the NCSE shows the steady growth in special classes in Ireland. From 2011-2019 provision of special classes increased by 196% (NCSE, 2019). This is analysed and reported on by Travers (2023) who explains that 89% of special classes are autism classes, an increase of 23% in the past ten years. The current prevalence rate for autism is estimated at 3.11%, a doubling from 1.5% in the past decade (NCSE, 2023).

Depending on school climates, cultures and level of support available there may be teachers with less experience in highly specific roles. There are many challenges emerging within the education system as a result of the introduction of the revised SET model, including support for school leaders in interpreting and initiating changes in schools (Kenny, McCoy and Mihut, 2020). Concerns raised about the lack of teacher PL to support SEN at primary level (Travers, 2019) echo with my own views regarding PL as a necessary tool to support teachers and principals to sustain teacher resilience throughout different career phases.

Central to the revised SET model is the idea of improving the learning outcomes and opportunities for all learners in an inclusive environment, which reforms the traditional withdrawal model of support for a more balanced model including increased in-class support. The department directive and guidelines around the revised SET model potentially enable teacher agency to occur. Many schools however, have no teachers with SET qualifications, and often deploy those who have completed PL or extra qualifications in SET in other positions such as mainstream class teachers. This trend opposes advice set out in Circular 13/2017 which states; “the classroom teacher will be supported by Special Educational Needs Teachers, who will have access to additional training in the area of special education” (DES, 2017a, p. 17). From my own experience, in several schools the most senior teachers are often in SET positions, however, they are not necessarily qualified for those positions. The DE outlines “the acquired professional development and expertise of teachers, including where teachers have attained recognised qualifications in special education”, should be considered

(2017a, p. 20). The guidelines reinforce that those pupils with identified levels of need should be supported by teachers “with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support” (2017c, p. 5). Belief in meeting the needs of all learners, frustration with systemic changes not being sufficiently supported and the lack of PL available to schools to successfully implement the revised SET model are reasons why I wanted to engage in this research and include the area of SEN as one of the systemic changes.

My doctoral journey gave me the confidence to consider myself as a teacher leader. Through this journey, I had an opportunity to explore the literature and engage in professional discussion in areas of education such as; leadership, policy implementation, providing for inclusive and special education, teacher agency and ultimately teacher resilience. I subsequently chose to pursue teacher resilience for my research study to explore teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals attitudes to resilience, the lived experience of a variety of teachers in different educational settings with varying levels of experience.

There have been many approaches taken by researchers into examining how teacher resilience is experienced. These include observing how resilience may be cultivated by policy and workplace, reviewing the dearth of literature on teacher resilience to develop frameworks and projects related to teacher resilience. Seminal work by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) investigated how graduating and early career teachers perceived resilient teachers. Perceived capacities, teacher commitment and self-efficacy, school and personal supports and culture and policy in pre-service teachers’ resilience are explored by Peixoto *et al.* (2018). Beltman (2021) examines multiple perspectives of teacher resilience; person-focused, process-focused, context-focused and system-focused to encompass the complexities of resilience. The question is raised of how different countries and cultures understand the components of teacher resilience. Maintaining a systemic view is advocated for by Beltman (2021) where the personal capacities and wider systems are included to reflect the “real-world complexity of education systems” and each relevant component, the capacities, processes and outcomes are harnessed to develop resilience (p. 22). Observing the findings from other researchers’ work facilitates a different lens to inform the conceptual framework and research instruments adapted for the purpose of this research study.

1.6 Research Questions and Aims

The following section will address the research questions and aims of the study.

The research question (RQ) is:

What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?

The subsidiary questions are as follows:

1. What supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals?
2. What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?
3. How does lived experience impact on resilience for teachers and principals?

The aims of this research are to explore the resilience of primary school teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals whose working contexts have been impacted by the multiple systemic changes relating to policy development, the implementation of initiatives and the global pandemic of Covid-19. The research study aims to address the gap in research from an Irish perspective to ascertain the extent to which participants demonstrated resilience throughout systemic changes and challenging periods in Irish and international education, what supported or fostered resiliency for them and what inhibited resilience for teachers and leaders. From a career wide perspective, the research will establish what makes a resilient teacher and if there are ways to build career wide resiliency in teaching. This research comprises a mixed-methods multi-site case study including six schools in the Leinster region and the recirculation of the case study questionnaire to facilitate a wider demographic from a national questionnaire.

The study afforded participants an opportunity to reflect and offer their opinions on a particularly challenging period for primary teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals in Ireland. The pace of change over the previous five years, the rollout and implementation of initiatives and policies will be addressed. The role of leadership in teacher resilience was scrutinised and the challenges of teaching and job satisfaction of participants explored.

1.7 Overview of Thesis

This chapter has briefly outlined the emergence of the area of research, identified the main research topic of teacher resilience and explored the rationale, the research questions, aims and contribution of this study. The following chapter will review current literature in relation to teacher resilience and educational change and describe the scope and selection procedures for literature relevant to the study focus. Chapter Two begins with an explanation of the literature review methodology, followed by the historical conceptualisation of resilience, the emergence of teacher resilience, navigating everyday resilience and discussions on building teacher resilience. The second half of the chapter considers teacher resilience as an innate quality or learnt skill, the role leadership plays in teacher resilience and additional factors which impact on teacher resilience. The chapter concludes with a focus on changes in education, sustaining career wide resiliency and the conceptual framework employed in the study. Chapter Three clarifies the methodological approach to this study. It describes the transformative approach taken, the research design and the process of instrument development and ethical considerations. The questionnaire distribution, conducting interviews and analysing the data sets are also outlined. The limitations of the study form the basis of the conclusion for this chapter. Chapter Four presents the analysis and conclusions reached on the findings of the study and a discussion of the findings is examined through answering the research questions in Chapter Five. Further research and the conclusion of the study are reported in Chapter Six.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

“To lead to one’s best and to teach to one’s best over time require resilience”

(Day and Gu, 2014, p. 105).

This literature review explores the relevant literature pertaining to teacher resilience beginning with an overview of the literature selection process that was followed. The purpose of this review is to give a comprehensive overview of literature currently available relating to teacher resilience, assess previous studies nationally and internationally in the area of teacher resilience which supported the development of a conceptual framework and subsequent research question in this area. This chapter will consider systemic changes and educational reform and how this impacts on teacher resilience. The literature review will also examine the role of leadership in supporting and enabling teacher resilience. Teacher retention, career wide resiliency and challenges to resilience are discussed. Finally, the conceptual framework used in this study is presented.

2.2 Search and selection procedures

In examining the Summon Dublin City University (DCU) database in May 2020, November 2020 and February 2021, the researcher applied the following criteria to the search term “teacher resilience”; articles shortlisted were peer-reviewed, from 2012-2021 and in the English language. This resulted in over 37,000 hits. The researcher made further refinements by selecting “education” as the discipline and “education”, “education and educational research” and “teachers” as the preferred subject terms. This shortlisted 8,442 articles, of which 2,854 had open access. By hand selecting according to the titles and abstract provided from the first 250 articles listed, 17 were deemed to be relevant because they focused on primary school teachers as opposed to students or initial teacher education students. No new themes were evident that had not been present after this point, many articles did not focus on teacher resilience or had a greater focal point. In addition, articles by Morgan *et al.* (2010),

Morgan (2011), the INTO report by Morgan and Nic Craith (INTO, 2015), Daniilidou and Platsidou (2018), supplementary articles previously selected by the researcher given their relevance to teacher resilience amid times of change (e.g. Botou *et al.*, 2017) and three books; Day and Gu (2014), Wosnitza *et al.* (2018) and Mansfield (2021) were also included as relevant literature in terms of teacher resilience and cultivating resilience among teachers.

The following electronic databases were also consulted; ERIC, SAGE, SAGE journals. Between 2012-2022 ERIC generated 403 results for “teacher resilience”, the first 150 were examined and 21 results were manually selected. SAGE initially generated 23,382 results for “teacher resilience”, subsequent parameters of “primary teachers” “principals” narrowed the search to 13,071 articles, once the education filter was applied this resulted in 817 accessible articles, again manually searched by the first 150. SAGE journals had 4,172 articles, within the parameters of 2012-2021 there were 2,278, applying “education” narrowed this to 537 and again the first 150 articles were manually searched. Duplicates were discarded and there were many overlaps from the initial 17 articles.

Subsequent searches as recent as August 2023 failed to retrieve any articles relating to the Irish context of teacher resilience within the time period in focus in this study (2016-2021). Using the DCU library database and including results from outside the DCU library, the researcher applied the following parameters to the most recent search. “Teacher resilience” in “education” were key words, between the time period of “2012-2023” this resulted in 63,809 hits. 62,444 were articles, 29644 had open access and refining the subject to “education and educational research” decreased the results to 5,273. The researcher then viewed 50 articles per page for the first five pages, examining 250 articles in total. Many corresponded to the previous search and were marked off. Additional articles were discarded if they referenced pre-service teachers or higher or further education staff. Through this search an additional eight articles were read. The researcher acknowledges that many more could have been accessed and critiqued but those chosen encompassed the key themes and theories in the literature base and provided a broad overview from a global perspective in terms of teacher

resilience through Covid-19. The INTO report (2022) into Teacher Workload was also included at this point.

In addressing systemic changes in education, policy documents and reports from 2016-2021 were examined and a review of research associated with educational change and the factors associated with negotiating educational change. Initially, systemic changes were considered in terms of policy documents. A further examination of material in 2023 sought to include more literature relating to educational change and the impact of Covid-19 on educational practices and teacher education throughout this time. The filters applied through the DCU library search in August 2023 were as follows: “educational change” – 9,176,541 results, “peer reviewed” – 2,295,469, between the timeframe of 2012-2023 – 1,370,100 results, articles, book chapters, books, were filtered and “education and educational research” limited the search to 212,142 hits. Once “primary” and “Ireland” were then applied this narrowed the search to 5,868. Of these the first 250 abstracts and titles were read and screened. Ten were deemed to be appropriate in addition to the work of Fullan (2002; 2015), and Hargreaves (2005), Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) and an additional book Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2015) on the area of teacher agency. The review was completed by analysis of the key themes and theories evident in the literature and the national policy documents and relevant DE circulars were also considered.

2.3 Teacher resilience

Resilience in the context of the teaching profession, can be conceptualised as a capacity, process (Luthar *et al.*, 2000) and outcome (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016a, p.80). These components consider the individual teacher (role), their contexts and the specific challenges in professional life phases (Gu and Li, 2013; Day and Gu, 2014; Beltman, Mansfield and Harris, 2016). Resilient teachers use personal characteristics such as problem-solving skills, reflection and competency and contextual elements such as mentoring and relying on support from peers and colleagues to support their management of challenges in order to develop and achieve job satisfaction and well-being in their professional career (Beltman *et al.*, 2011; Mansfield *et al.*, 2016a; Boon, 2021). The concept that resilient teachers experience adversity but are able to recover in

terms of functioning and capacity to the psychological state prior to the adverse experience is noted by McKay and Barton (2018). Research from Gu and Day (2013) highlights the capacity of teachers to maintain “equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency” in their everyday worlds (p. 26). Challenges to teacher resilience are explored in the analyses of longitudinal qualitative data where 300 primary and secondary teachers were interviewed twice yearly for three years. This was part of the VITAE (Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and Effectiveness) study (Day *et al.*, 2006). The research focused on the lived experience of participants and their perceived effectiveness and placed participants in six career phase groupings. Conceptualisation of resilience as the ability to “bounce back” in challenging environmental circumstances (Oswald *et al.*, 2003; Tait, 2008) does not reflect the “uncertain and unpredictable circumstances and scenarios which form the main feature of teachers’ everyday professional lives” (Day and Gu, 2014, p. 141). Teacher resilience is the capacity to manage the “unavoidable uncertainties” (Shulman, 2005, p. 1) inherent in the realities of teaching (Gu and Li, 2013).

Associations of influence are discussed by Day and Gu (2014) in relation to professional identities, which are more or less vulnerable at various times, influenced by teachers’ capacity to “manage the interaction of a number of policy, workplace and personal challenges” (p. 58). In their book *Resilient Teachers, Resilient Schools*, Day and Gu (2014), present on the nature of teacher resilience, building resilience in teachers and why resilience matters. Drawing upon findings of the VITAE research, the role of resilience in teachers’ career-long commitment and effectiveness is examined. They discovered three inter-connected conditions were required: a vocation from the teachers themselves, high quality social and professional relationships with colleagues and support and recognition from leadership. Research by Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) evaluates whether factors at the individual level or contextual level have the greatest influence on measures of resilience. There has been a shift in mindset from examining deficits in individuals to recognising strengths in terms of resilience and what creates these. Intrinsic motivation (Kitching, Morgan and O’Leary, 2009) is one such individual factor which is believed to be important in developing teacher resilience.

Teacher resilience is driven by teachers' "educational purposes and moral values" and is influenced by teachers' commitment to teaching and fostering a sense of achievement for children on a daily basis over the course of their professional lives (Gu and Li, 2013, p. 300). Familiarity with the concept of resilience and the use of the word "resilient" in the media is raised by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) who highlighted over a decade ago that overfamiliarity with the word being heavily referenced by the media could potentially impact how resilience is described and understood. Teacher resilience will now be examined under the headings of individual and contextual, research in the Irish context and everyday resilience. For the purpose of the present study teacher resilience concerns an individual's capacity to "maintain positive attributes in face of a range of challenges, pressures and demands" associated with their work (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018, p. 17). Resilient principals consider the learning needs of pupils and the professional growth of teachers (Day and Gu, 2014). Teacher resilience bears three distinctive characteristics: context specific, role specific and demonstrating everyday resilience (Gu and Day 2007, 2013; Gu and Li, 2013; Gu, 2014; Gu 2018).

There has been a shift away from examining teacher resilience pertaining to an individual solely to an ecological perspective (Beltman *et al.*, 2016). Teacher resilience is believed to be sustained and influenced by interactions with individuals and in a variety of contexts. This expands on the work of Beltman *et al.* (2011) who present individual and contextual risk and protective factors for teacher resilience. Gu (2018) builds on previous work (Gu and Day 2007, 2013; Gu and Li, 2013; Day and Gu, 2014; Gu, 2014) to reconceptualise resilience in teachers using a social-ecological perspective. Teachers possess a capacity for resilience, and they rely on individual or contextual factors to support them in adverse situations (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016a). The complexity of interactions between these personal and contextual factors impact on the process of resilience building among teachers (Gu and Day, 2013; Beltman and Mansfield, 2018; Gu, 2018; Peixoto *et al.*, 2020). Teachers' lives are understood in the context of their work and their capacity to teach to their best influences and is influenced by the world around them. Teachers' lives are examined in the context of individual, relational and organisational roles (Leahy, 2012).

2.3.1 Individual teacher resilience

Arguably teachers own individual resilience impacts on their overall teacher resilience (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019), but both individual and contextual factors need addressing to support resilience in role. Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) present a quantitative study to establish which factors were the strongest predictors of three measures of positive adaptation in teachers: job satisfaction, burnout and wellbeing. Positive adaptation encapsulates beneficial outcomes experienced by individuals in spite of risks within the environment (Howard and Johnson, 2004; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019). When assessing levels of resilience, evidence of positive adaptation despite challenging circumstances is sought. “Positive adaptation, reflected by higher levels of wellbeing and job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout are all related to teachers’ capacity to sustain motivation and provide an effective learning environment for their pupils” (p. 118). The findings revealed “differences in teachers’ levels of positive adaptation were related to both characteristics of the individual and their environment” (p. 122). The centrality of relationships in the process of positive adaptation is emphasised by Gu, 2014; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019. The results showed that differences in positive adaptation levels among teachers were related to individual and contextual factors. Their research argues that both individual and contextual factors need addressing in order to support resilience in role. At an individual level, emotional intelligence was a predictor of general resilience, and they acknowledged that teachers need time to revisit their own beliefs and values. Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) warn against efforts to work on individual resiliency which focus on an individual approach.

Self-care was identified as the most significant individual level predictor of wellbeing as it was linked with job satisfaction. Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) view self-care as making time for oneself (p. 124). Interestingly, the study found that self-care was the most important individual level predictor of well-being. This aligns with organisational psychology literature which shows the link between a successful work-life balance and high job satisfaction and research by Harris and Jones (2020) which advised that self-care and consideration should be the main priority and concern for all

school leaders. Gu (2018) concludes it is widely accepted that the potentiality of individuals to be resilient is “nurtured, learned and acquired” (p. 22).

2.3.2 The contextual nature of teacher resilience

The wider ecological view (Beltman, Mansfield and Harris, 2016) emphasises the importance of both “personal and contextual resources that support or enable teacher resilience, and the multidimensional and dynamic nature of the resilience process” (p. 173). The three most important contextual factors in the Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) findings were workload, support from management and school culture. “Ensuring supportive management, reasonable workloads, and positive school cultures where staff collaborate and socialise with one another” would help teachers thrive within their role they explain (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019, p. 126). School level support, including support from management and culture remain important considerations as context matters.

Gu and Li (2013) acknowledge the emotional and physical demands of teaching and suggest that the endurance of teachers’ capacity to teach to their best “in the unpredictable setting of the classroom is constant rather than occasional” (p. 296). In their quantitative study of over 500 primary and secondary school teachers in Beijing they offer an understanding of resilience in Chinese teachers’ work in times of change and reform. Three elements of context were considered which influence teachers’ capacities to be resilient: conditions, professional life phases and workplace relationships. Normal working conditions included; “long working hours, excessive workload, disproportionate pressure and responsibility and low salary and social status” (p. 296). Two thirds of questionnaire respondents reported a sustained sense of commitment and motivation in their teaching despite their working conditions, with a similar number reporting strong or moderate agreement on their sustained motivation and commitment to teaching over different career phases. In terms of workplace relations, relational trust between teachers and colleagues was considered most important in terms of perceived capacity to remain resilient. Gu and Li (2013) conclude that resilience building processes should be “consistent and ongoing and related to the needs which themselves are likely to fluctuate in response to changes in policy,

workplace and personal circumstances” (p. 300). Building and sustaining resilience throughout different career phases is explained as a continuous process. Building resilience within an organisational setting emphasises the necessity for the context, structure and system to function in unison to create a “supportive environment for individuals’ professional learning and development”, to ensure trust among staff, and a collective sense of efficacy and to strive for continuous improvement (Gu, 2018, p. 25).

The lived-in resilience of teachers and how a range of factors contribute to the experience of lived-in resilience is considered by Boon (2021) – Figure 2.1 below, who is concerned with examining the lived-in resilience of teachers who have sustained resilience as well as those who have left the teaching profession.

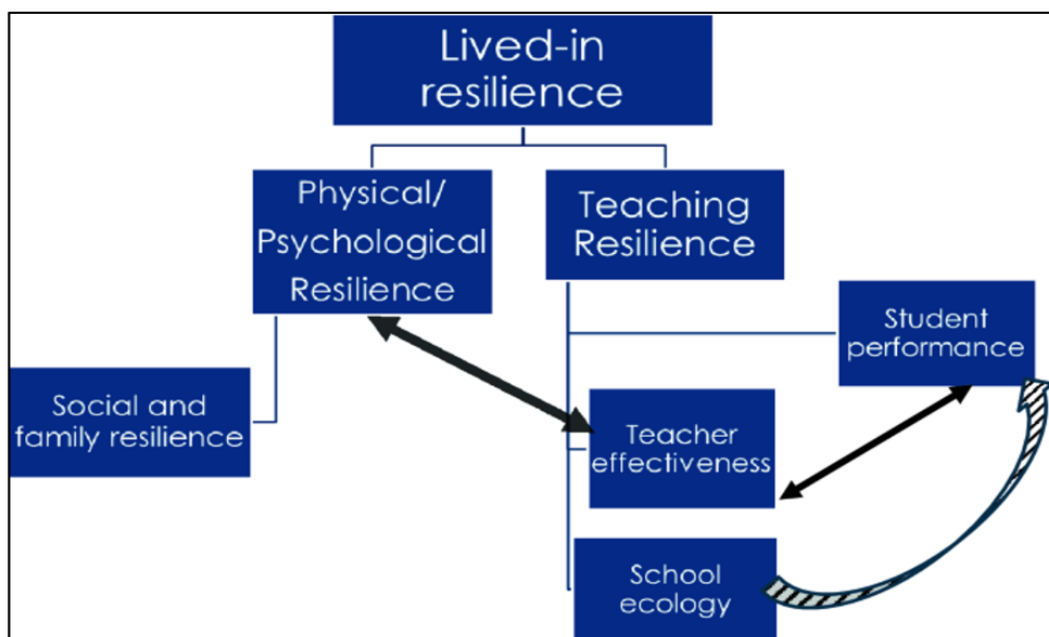


Figure 2.1 Lived-in Resilience Framework (Boon, 2021)

This proposed framework (Boon, 2021) develops the contextual social factors and support that impact individuals with interconnected pathways and loops, with teacher effectiveness seen as impacting on student performance and psychological resilience. Both nationally and internationally, teachers recognise the additional pressures exerted by wide ranging reforms of curricula and the “fast changing knowledge economy” which not only increases workload but also the complexity of the profession (Gu, 2014, p. 502). Teacher Resilience in the Irish context will be focused on next.

2.3.3 Teacher Resilience in the Irish context

Despite teacher resilience being identified by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) as a research area with rapid growth, the specific focus on career wide resiliency, especially in an Irish teaching context did not develop at the same rate. Indeed, little research is currently available that examines the trajectory of teacher resilience as a concept with experienced teachers. The reality that efficacy, commitment and teacher motivation change depending on career stages for teachers and the context of their work is acknowledged by Morgan *et al.* (2010) who focused on teachers in the first five years of their career as part of their research. Their quantitative study (n=749) examined one school term in the lives of early career teachers from September to December 2006 to ascertain what sustains teachers and what keeps early career teachers motivated. The authors acknowledged that influences in sustaining teachers were “likely to change depending on the career stage and indeed the context of the teacher’s work” (2010, p. 203). Teacher resilience is not limited to the first five years or a teacher’s early career. They found that a teacher's initial motivation to pursue a career in teaching was what sustained their resilience over the first five years. The study found positive interactions and relationships with pupils helped to counterbalance negative experiences and perceptions of change participants may have experienced.

From the perspective of Irish primary teachers and principals, the INTO carried out two research reports: *Workload, Stress and Resilience of Primary Teachers: Report of a Survey of INTO members* (INTO, 2015) and *Teacher Workload: INTO Research Report* (2022). The INTO report (2015) examined the workload, stress and resilience of primary teachers in Ireland and included the views of principals, SETs and mainstream class teachers. Approximately 90% of teachers surveyed (n=332) indicated that teaching had become more or much more stressful, demanding, challenging and hectic than the previous five years. Noteworthy, documentation and paperwork were identified as contributing to the increase in stress. Half of mainstream class teachers (50%), 58% of those in role in SET and 72.7% of principals took the view that teaching had become much more stressful. Participants were in consensus that reduced paperwork and addressing the curriculum overload issue would make teaching less stressful and enhance job satisfaction. PL opportunities in the area of SEN, time for planning during

the school day and the recognition of wellbeing of teachers were also identified as factors that would support participants.

The INTO Research Report (2022) focused on the identification of solutions to the previously identified sources of workload challenge in the 2015 report (INTO, 2015) in addition to identifying new sources. Principals, SETs and mainstream class teachers were again involved in this study described in Chapter One (1.5.1). The report (INTO, 2022) concludes the work of teachers and principals has continued to become more demanding. For teachers, the report appreciates that while change in the curriculum may be necessary, the resultant increased workload for teachers is conceded. The implementation of initiatives, curricula and policies is the responsibility of teachers. Principal teachers' workload is described as “becoming unsustainable” (p. 60). The level of work being completed for operational reasons by principals should be reviewed. The INTO recommends the establishment of a Primary Education Review Group, to include educational stakeholders such as the INTO, school management bodies, the DE and other stakeholders to review the structure and organisation of primary education.

2.3.4 Everyday Resilience

Teachers who are resilient according to Mansfield *et al.* (2012) are “more likely to persevere in adverse situations, find it easier to adapt to change and ultimately may be less inclined to consider leaving the profession” (p. 357). Building resilience is also accepted as a proactive way to address teacher attrition (Tait, 2008; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012), and will be addressed further in this review. Mansfield *et al.* (2016a) advise a cautionary view of associating attrition with low levels of teacher resilience. “The possibility that some school contexts may be particularly adverse for some individuals, and that a resilient response may be to leave should not be precluded” (p. 85).

Teachers are faced with “constant intellectual and emotional challenges” and this gives rise to the term “everyday resilience” Day and Gu (2014, p. 141). The culmination of having the capacity to be resilient alongside the desire, determination and energy as well as the requisite knowledge enables teachers to realise and teach to their best over a sustained period. Gu (2018) advocates that resilience in teachers needs

to be recognised as being closely linked with their everyday capacity to sustain their teaching contributions and successfully manage the “unavoidable uncertainties inherent in their world” (p. 14). This relates teachers’ everyday capacity to sustain their position as educators which needs to be understood within the context of teachers’ classrooms regardless of factors such as age, experience and school types.

2.3.5 The resilience building process and existing frameworks

Various risk and protective factors impact on teachers’ resilience (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018). In terms of teaching, risk factors can be individual or environmental. Protective factors impact resilience by mitigating the impact of risk factors. These can be individual or collective factors that encourage self-improvement or enhance positive outcomes (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018). Personal strengths and coping strategies that support early career teachers to be resilient are listed by Mansfield *et al.* (2012). Identifying risk and protective factors of both individuals and contexts as a framework is recommended (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012, p. 359). Interestingly, the gap in considering how teacher resilience may be developed is highlighted here. It remains unclear if the same constraints and supports impact the resilience of early career teachers and experienced teachers in the same way. While the researcher acknowledges the need to support early career teachers (which is happening in a more structured format since the introduction of Droichead in Irish schools on a phased basis in 2015) there is limited research into sustaining career wide resiliency in the Irish context.

Mansfield *et al.* (2012) focused on graduating and early career teachers (n=259) in terms of how they view resilience for their quantitative survey and acknowledged the limited research into how teachers view resilience in “the context of their profession or at particular career stages” (p. 358). They report few studies have examined how teachers understand resilience or how they would describe a resilient teacher. Their study organised the 200 responses to the open ended question “how would you describe a resilient teacher?” into 23 categories initially, then to four broad dimensions where they attributed the interrelated aspects according to the dimensions and identified overarching themes. The four dimensions identified comprise the *Four Dimensional Framework of Resilience* (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012) which built on the work of Kumpfer

(1999). These are the profession related, the emotional, the motivational and social dimensions as seen in Figure 2.2 below.

The profession-related dimension involves aspects concerning the practice of teaching, some of which may be traditionally addressed in teacher education programs. These include organisation, preparation, use of effective teaching skills and being reflective. The emotional dimension involves aspects concerning emotional responses to teaching experiences, emotional management and coping with stress. Aspects related to motivation, such as self-efficacy, focusing on continual improvement and learning, persistence and perseverance are included in the motivational dimension. The social dimension concerns aspects related to social interactions in the work environment, such as developing a support network, asking for assistance and taking advice

(Mansfield *et al.*, 2012, p. 362).

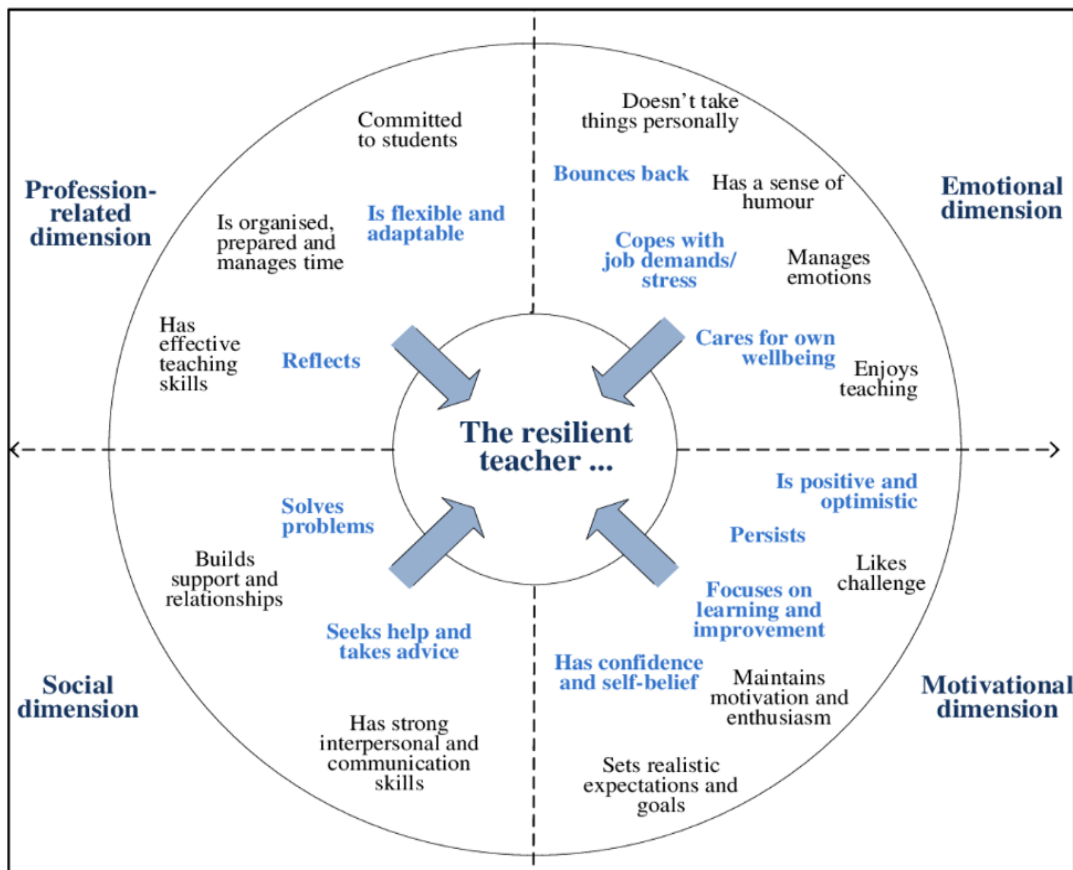


Figure 2.2 The Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resilience – Mansfield *et al.* (2012)

The fluctuating nature of resilience allows the same internal or external factor to act as a risk or protective factor depending on whether it intensifies or reduces the impact on stressful and challenging events (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018). In terms of future research, Mansfield *et al.* (2012) advocate for comparing understandings of

teacher resilience with teachers in different contexts and career phases and recommend the inclusion of in-depth interviews.

A multilevel heuristic model on teacher resilience which builds on the work of Mansfield *et al.* (2012), amongst others, was proposed by Wosnitza *et al.* (2014). This was part of the *Enhancing Teacher Resilience in Europe* project (ENTRÉE). In this framework individual behaviour is recognised as a result of experience, skills, knowledge and beliefs, developed in interaction with the environment. It is assumed that teachers can learn to respond in resilient ways and that resilience can change over time, influenced by support systems and environmental factors. This posits teacher resilience in a multifaceted way, resulting from the interaction between individual characteristics and contextual factors and acknowledges the impact that increased demands and policies exert on teachers (Figure 2.3).

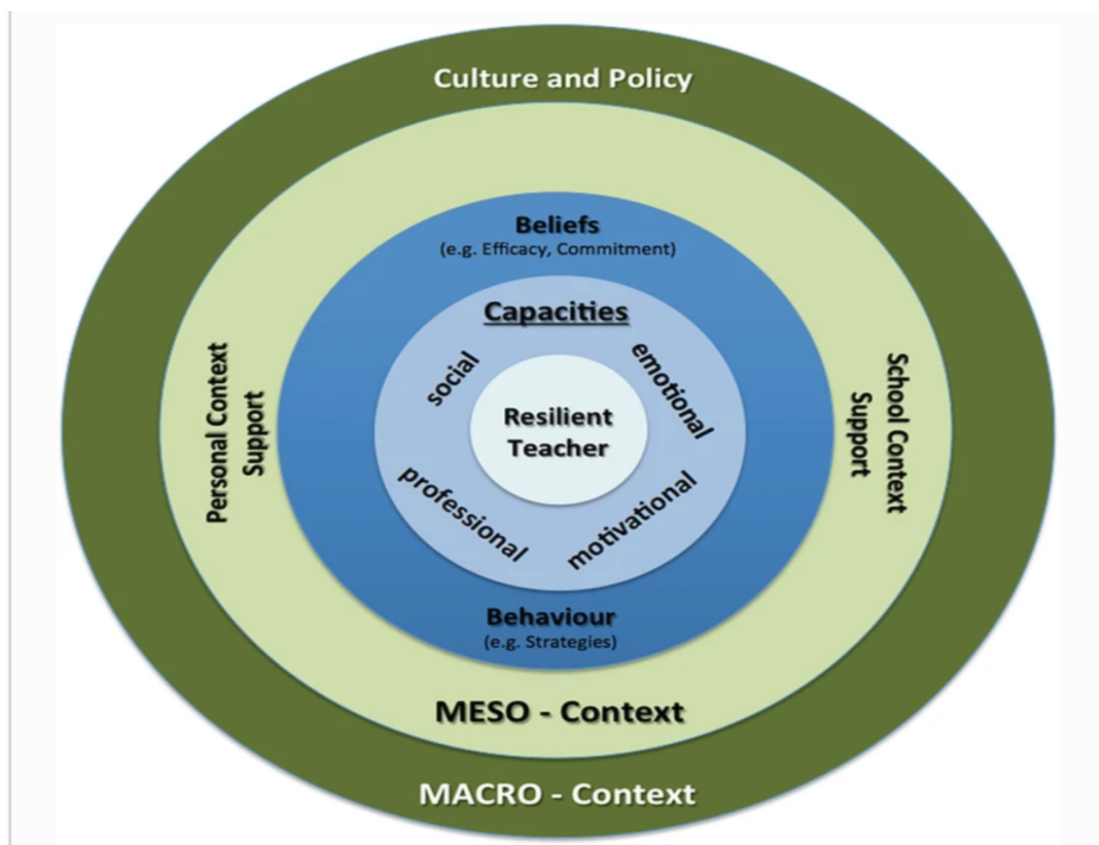


Figure 2.3 Multilevel model developed by ENTRÉE (Wosnitza *et al.*, 2014)

Four key themes for consideration for building teacher resilience; relationships, wellbeing, motivation and emotions, with a conceptual underpinning of teacher resilience are proposed by Mansfield *et al.*, (2016a). These are acknowledged as developing over time and with experience depending on individual and context (p. 83). They are presented as the BRiTE (Building Resilience in Teacher Education)

framework. The complexity of the resilience construct is acknowledged by Mansfield *et al.* (2016a). The framework is informed from a review of literature on teacher resilience from 2000-2014. This framework was launched in Australia in 2015 as five online learning modules and by 2020 over 14,000 participants had registered to complete modules (Mansfield *et al.*, 2021).

Peixoto *et al.* (2020) in their study of 334 Portuguese teachers again stipulated that further studies are warranted to make sound conclusions into the structure of teacher resilience. They suggested additional studies would involve teachers of different ages with varying levels of experience. Arguably, it would be remiss to limit studies on teacher resilience to early career teachers, it is important to examine the career wide view of resilience from teachers and principals in a broad range of school types and contexts in Irish primary education.

Three aspects that foster resilience, social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure are noted by Day and Gu (2014). It would be beneficial to establish the significance of these aspects to teachers and principals in Ireland in order to provide support if necessary, in the subsequent areas to foster the growth of teacher resilience. Teacher resilience can be conceptualised in a range of different ways “each with the possibility of new insights into the nature of resilience and how to support resilience” (MacCallum, 2021, p. 295). Current frameworks need to be considered in terms of systemic changes from an Irish context and how they will assist in answering the research questions.

2.3.6 Can teacher resilience be developed?

Day and Gu (2014) reaffirm previous research that resilience in teachers is not innate (Beltman *et al.*, 2011; Gu and Day, 2007; Gu and Li, 2013) or “inexhaustible” (p. 99) and the capacity to be resilient has been overlooked in previous research where the problematic nature of “teacher stress, burnout and retention” were instead prioritised (p. 15). The social environment is important in terms of the workplace and self-efficacy and resilience can be “fostered or diminished through the environment” (Day and Gu, 2014, p. 88). The nature of resilience is influenced by individual qualities in the multi-layered relationships in which teachers’ work and lives are embedded (Gu and Li, 2013; Day and Gu, 2014). Gu and Li (2013) point to the “necessity” of nurturing teachers’ sense of resilience and commitment (p. 290). Gu (2018) emphasises the “latent” concept of teacher resilience which is neither “innate or stable” (p. 14). Teachers’

capacity to be resilient fluctuates as a result of the conditions experienced, school leadership and relational and organisational structure where they work (Gu 2014; 2018). Research in the area of teacher resilience cites many factors and attributes which impact on teachers and leaders. Based on the concept that teacher resilience can be developed, contextual and ecological factors, both positive and negative are considered (Day *et al.* 2006; Boon, 2021). These will now be addressed in turn beginning with factors that positively influence teacher resilience.

2.4 Factors that positively influence teacher resilience

There are a range of factors which impact positively on teacher resilience. These include but are not limited to collaboration (Gu and Li, 2013; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020), the strategy of professional learning, leadership (Gu, 2014) and school culture (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019). A systemic view of resilience is presented by Mansfield *et al.* (2016b), adapting a previously developed systems model (Biggs and Moore, 1993) to categorise constructs as personal resources, contextual resources, strategies and outcomes. Personal resources include motivation, efficacy and initiative; contextual resources such as mentors, support networks and positive relationships; strategies, for example professional learning, reflection, problem solving and outcomes such as wellbeing and job satisfaction offer an understanding of the process, which can vary for individuals, in different settings, over time. The systemic view is advocated for by Beltman (2021) as one that has the potential to reflect the real world complexity of education systems. A range of factors addressed in research on teacher resilience including collaboration, PL, relationships and support networks, teacher self-care, self-efficacy and reflection, teacher wellbeing and school culture will now be discussed.

2.4.1 Collaboration and examples of the advocacy for collaboration in recent policy documents

Collegial connections provide the necessary intellectual and emotional conditions for collective and collaborative learning and development (Gu, 2018). The link between collaboration and relationships is evident in much of the research in teacher resilience. For the purpose of this literature review they will be considered as two separate factors which have the capacity to impact positively on teacher resilience. Collaboration in the context of schools is understood as working together and planning together for the benefit of pupils. Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) value collaboration that

is more than just “an intraschool phenomenon” (p. 333). They report that when the necessary digital platforms were available during the period of remote teaching and learning this allowed for the strengthening of collaborative relationships.

A fundamental concept of the revised SET model (DES, 2017a) is the collaborative approach between the mainstream teacher and SET, with in-class support strongly advocated for, more so than in the previous allocation models. Through the parameters of the new SET model, children who would not previously have received support can be recommended for additional support when teachers act in an agentive, collaborative manner. The revised model promotes inclusion, children without a formal diagnosis are offered support based on the “identified needs” they present with (DES, 2017c, p. 5), this allows for teacher agency and greater collaboration between mainstream and SET teachers to discuss how children should be supported, either in-class, through co-teaching, stations, small group work or on occasion on a withdrawal basis. Teacher collaboration is viewed as central to implementing inclusive education (Ainscow, 2014; Brennan, King and Travers, 2019). Teachers engaging in PL focused on collaborative discourse related to teaching and learning, encourages participants to take ownership of their learning aligned to their moral purpose and values (King, 2019). The impact of PL on teacher resilience will be discussed next.

2.4.2 Professional learning (PL)

Teacher PL is viewed as a process which results in a growth of expertise (King, 2016). While the term professional development is sometimes used interchangeably, PL is more commonly used to describe processes that support teacher learning and is the term used in Irish policy on teacher education (Cosán) (TC, 2016a). Collaborative models of inquiry show potential for transforming practice whereas transmissive “once off” models fail to significantly impact practice (Kennedy, 2014). Many professionals in different fields must engage in a specified amount of PL annually (Mujis and Reynolds, 2018). In Ireland there is no obligation on teachers currently to engage in PL, however many teachers engage in PL courses over the summer months in order to qualify for extra personal vacation (EPV) days the following year. These PL courses have to be DE approved and can be attended in-person or online depending on the course provider or type of course. In some circumstances a blended approach to learning (a combination of in-person and online attendance) is offered.

Many of the providers who offer PL courses over the summer months also facilitate short courses during the school year. ESCI offer face-to-face and online workshops and webinars during school term. Most of the courses advertised are free to attend and this has addressed the accessibility gap referenced by Stevens and O' Moore (2009); TC (2016a). During the consultation period on Cosán, many respondents explained the cost of travel, childcare, impact on home life, intrusion on personal time and distance and geographical considerations precluded them from attending PL opportunities (TC, 2016b).

Secondment opportunities with different agencies and organisations such as Oide, which launched in 2023 from the integration of four existing DE support services: the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the NIPT, in addition to the NCSE, NCCA and INTO, also facilitate an opportunity for teachers to experience another aspect of educational provision and offer an alternative to teachers, many who have acquired and developed a specific skill set in a particular niche area. This can be through supporting the professional growth of NQTs or early career teachers, providing PL opportunities to teachers and principals and offering tailored school specific support or sustained support in a subject area or to facilitate the implementation of change or best practice in schools. Often these PL opportunities may be as part of mandatory after school hours (DES Circular 08/2011, DES, 2011), agreed under the “Croke Park Agreement”, where teachers were required to work an additional 36 hours annually, for non-class contact activities with DES Circular 42/2016 providing for up to 10 hours for planning or individual activities (DES, 2016c). Teachers on secondment may also facilitate whole staff or sector specific workshops or webinars in Education Centres or DE designated training days in the case of the PLC (NCCA, 2019) or Primary Maths Curriculum (PMC), (NCCA, 2023) for example.

Gibbs and Miller (2014) suggest that to invoke change in a school teachers need to be provided with effective PL. Schussler *et al.*, (2018) recommend that a “shift in how educators approach professional development may be necessary, focusing on environmental and personal factors that provide teachers a greater capacity to adapt and to meet the needs of their students” (p. 24). It is widely accepted that effective PL enhances student outcomes (King, 2016) and teacher PL for inclusive practice across the teacher education continuum is necessary to develop inclusive schools (Brennan, 2017; Brennan, King and Travers, 2019).

The introduction of Droichead in the Irish context is the first step in ensuring teachers continue with PL beyond their ITE and engage in a collaborative supportive transition into the professional phase of teaching. This is reflective of the aim of induction programmes to ease the transition into the profession and provide necessary PL for teachers in their early career (Gratacós *et al.*, 2021). Improving skills and seeking help is seen as an important factor for teacher resilience (Mansfield *et al.*, 2013; Beltman, Mansfield and Harris, 2016).

Professional Learning Communities explored in the Irish context by Brennan, 2017; Brennan and Gorman, 2023 involve collaborative teams. They are a form of collaborative professional enquiry with the potential to act as a transformative model of PL (Kennedy, 2014). PL opportunities are rarely completely individual, rather collective (Swaffield, 2018). Brennan (2017) explores to what extent a Professional Learning Community contributes to the development of teacher PL for inclusive practice. Through external support and regular meetings participants found their beliefs and attitudes towards inclusive practice developed, teacher efficacy for inclusive practice increased, exploration and enactment of inclusive practice in the classroom was evident and participants were open to and engaging in collaborative planning. Further research on Professional Learning Communities and collaborative PL by Brennan and Gorman (2023) demonstrated teachers reported it as a “safe space” which arguably supports resilience. Collaborative PL can enhance social capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) with teachers collectively working towards an end goal, it can develop collective responsibility and collective efficacy for student learning (King, Brennan and Gorman, 2023). Relationships are an important part of collaboration and will be discussed further in the section that follows.

2.4.3 Relationships and Support networks

Seen as worthwhile in influencing teacher resilience, the influence workplace relationships have on teacher resilience is discussed by Gu (2014; 2018). Day and Gu (2014) introduce the notion of “relational resilience” (p. 9), understood to be relative, dynamic and developmental, with the potential to alter through the different phases of teaching. Resilience is “nurtured by the social and intellectual environments in which teachers work and live, rather than determined by nature” (Day and Gu, 2014, p. 135). The importance of three sets of relationships is highlighted, the teacher – teacher relations, teacher – principal relations and teacher – pupil relations (p. 121).

The introduction of Droichead as a supportive approach to normalising whole school sharing of best practice facilitates the development of support networks within schools, through facilitated observations of more experienced teachers and through supportive conversations with PST mentors. Collegial relationships, Gu (2018) notes, provide a “necessary intellectual and emotional condition for collective and collaborative learning and development” (p. 26). Through the Droichead model and NIPT workshops, facilitators and PST members support NQTs to develop strategies to be able to depersonalise stressful incidents (Howard and Johnson, 2004; Schussler *et al.*, 2018). “Whilst the capacity to be resilient is a necessary condition for sustaining quality in teaching, without moral purpose and the support of colleagues and school leaders it is unlikely to contribute to building and sustaining quality teaching” (Day and Gu, 2014, p.12). This is supported in Irish schools through the Droichead process and informal mentoring networks in place in many schools. Collaborative PL in the form of the rollout of the PLC and the PMC for example offer further opportunities for relationship building. The INTO research report on teacher workload (INTO, 2022) suggests the extension of the supply panel to include cover for teachers released to engage in collaborative work with colleagues or to engage with parents. Collaborative PL and whole school planning is also suggested as a whole school activity with an agreed amount of time each month.

The multi-layered relationships that exist in teachers’ worlds are explored by Gu and Li (2013). They distinguish the relational trust between teachers and colleagues as well as teacher trust in parents and students and teacher trust in the leader. Gu (2014) explores how the formation of connections with colleagues and pupils enables teachers to build and develop their capacities to be resilient through “collective intellectual and emotional capital” (p. 507). Building resilience in teachers is both an individual and social process within a school community driven by a shared sense of moral purpose (Gu, 2018).

2.4.4 Teacher self-care, self-efficacy and reflection

The need for reflection as a self-care practice to build resilience is raised by McKay and Barton (2018). Self-care and self-esteem are noted as important predictors of wellbeing in the Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) study. McKay and Barton (2018) recognise reflection as being “critical” for ongoing development and self-care. Encompassing reflective practice is viewed as an “integral aspect” of self-care which is

seen as necessary to build resilience and wellbeing in teaching (McKay and Barton, 2018, p. 357).

Online self-reflection tools based on the ENTRÉE model (Wosnitza *et al.*, 2014) such as the *Teacher Resilience Self-Reflection* (TRSR) tool, is suggested by Wosnitza *et al.*, (2018) for teachers. They recognise self-reflection as a crucial element of enhancing personal resilience for teachers. This can be in the form of reflecting on the experience of getting through a potentially stressful situation, which can lead to the identification of missing resources and an understanding of ways to strengthen them to be better equipped for future similar situations should they arise. The tool allows teachers to reflect on their resilience on the premise of a range of factors that help or hinder resilience. Individualised feedback is provided to build and strengthen capacity for professional resilience. Gibbs and Miller (2014) demonstrate the important association of efficacy beliefs with outcomes and posit the espoused collective beliefs shared among staff as an additional source for individual efficacy. The overall pattern of results maintains contextual factors trump individual factors in terms of their impact on how teachers experience their role and job satisfaction.

2.4.5 Teacher wellbeing

Research points to resilience supporting teacher wellbeing which is associated with teacher effectiveness (Boon, 2021). Teacher wellbeing is linked with students' increased wellbeing and decreased levels of mental health issues with depression offered as an example. Low levels of teacher wellbeing can result in higher rates of absences, which can affect student outcomes and impact supportive teacher-student relationships (Jamal *et al.*, 2013; Boon, 2021). Increased teacher wellbeing can similarly impact teachers' professional job satisfaction and transfer to students, impacting on academic achievements (Hansen *et al.*, 2015). A resilient teacher should “demonstrate adaptive functioning by meeting their professional obligations: demonstrating appropriate pedagogies and classroom management practices to support their students' learning” (Boon, 2021, p. 271). This emphasises the need for quality ITE and PL to enhance career wide resiliency. Day and Gu (2014) validate the need to discuss wellbeing alongside stress “since a sense of negative or positive wellbeing clearly plays a role in both” (p. 31).

Regular participation in a physical activity has shown a positive association with resilience (O' Brien *et al.*, 2020, p. 392). Their study examined the importance of

wellbeing awareness for pre-service teachers and highlighted the role of the teacher educator in explaining and promoting pre-service teacher wellbeing. This is viewed as a worthwhile endeavour as the pre-service teacher's wellbeing will impact on their future students' wellbeing both in the classroom and beyond. Further exploration of the link between teachers' wellbeing and pupils' wellbeing is called for by the INTO report (INTO, 2015). Teacher wellbeing is the most frequently linked outcome of resilience (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016a).

The ability to maintain wellbeing and resilience amidst professional challenges is acknowledged as a valuable capacity for teachers (Hascher, Beltman and Mansfield, 2021). They establish a clear delineation between the two broad constructs with an aim to understand the role of teacher resilience in maintaining and restoring wellbeing. Their literature review of 81 articles from 2010-2020 helped to understand the relationship between the two constructs. These articles were divided into four groups. In some studies the terms were used interchangeably, while other studies viewed them as components of one another. The third group of studies understood teacher wellbeing to be a predictor for the development or improvement of teacher resilience, while the final group of studies viewed the role of teacher resilience in the maintenance and development of teacher wellbeing. As a response, Hascher, Beltman and Mansfield (2021), created the *Aligning wellbeing and resilience in education* (AWaRE) model. Teacher resilience is an individual process, situated and mediated between experiences of teacher wellbeing. The AWaRE model shows a resilience process which acknowledges the contextual and individual levels situated within a teacher's experience of wellbeing. Figure 2.4 below demonstrates the model. Wellbeing is inextricably linked to resilience and must be considered in terms of addressing resilience, just as when considering wellbeing, teacher resilience must be addressed.

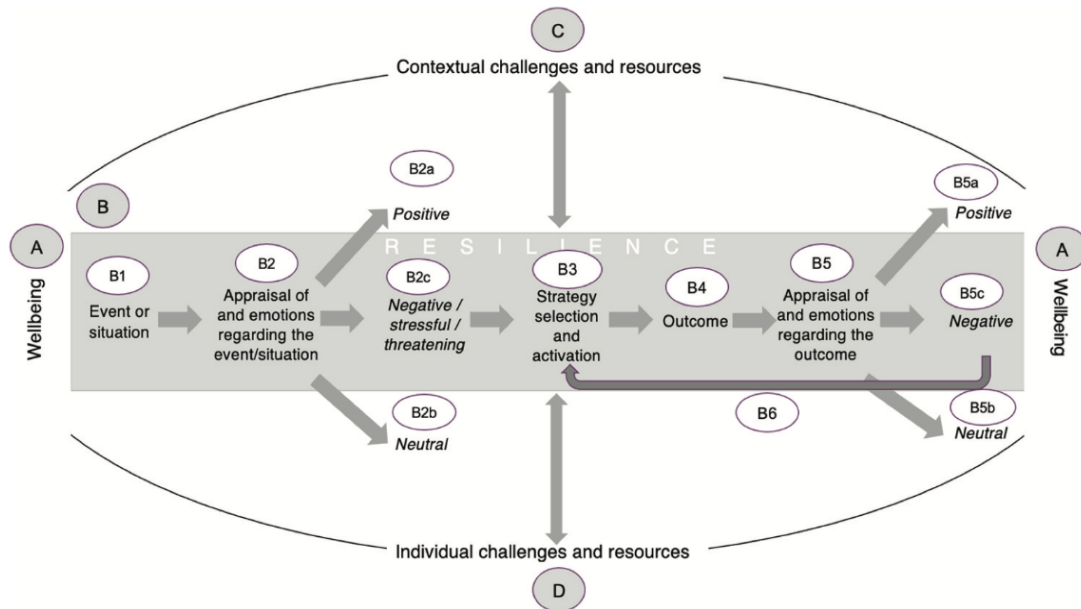


Figure 2.4 The AWaRE model (Hascher, Beltman and Mansfield, 2021)

2.4.6 School culture

Research from Gu (2014) indicates that promoting and cultivating a healthy social culture in schools impacts on how teachers visualise themselves as professionals in their schools and the extent to which they are able to maintain resilience, commitment and the capacity to teach to their best over time (p. 522). School culture and ethos are often used interchangeably but the culture of a school refers to more than just the internal workings of an organisation (Mc Keon, 2020). The complexity of school culture is raised by Stoll (1998), who advises that culture varies from school to school and a school’s culture is shaped by its history, context and the people in it. School culture is viewed as the values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, behaviours and relationships that characterise the daily occurrences of school life (Johnson *et al.*, 2012). The contextual influence impacts on teacher resilience (Gu and Li, 2013; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019). School culture is often identified as a collective response and a theme within qualitative teacher resilience literature (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019; Beltman, 2021). The need to assess the impact of school culture on career wide resiliency in the Irish context seems important given how culture is viewed as a collective activity and is linked with relationships and support in international literature.

2.5 Factors that inhibit teacher resilience

Much of the research in teacher resilience identifies contributing factors to stress which can impact on teacher resilience. Classroom management can be a source of stress for example and can be a challenge on teacher resilience (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Other factors identified as impinging the resilience of teachers include: new initiatives, class sizes, insufficient support for special educational needs (SEN), lack of PL, the need for documentation and time for planning (INTO, 2015; 2022). An intensified workload, the lack of time for collaboration, teacher isolation during Covid-19 and lack of access to PL will now be addressed as factors that inhibit resilience.

2.5.1 Intensified workload

Teachers experience demands from a range of sources (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). The intensification of teachers' work is recognised as impacting on teacher attrition (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012). In order to combat high attrition rates among early career teachers, Price, Mansfield and McConney (2012) suggest developing the resilience during student pre-service education. The speed of changes to the working contexts of principals, class and special education teachers places them "under increasing pressure" at an accountable time (McKay and Barton, 2018, p. 356). The performativity agenda (Ball, 2003) and results driven policy agenda in different countries has increased the pressure on schools (Day and Gu, 2014). Gu (2014) refers to the "wide ranging reforms of curriculum and the fast changing knowledge economy" which contribute to increased pressure (p. 502). The rapid implementation of initiatives is recognised and experienced on the ground by principals and teachers with a resultant workload (INTO, 2022).

2.5.2 Lack of time for collaboration

Teachers cite the lack of time for collaboration with colleagues and the lack of time for planning as problematic (INTO, 2015; King, Ní Bhroin and Prunty, 2018; King, Brennan and Gorman, 2023). The need to create time for collaboration is highlighted by Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020). School leaders must support collaboration among teachers to develop new teaching practices (King, 2016). The lack of time for collaboration is a challenge for both teachers and leaders (INTO, 2022). Solutions offered by the report include utilising the supply panel to cover for teacher collaboration purposes, employing part-time teachers to cover release time and

allocating regular time by closing schools for additional professional time. Ní Bhroin and King (2021) examine teachers' collaborative practices in developing the individualised educational planning (IEP) process. Their research showed that responsibility for writing the IEP was typically taken by the SET. Parents, class teachers and SETs were generally in attendance at IEP meetings which took place at least once a year, but for some teachers once a term. They produced a conceptual framework to include the three stages of planning, implementation and review. While the collaboration during the initial planning stage was high among survey respondents, the subsequent areas of implementation and review require an increased collaborative focus.

2.5.3 Teacher isolation as experienced during Covid-19

The isolated nature of teaching is not a new concept. Previous work by Lortie (1975) and Miller (2003) reference teaching as a private and isolated act. Teachers working in schools where they feel unsupported from colleagues and the principal, may feel isolated and in turn lack motivation (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) revisit the work of Lortie, in an attempt to assess if the cultures of individualism (Lortie, 1975) have been impacted by the pandemic. Most teachers reported that they valued collaboration and feedback from colleagues which was missing during the pandemic. Professional collaborations, Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) report, were strengthened by collegial meetings on Zoom or other digital platforms.

The global Covid-19 pandemic resulted in numerous periods of lockdown, where teachers and pupils experienced a shift to remote learning and a sense of urgency to embrace the potential of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment (Farrell, 2021). Lemon and McDonough (2023) identified the multidimensional approach taken by teachers to mitigate the challenge of teaching remotely. They found teachers worked in isolation from their colleagues during the remote teaching period, and that the geographical boundary between work and home life was dissolved. Collective teacher engagement, a collective phenomenon is evident when professional learning communities and teams are supported by collaborative work cultures (Lawson, 2017). Collective teacher engagement is viewed as a solution to prevent teacher isolation and understood to work in tandem with collective efficacy, collective agency

and collective emotional resilience within a teacher-focused innovation framework (Wilcox and Lawson, 2018).

2.5.4 Lack of access to PL

While engaging in PL was seen as a positive factor in fostering teacher resilience (Gu, 2018), lack of access to PL is outlined by Curtin and Egan (2021) who reference the limited PL opportunities to support teachers to identify the needs of pupils with SEN. Another impacting factor on teacher resilience is PL in relation to challenging circumstances for example effectively including learners with complex learning profiles in the classroom. Again, at present teachers working with students with complex special need profiles are not required to engage in PL to specifically support inclusive education practice (Kenny, McCoy and Mihut, 2020; Brennan and Gorman, 2023). This is despite the DE guidelines on SET stating that children with the most need should be supported by teachers “with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support” (2017c, p. 5). The 2020/21 school year saw difficulties in acquiring substitute teachers to cover fixed term and maternity positions and Covid related sick-leave, which led to many SET teachers deployed in a classroom or special classes or simply not being replaced. This put huge pressure on principals and in many cases weakened relationships built between pupils with SEN and teachers due to the lack of consistency. DE statistics and a recent INTO collaborative survey indicate in the 2023/24 school year that long and short term substitution and unfilled positions continues to be problematic (INTO, 2023). Of the schools who responded to the survey, 66% indicated they had used a SET to cover for a teacher absence in a mainstream classroom (INTO, 2023).

2.6 The role of leadership in teacher resilience

In relation to principals, Day and Gu (2014) acknowledge that school leaders need to be aware of different professional, role and organisational identities faced by teachers in order to provide “relevant and effective” PL of both a formal and informal nature to support commitment and resilience (p. 68). The school leader is likely “to exercise, indirectly or directly, most influence” (Day and Gu, 2014, p. 89). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that in-school management support for teachers’ learning and development alongside leadership trust and encouraging feedback from parents and pupils impact positively on teachers’ motivation and resilience (Botou *et*

al., 2017). The “archetypal resilient teacher” is supported by an effective leadership team and benefits from supportive colleagues (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012, p. 85). Day and Gu (2014) offer that resilience has always been “desirable in principalship but now has become an imperative” (p.105). They criticise the little extant research on the nature and enactment of resilience and its relationship to successful principalship as they believe that resilience is a fundamental quality for leadership success. Gibbs and Miller (2014) reiterate that the leaderships and management of schools play an imperative role in supporting teachers’ beliefs in their efficacy. Much of the context for support that maintains teachers’ beliefs in their efficacy is from those in leadership and management positions in schools (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). Leaders play a role in advocating for teachers and nurturing an environment conducive to them nurturing and advocating for each other and for their pupils (Wilcox and Lawson, 2018). For resilient capacities to be sustained, Gu and Li (2013) concede, they require nurturing from the social and intellectual environments where teachers work and live.

2.6.1 Leadership and collaboration

Gu (2014) explains the role of leaders in enabling collaborative efforts for learning is important for teachers to experience satisfaction and success. This reiterates the importance of collaboration for teacher resilience. Gu perceives the improvement in the quality of teaching and teachers should be understood within the context of the “social, cultural and organisational environments of the school – which are designed, nurtured and shaped by the educational architect who lives in the principal’s office” (2018, p. 14). Like resilient teachers, resilient principals are equally driven by a strong sense of moral purpose and care about and “focus on the learning needs of pupils and the professional growth of teachers, and work hard to enhance the role of the school as an agent of social change” (Day and Gu, p. 145). Day and Gu (2014) conclude that “policy makers, teacher educators and school principals need to design the means to build and sustain teachers’ capacities to be resilient” (p. 146). A strong understanding of the schools’ internal and external contexts, the leadership of the principal and the positive or negative impact that may be felt as a result of this leadership on the teachers’ and pupils’ success is important (Gu, 2018).

Klap, MacCallum and Mansfield (2021) acknowledge that principals have a significant impact on school culture and teachers’ well-being and ensuring principals’ well-being and resilience are addressed enables them to engender resilience in teachers.

They suggest that mindfulness programmes for school leaders such as the *Mindful Leaders* programme which had been completed by 350 school principals from primary, secondary and special education schools, in Western Australia by the end of 2019, offer a personal experience and discerning insight into the value of such an approach. The programme offered preventative stress strategies and the space to build and improve resilience for participants.

2.6.2 Sustainability of leadership roles

Day and Gu (2014) suggest that similarly to their teaching staff, school principals may be at different phases of their professional learning lives and demonstrate varying levels of “competence and commitment” (p. 119). The sustainability aspect of leadership is examined by the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN). Analysis of data gathered from over 1000 respondents indicated the incidence of burnout, stress and depressive symptoms among Irish primary principals was almost double that of the healthy working population (IPPN, 2022). In September 2022, the sustainability mean score among all principals was 3.96 out of 10 and this fell to 3.63 in September 2023 (IPPN, 2023). The broad range of tasks and responsibilities for principals is presented in the report which reviewed the DE circulars received by principals from 2016-2022. These are acknowledged alongside the key policy initiatives and guidance documents which referenced the duties assigned to principals. In total, 162 documents were analysed. Of these, all referenced tasks and responsibilities for school leaders in managing the organisation. In the report a comparative table indicates the sources of stress from 2015 alongside the 2022 responses. Teacher shortages had the highest change from 4.1/10 in 2015 to 8.4/10 in 2022. This is an area of growing concern for leaders and recent data from an INTO led survey (INTO, 2023) shows schools in the Dublin area are affected greatly by this issue. The TC recently announced in order to combat this issue that on an exceptional basis, for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years, NQTs employed covering principal release days (in a fulltime post), or on the supply panel will be able to complete the process in these settings (TC, 2023). The supply panel pilot scheme (DES Circular 59/2019) was trialled on a pilot basis in six schools in 2019/20 (DES, 2019). Teachers employed on the panels are designated a base school who manages the scheme in an area and the purpose is to provide short term substitute cover for teachers who are eligible to be covered for short term absences in accordance with DE publications. The scheme has since been expanded nationwide.

Eliciting teachers' and principals' views on the role of leadership in teacher resilience from a lived experience throughout the navigation and implementation of new policies, programmes and in terms of providing guidance throughout the Coronavirus pandemic will be important for ascertaining the current standings on the role of leadership in promoting resilience.

2.7 Teacher retention

Teacher retention refers to teachers remaining in their role as teachers as opposed to leaving the profession. Gu (2014) reminds us that in many countries, “for diverse and complex socioeconomic and political reasons” there is a challenge in “retaining and developing committed and effective teachers” (p. 504). This is especially relevant in developing countries where enrolment in schools is on the rise, but there remains a shortage of teachers. Gu (2014) acknowledges that there are other issues concerning teacher supply and quality in the developed world such as an ageing teaching population in some European countries. External factors such as classroom management, paperwork and accountability also impact on teacher retention (Gu and Day, 2013; Mansfield *et al.*, 2021). Morgan *et al.* (2010) noted that at the time teacher attrition was not as big a challenge in the Irish context as it was elsewhere. The continued evolution of teacher resilience in the past fifteen years as a research focus is presented in an attempt to understand and combat teacher attrition (Boon, 2021). Smith and Ulvik (2017) signal the complexities of attrition “which cannot be understood by looking at the numbers in isolation” (p. 929). They question the act of leaving teaching as a display of resilience in itself. Their claim is a lack of resilience alone does not entice teachers to leave the profession. The case studies they present are from a Norwegian context where teachers were motivated during their teaching phase and their argument is the reasons for leaving seem to be personality related, where they exercised teacher agency in order to leave the profession. They ask if the decision of the four teachers they describe to leave the profession shows a lack of resilience even though they left because “they saw opportunities outside the profession which would better suit their personal needs and characteristics” (p. 941). They also highlight the absence of a career ladder in teaching and ponder if this would have kept the four participants in the profession. The lack of career progression opportunities in Ireland is reported on by King, Brennan and Gorman (2023). Acknowledgement of career phases are offered as a solution by Smith and Ulvik (2017) to retain motivated teachers in the profession and

seek new ways to develop the teaching profession as a less restrictive career not only to retain teachers but to offer a professional space where sufficient challenges and career opportunities exist. They suggest future research from an international context of strong and resilient teachers who have left the profession to discover more about their careers post-teaching. This is also suggested for further examination by Boon, (2021). While there is an abundance of research from the Australian and more recently South African contexts on teacher resilience including but not limited to; Beltman, Mansfield and Harris 2016; Beltman and Mansfield 2017, 2018; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012, 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Lemon and McDonough, 2023, Beltman (2021) advocates for further research to understand how different countries and cultures understand the components of teacher resilience which emphasises the rationale for this study.

2.8 Changes in education

Morgan and Nic Craith discuss the national and international influences that present as a cause of stress for teachers (INTO, 2015). They relate the extent to which policy changes are a source of stress and dissatisfaction for teachers. International influences, national policies, school factors such as type, location and organisational culture, classroom experiences and the problematic nature of time are listed as causes of stress which can potentially impact on resilience. The systemic changes outlined in Chapter One (Table 1.1) all impact on schools. Granted that different policies, guidelines, curricula and processes impact on teachers (mainstream and SET) and principals with varying degrees, the introduction of so many initiatives in a short period can be a source of stress. The INTO (2022) report concurs that while individual changes may not significantly increase workload in isolation, collectively all changes have a significant impact on teacher workload and in turn can lead to a potentially negative impact on teacher resilience.

2.8.1 School Self Evaluation (SSE)

In 2012, primary schools commenced the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process in Ireland. The process provides all schools “with an internal process for developing and progressing action planning for improvement” (DES, 2016a, p. 1). Circular 39/2016 (DES, 2016a) supersedes previously published guidelines and outlines the requirements for schools to engage with the second cycle of SSE. Circular 16/2018 (DES, 2018c), revises the re-engagement of primary schools and clarifies that one or two curriculum

areas or aspects of teaching and learning should be focused on, instead of the two to four as outlined in Circular 39/2016. *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* (DES, 2016b) supports internal SSE and “external evaluation” (DES, 2016a, p. 5). The one or two curriculum areas of focus are based on the domains and standards of *Looking at Our School 2016* (DES, 2016b). The SSE process allows schools to focus on a particular area of interest to them as a school which through the consultation, implementation and review of progress can enhance teaching and learning in that area or domain. Many schools were employing a similar approach to this in terms of reviewing best practice for a curriculum area in an effort to develop a whole school approach to reading or spelling for example but this initiative formalised their efforts in a nationwide approach to self-reflective practice for schools. The autonomy for schools to choose areas was welcomed but inclusive practice could have been signalled as a key area to focus upon considering the revised SET model and lack of implementation of the Inclusive Education Framework from 2011 (Raftery and Brennan, 2021). Gu (2018) considers the nurturing process of constructing professional identities and capacities which requires support, sustainment and space to enable teachers to “develop their capacities to teach to their best over time” and continue to strive for improvement. (p. 29).

2.8.2 The impact of changes in education requires a change in mindset

The impact of the recent changes in education on teacher resilience remain unexamined. Public perception of teachers has been raised constantly in light of Covid-19. Concerns have been raised by school principals in relation to the issuing of DE Circulars. In the INTO (2022) report many respondents related their dissatisfaction about the timing and lateness of important announcements with schools from the DE. The timing of circulars published on a Friday evening was un-welcomed by those who wish to exercise the right to switch off. Some respondents to the INTO survey (2022) highlighted the increased use of digital communications, from parents and within schools, with staff communicating via WhatsApp groups and for members of management to communicate with staff. This always-on mentality with advancements in social media, and educational platforms where parents have greater access than before to teachers (INTO, 2022), signals a change with potential to negatively contribute to the stress and resiliency of teachers.

Fullan, a global authority on education reform emphasises the need to shift mentality from “my classroom” to “our school”. This is the premise for a deeper move towards “our schools” nationally, a larger sense of meaning, in what he champions the new meaning of educational change is all about (2015, p. 52-53). The emotions of teaching and educational change are highlighted by Hargreaves (2005). He explains that educational change initiatives affect more than teachers’ knowledge, skill and problem-solving capacity, they affect teachers’ relationships with each other, with their pupils and with the parents of those pupils. Teachers invest in these relationships with their emotions. The emotional dimensions of teaching and learning impact on the successful implementation and enactment of educational change. The “undeniable chaos” created by the Covid-19 pandemic is recognised by Hargreaves and Fullan (2020), who see the positives in that Covid-19 and the changes that followed have brought about in terms of innovative, collaborative and laser-focused problem-solving (p. 334). Teachers face challenges specific to their professional life phases and it can be summarised that teacher resilience is a “relational, multifaceted, and dynamic construct” (Day and Gu, 2014, p. 134). Considering this, it is important to address career wide resiliency in terms of the impact on teacher resilience.

2.9 Career wide resiliency

At different phases of their professional lives, teachers are likely to face different influences, tensions, professional and personal concerns. Intervening to support teacher resilience and wellbeing is appropriate at all stages of teacher learning and development (MacCallum, 2021). Existing professional identities are more or less vulnerable at various stages according to a teacher’s capacity to manage multiple interactions of policy, workplace and personal challenges (Day and Gu, 2014; Gu, 2014). As previously mentioned, the VITAE study (Day *et al.*, 2007) listed six professional life phases and concluded that each stage had its own challenges which emphasises the need to sustain and renew the commitment of teachers over the course of their career (Day and Gu, 2014). What it means to be resilient may differ throughout career phases but the “intellectual, emotional and physical endeavour required to manage these challenges does not necessarily reduce or increase over time” (Gu and Li, 2013, p. 297). Teachers’ capacity for maintaining the notion of everyday resilience over the course of their career is “associated with their ability to manage the personal, professional and organisational contexts in which they work and live” (Day and Gu,

2014, p. 120). Across different career stages “collegial, emotional and intellectual connections with colleagues” were identified as positive influences on building and sustaining the capacity to be resilient (Gu, 2014, p. 513). Gu (2018) argues that teacher resilience is influenced by their biographies and the “social, cultural, organisational and policy conditions of their work and lives” (p. 24). The acknowledgement that work and life in a professional and personal context can become intertwined is important through the lens of career wide resiliency. The social-ecological lens recognises teacher learning and development over time as a “journey towards greater intellectual and emotional growth and fulfilment” this responsibility is both individual and collective or organisational (Gu, 2018, p. 28).

Mansfield *et al.* (2016a) suggest further research is warranted to investigate the extent to which PL activities designed to build capacity for resilience have a temporary or sustained influence on resilience in terms of commitment, motivation, job fulfilment and wellbeing (p. 85). The results of the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) study shows no differences overall between graduating and early career teachers in the relative frequencies of each of the four dimensions; motivational, professional, social and emotional when their responses were placed in each of the four dimensions. It would be interesting to consider these dimensions from the perspective of career wide teacher resiliency and see if any differences emerge. This is also one of the recommendations for future research by Mansfield *et al.* (2012). It remains unclear in an Irish context how teachers and principals view their own resilience, and from lived experience, what sustains or develops career wide resiliency.

2.10 Challenges to resilience

Many of the systemic changes might be presented and experienced differently from one school to the next. This may be for example in the form of a different shared approach to planning in the case of the PLC or shared resources, a clear understanding of the revised SET model and enacting as per the guidelines and circular. Gu (2014) refers to the “wide-ranging reforms of curriculum and the fast-changing knowledge economy” which contributes to increased pressure (p. 502). Covid-19 aside, it is likely that teachers and principals were under increasing pressure from the introduction of many initiatives over a short period of time. Arguably, the pandemic has led to a restructuring of priorities in many schools and has enforced reflection on teachers and principals as to what they can do and why they are doing certain things. At the heart of

this reflection is the pupils who have been impacted by this and their teaching and learning opportunities have varied. Prioritising Literacy, Numeracy and wellbeing was a common thread in many schools as they returned to in-school teaching. The *Roadmap for Full Return to Schools* (Government of Ireland, 2020) contained supports to assist the wellbeing of school communities. Guidance from the DE also outlines that primary schools were asked to reprioritise Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE), Language and Mathematics (DE, 2020c). The role of relationships and building resilience in pupils was promoted. It is imperative that teachers and principals nurture their own resilience also. Research on the importance of collaboration, collegiality and relationships for enabling teacher resilience suggest it is unlikely teachers and principals develop and sustain resilience if collegiality does not exist. Beltman (2020) asks whose responsibility is it to develop teacher resilience, which remains unclear both from an Irish and an international context. Establishing what sustains and strengthens resilience for teachers and principals will be important in this study and who should direct interventions to support the development of resilience (Beltman and Mansfield, 2017). Mahdiani and Ungar (2021) conclude that further research examining individual and community resilience is needed and this study aims to report on the individual and collective experience of participants in order to explore how they responded and adapted to the challenges experienced from 2016-2021 in Irish primary schools.

2.11 Conceptual framework used in this study

As discussed in this chapter, Mansfield *et al.* (2012), present a *Four Dimensional Framework* of teacher resilience (Figure 2.2). This encompasses the resilient teacher within four distinct categories or dimensions, these are professional related, emotional, motivational and social. Consideration was given to other models and frameworks previously discussed, notably: Figure 2.3 Multilevel model developed by ENTRÉE (Wosnitza *et al.*, 2014) and Figure 2.4 The AWaRE model - Hascher, Beltman and Mansfield (2021). In the end the researcher settled on combining the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) *Four Dimensional Framework* as a lens to view teacher resilience with elements of the *Lived-in Resilience Framework* proposed by Boon (2021) (Figure 2.1). Boon, questions if teacher resilience as understood presently equates with professional resilience. Is resilience synonymous with effectiveness?

Arguing that research to date has relied on self-reported measures, the literature has presented on the perceived psychological resilience of teachers, she then proposes a “lived-in” teacher resilience framework. This conceives a holistic examination of resilience. This resilience framework is suitable for capturing the resilience of teachers given their multifaceted roles. The framework measures an individual’s capacity to function across various domains; professional and personal “by accounting for all factors that impact upon a person’s wellbeing and adaptive functioning” (Boon, 2021, p. 271).

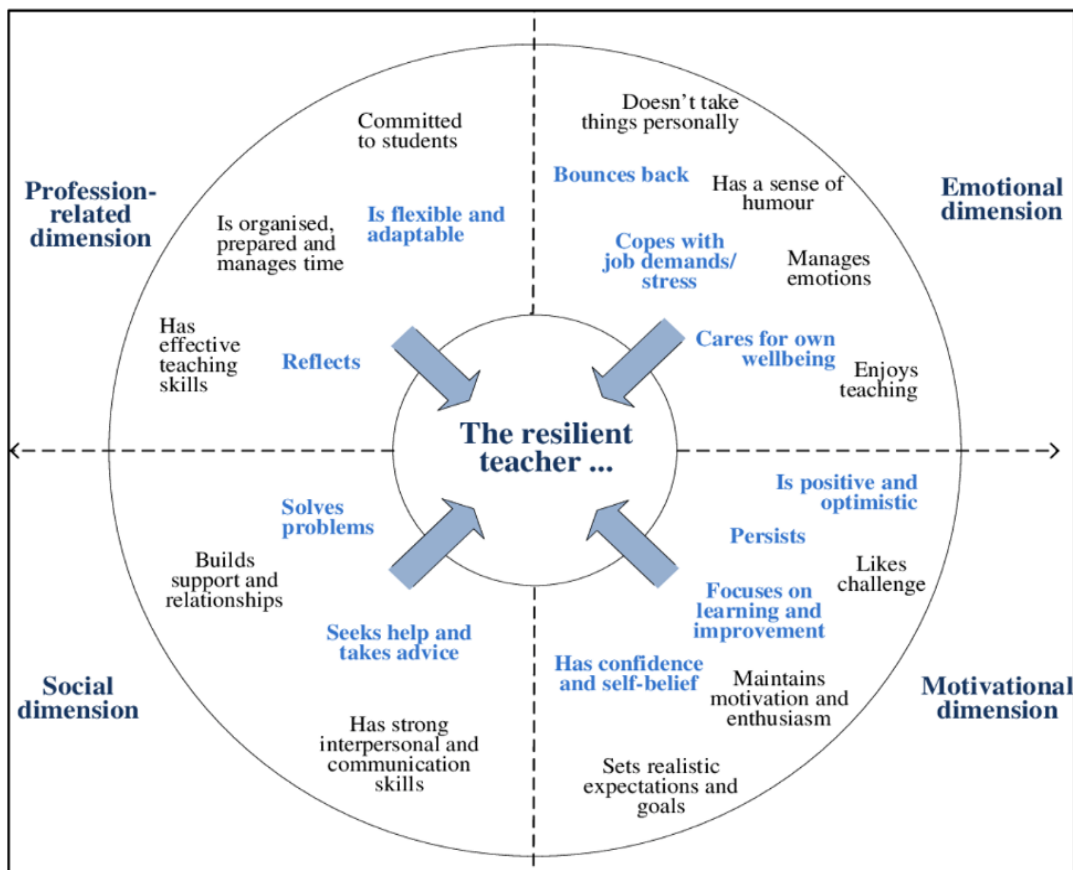


Figure 2.2 The Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resilience (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012)

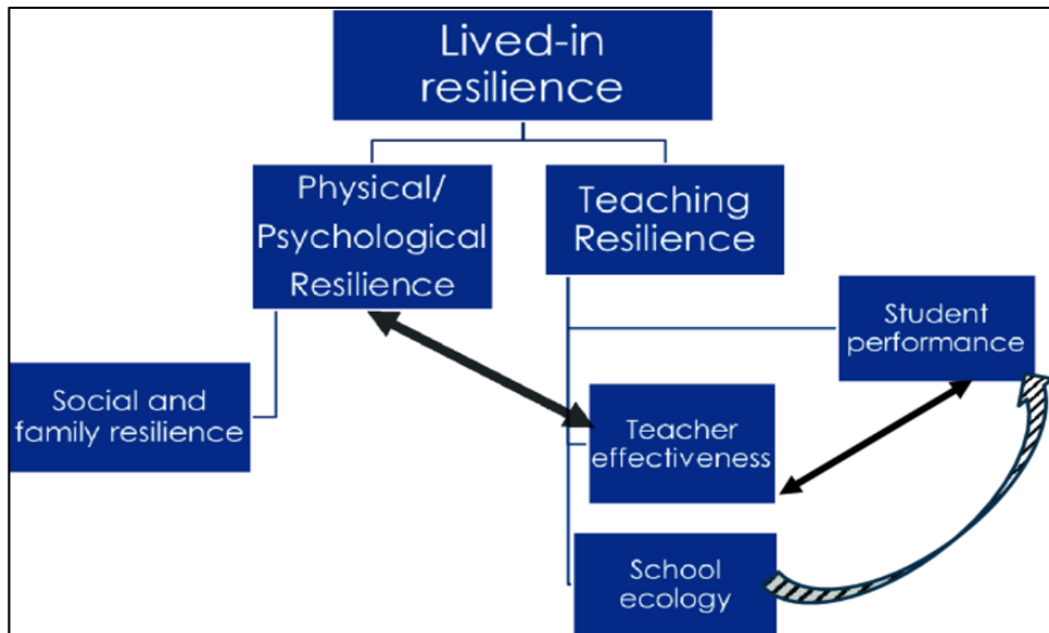


Figure 2.1 Lived-in Resilience Framework (Boon, 2021)

In this framework the links between a range of factors contributing to the experience of lived-in resilience are highlighted. Boon suggests that future studies should consider the ‘actual, lived-in resilience of those teachers who, having remained in the profession for many years, continue to maintain stress-free mental and physical health, while performing their professional duties with zeal and excellence’ (p. 273). Arguments are made for more objective indicators of teacher resilience to be considered in future studies. The conceptual framework includes a combination of these two frameworks that situates the four domains discussed by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) within Boon’s framework (2021) in order to establish how experiences influence or hinder the capacity to be resilient throughout various career phases. The conceptual framework also includes identified literature on resilience that is relevant to this study such as: Morgan *et al.*, 2010 (teacher motivation); Mansfield *et al.*, 2012 (characteristics of resilient teachers); Gu and Day, 2013 (challenges to resilience); Day and Gu, 2014 (leadership for resilience); INTO, 2015 (how teaching has changed in the previous five years, changes in job satisfaction, factors making teaching more or less challenging); Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018 (internal and external factors); Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019 (relationship between individual and contextual factors); INTO, 2022 (solutions and identified challenges for teachers) and Lemon and McDonough, 2023 (dimensions of teacher resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic).

The conceptual framework outlined here underpins the present study which examines the resilience of teachers with a variety of experience, in various positions, namely; mainstream class teacher, SET and principal (both teaching and non-teaching principals) to understand their levels of resilience in relation to the current climate in Irish primary schools.

2.12 Conclusion

Day and Gu (2014) outline that “promoting much needed resilience in times of change remains an overlooked and under-researched area” (p.17). Gu and Day (2013) acknowledge the research gap in relation to nurturing, sustaining or eroding resilience in light of different circumstances in teachers’ personal and professional lives. Additional research with a focus on teachers of various ages and professional stages (Peixoto *et al.*, 2020) different career stages and utilising alternative data collection methods namely in-depth interviews, would “add” to their body of research (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012, p. 366). Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) also conclude experience, and other demographic variables such as age and gender should be considered in light of the resilience process and longitudinal work would provide further clarity on factors of influence at both an individual and contextual level.

The present study proposes to ascertain how to build career wide resiliency by examining how principals, mainstream and special education teachers demonstrated resilience throughout systemic changes, what supported or fostered resiliency for them and their views on what makes a resilient teacher. Mansfield *et al.* (2021) reveal that research in the field of teacher resilience has grown at a rapid rate in the past ten years. MacCallum (2021) explains the journey for Mansfield *et al.* (2015) developing the BRiTE modules, whereby the focus was shifting from an individual and contextual risk and protective factors to a process-focused approach, incorporating the language of “personal and contextual challenges and resources” (p. 297). This viewpoint aligns teacher agency with resilience with context viewed as a potential resource or challenge.

The capacity and capability to be resilient, allied with knowledge of subject and pedagogy and a strong sense of moral purpose with supportive school and classroom environments, is essential to teachers’ ability to sustain the intellectual and emotional energy and commitment that the best teaching demands.

(Day and Gu, 2014, p. 22)

“To teach, and to teach at one’s best over time, has always required resilience” (Gu and Day, 2013, p. 22). As there is little research into the ways that this capacity is nurtured, sustained or eroded over time in spite of experiences, this research study will analyse the potential gap in teacher resilience and focus on the process of building, sustaining and renewing teacher resilience for teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals. The cyclical model of growing, sustaining and renewing resilience is necessary for the facilitation of resilience development (Day and Gu, 2014).

As outlined, research on teacher resilience in the Irish context is limited. Teaching and leading at primary level has changed and continued to change in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and multiple systemic changes. The strategies and coping mechanisms teachers employ to sustain their commitment to teaching and maintaining high standards in their professional life while also balancing a personal life warrants further investigation. Whether the school type or role assumed impacts the potentiality for resilience will be established from the context of participants’ lived experience in the past five years teaching or leading. Chapter Three will examine the methodological approach taken in the present study.

Chapter Three: Methodology/Research Design

3.1 Introduction and background

This chapter outlines the methodology and research design of the study. The research approach used in this study is a mixed-methods case study approach. The study explores primary teachers' and principals' capacity to be resilient and sustain resiliency through various career stages in spite of increased workload, pressures and demands in the context of systemic changes. The main research question (RQ) was: What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?

The subsidiary questions were as follows:

1. What supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals?
2. What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?
3. How does lived experience impact on resilience for teachers and principals?

The research approach is exploratory as the study aims to explore the resilience of primary school teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals whose working contexts have been impacted by multiple systemic level changes relating to policy development, the implementation of initiatives and the global pandemic of Covid-19. The study focuses on how teacher resilience has been experienced from the context of the participants (principals, SET and class teachers) from their experience teaching or leading over the past five school years from 2016-2021.

This chapter firstly outlines the philosophical assumptions relating to the study, and secondly, the research design. The research methods will then be discussed in detail, including the sampling procedures, ethical issues pertaining to the study and data collection methods. Finally, the approach to data analysis will be discussed.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions underpinning this study

Philosophical underpinnings determine which method of research a researcher employs in their study. I considered the philosophical assumptions which Atkins and Duckworth (2019) advise 'offer a lens to notions of "reality" which then determines what can be regarded as legitimate knowledge' (p. 19). Waring (2017) advocates for researchers understanding their own views and the views of others about: ontology – the

nature of ‘existence and what constitutes reality’ (Gray, 2022, p. 23); epistemology – how we can know about it and what it means to know; axiology – the different values that may underpin enquiry.

Deciding on a philosophical stance as a researcher has recurring consequences for all researchers as philosophical positioning affects the production of questions and methodology (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019). Waring (2017) explains that all researchers need to understand that their research is ‘framed’ by a series of related assumptions around four key questions in linear fashion from ontology to epistemology, methodology and methods (p. 15). See figure 3.1 below.

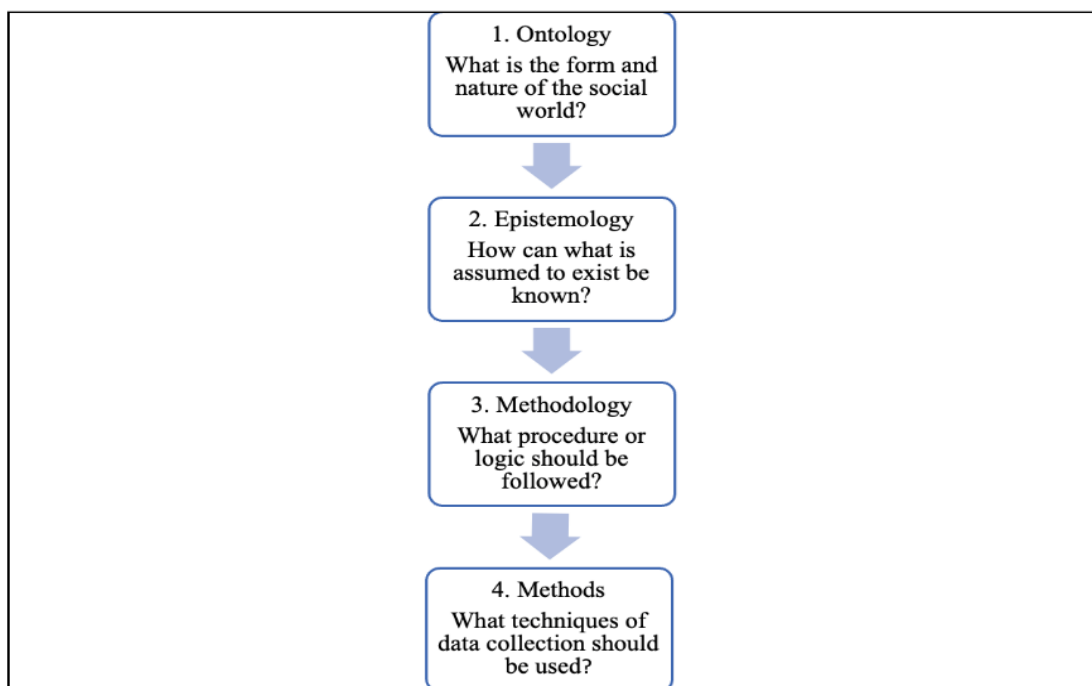


Figure 3.1 The relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) use ‘philosophical worldviews’ which they acknowledge is used interchangeably with paradigms; epistemologies and ontologies, or research methodologies. A transformative worldview addresses important social issues, by providing a voice for participants of the research, focusing on the needs of groups and individuals (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The philosophical assumption underpinning this study is pragmatism. Pragmatism has been linked with an explicitly mixed-methods approach regaining some popularity since the 1970’s (Gray, 2022),

pragmatism as an approach can challenge the notion of paradigms. Adapting this view, research is used for specific reasons to answer questions or validate discrepancies. Coe argues that it is ‘an oversimplification – and unnecessary constraint- to see all research as having the characteristics of one of a small number of paradigms’ (2017, p. 8). While in pragmatist research, Gray (2022) explains, research paradigms can be viewed in isolation or they can be used alongside another research design either by being mixed or combined.

Both paradigms, quantitative and qualitative operate on the basis of different underlying assumptions, quantitative researchers align themselves with positivism and qualitative researchers identify with post positivism (Castellan, 2010). The views, designs and methods selected by the researcher are typically quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Castellan (2010), explains that there are two main categories of study, quantitative and qualitative. Recent literature from Atieno, 2009; Choy, 2014; Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017 and Creswell and Creswell 2018, provide relevant definitions on quantitative methods. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by inspecting the relationship among variables. Quantitative research is where data can be ‘quantified’ (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017, p. 370). Quantitative research is a positivist paradigm, where the data is based upon numbers, it is a means for testing objective theories by inspecting the relationship between variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) and can establish correlations between given variables and outcomes (Choy, 2014).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with producing an in-depth understanding of a given problem (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017), the data in this method is based upon text. Qualitative research is an interpretivist paradigm, subjective in nature. Case studies methodologies and focus groups are popular within the qualitative approach, surveys and correlational studies are the most adopted types of quantitative research (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017).

Until the mid 1970s a quantitative approach dominated research on teaching, whereas more recently, qualitative and hybrid studies, for example, mixed methods research studies have become more popular in social science research (Castellan, 2010). The present study favoured a collaborative mixed methods design. The use of this method would clarify the potentialities and limitations of both research methods and facilitate a more in-depth descriptive and statistical study. This perspective resonates

with Choy (2014) who states that a complementary blend between qualitative and quantitative research methods is an alternative way to provide a better solution than adopting one method in isolation. The use of mixed methods also aids with data triangulation (Gray, 2022). There are significant benefits to utilising quantitative research methods such as: suitability for testing theories and hypotheses; the use of surveys to gather large scale responses and the highly systematic approach of quantitative research. However, depending on the research question, the limitations of quantitative research can also be mitigated by the inclusion of some qualitative research methods as appropriate. This view is shared by Atieno (2009), in his study of the benefits and limitations of qualitative research where he advises the incorporation of quantitative research methods in order to account for limitations. Quantitative data cannot offer the depth of qualitative data, a rich description of the lived experience of the participant. This affirms my decision to incorporate a mixed-methods approach for my study, not alone to minimise the limitations in the use of an entirely quantitative or qualitative approach, but also because mixed-methods provides both breadth and depth to the research. The two methods remain 'autonomous' in that they operate side by side in the research (Flick, 2018).

3.3 Methodological approach taken

This study opted for a multi-site case study approach across six school types. Gray (2022) advocates for the use of the case study method when a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked, in this instance how teachers sustained their resilience in the face of a range of challenges and adversities throughout their career was being examined (p. 287). To echo Yin – the essence is that it is enquiry in a real-life, everyday context. The need for 'case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena' (Yin, 2018, p. 5). Case studies permit in-depth analysis such as in studying life cycles, processes, performance, change etc whilst retaining 'a holistic and real-world perspective' (Yin, 2018, p. 5). Although the research is a multi-site case study, each school involved (six), is considered as a single-case initially and then comparative findings and conclusions are drawn across each school or case collectively. Creswell and Creswell (2018) report that the mixed methods case study design involves the use of one or more core designs. Eisenhardt (1989) suggests between four and ten case studies is sufficient for multiple case study design. Within the constraints of a doctoral study, six case study schools seemed a feasible number.

The study followed an exploratory sequential mixed methods design approach. This was a two phase data collection process that followed a combination of a deductive approach for quantitative research and an inductive approach to qualitative research. The cases were established by the researcher at the outset of the study and the researcher documented ‘the differences in the cases through the qualitative and quantitative data’ (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 230).

3.4 Rationale for approach

The initial questionnaire (quantitative data) established teachers’ attitudes and experiences in relation to the topic of teacher resilience, while the individual interviews (qualitative data), provided a ‘deeper understanding’ in relation to teacher resilience among a range of teachers with varying levels of experience in different school contexts (Biesta, 2017). There are many advantages to quantitative research which include that it focuses on ‘objectivity’, adopts ‘structured procedures and formal instruments for data collection’ and permits for statistical data analysis (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017, p. 370). Several benefits to surveys which are the most popular of quantitative methods according to Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) include, high representativeness and low cost in comparison to other methods of data collection. Surveys can also reach a large audience and are not affected by the subjectivity of the researcher (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017). Furthermore, Choy (2014) notes that surveys can be ‘administered and evaluated quickly’ and the numerical data discovered can be used in a comparative manner (p. 101). However, Queirós, Faria and Almeida, (2017) caution that the reliability of surveys and the data they produce is dependent both on the structure of the survey and the accuracy or truthfulness of the participants who provide the answers. The capacity to reflect the ‘opinions, perceptions and behaviours of a group of individuals’ (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017, p. 381), also has the potential to counterbalance this weakness. One of the limitations highlighted regarding quantitative research is the inability of this research method to explore a problem in depth.

Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017) also warn that quantitative studies fail to capture emotions, behaviour and changes of emotions of respondents. As stated by Castellan (2010), it is difficult to ‘infer meaning beyond the results achieved through statistical analysis’ (p. 12). The advantages of using quantitative data to explore teacher and principal resilience in my study include using surveys as an effective method of eliciting teachers’ attitudes and statistical analysis which can be used two-fold as

described by O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2017), descriptively and inferentially. The use of surveys as previously mentioned permits for yielding a large scale response. Limitations to the survey is that this approach cannot provide in-depth descriptions or information in contrast to qualitative methods. Interviews can provide participants with the opportunity to have their voices heard and to expand further survey responses.

Yin (2018) describes the design procedure when considering case selection suitability in multiple-case studies.

The design of multiple-case studies follows an analogous logic. Each case must be carefully selected so that the individual case studies either (a) predict similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication)

(Yin, 2018, p. 55).

The replication approach followed in this study is shown in figure 3.2 below. This is based on Figure 2.5 Multiple-Case Study Procedure (Yin, 2018, p. 58) with the questions used in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview constructed from previous literature in this field (including: Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Day and Gu, 2014; INTO, 2015; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019) and additional questions relevant to teachers and leaders professional lives during the Covid-19 pandemic and on the return to school. Cases are analysed individually and then cross-case comparison and interpretation occurs. This research approach strengthened the reliability of the project by performing multiple replication of the same case as advised by Gray (2022).

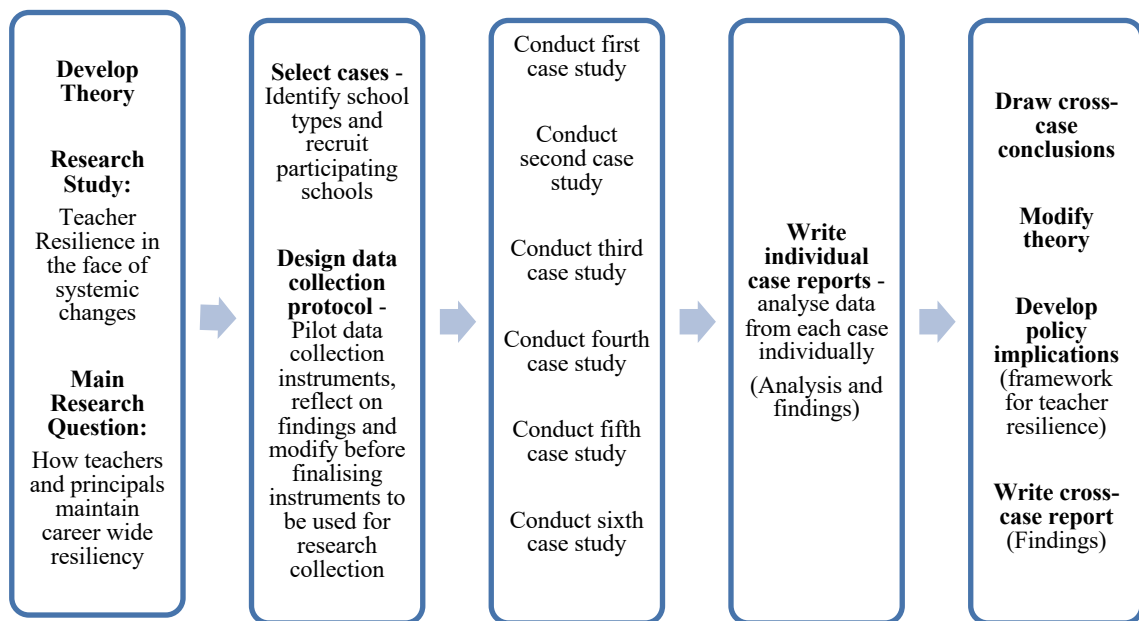


Figure 3.2 Case study replication approach followed in this study

3.5 Positionality

The data collection methods of survey and interview alongside the researcher’s anecdotal reflexive journal allowed me to position myself within the research realm. Munn-Giddings (2017) advises that researchers locate themselves within their research and ‘reflect on and be transparent about’ how their values, politics, gender, ethnicity, assumptions, categories, feelings and previous experience impact on their research (p. 72).

3.5.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity describes the relationship between the researcher and the object of research (Coghlan, 2019) this includes the researchers’ own reflections on their actions and observations in the field as well as their feelings, which become part of the data. The insider versus outsider debate is presented by Gray (2022) in terms of handling identity and reflexive positioning. He points out the importance of balance which can be a challenge depending on the research method selected for use. As a participant observer, Gray recommends the researcher is both ‘inside and outside the setting’ (p. 476). This resonated with me because as a primary school teacher I felt I could directly relate with the participants of my study. Yet subsequently, as I worked in a different

educational setting, at times I felt like an outsider, listening to the participants discuss the many logistical challenges that pertained directly to their school, in terms of staffing, location, layout etc. The acknowledgement that good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background by Creswell and Creswell, (2018) ensured as a researcher I was prepared to create an open and honest narrative. Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity, by trialling the questionnaire and interviews at the pilot phase, having pre-prepared interview questions, using the same explanations and definitions with all case study schools, there is a possibility that certain biases may shape the way I interpret the data as both a teacher and a researcher. Across the research process every effort was made to gather factual information, identify gaps in national and international literature on teacher resilience, follow the linear design of the case study replication method (Figure 3.2 above) and adhere to the ethical guidelines throughout.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Type

3.6.1 Sampling type and decisions around sampling

Sampling of participants and deciding how to gather participants is a key consideration for any research study (Gray, 2022). The two main types of sampling are probability sampling (which includes random, stratified, cluster and sampling using multiple probability techniques) and non-probability samples (generally used in qualitative research to establish deep levels of understanding). Non-probability sampling includes purposive, convenience and mixed-methods sampling. A purposeful sampling approach was implemented in this study, to ensure a wide audience was reached and a fair representation established. In a sequential design, quantitative and qualitative methods can be conducted interchangeably, with one phase informing the other.

3.6.2 Sampling application in the present study

The recruitment process began once ethical approval was granted on March 1st 2021 (Appendix A). Using professional contacts initially, namely teachers and principals from the researcher's Masters and Doctoral cohorts, five schools were contacted on March 11th by email. These schools represented varied school types in terms of size, socioeconomic status (DEIS [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in

Schools] or non DEIS), leadership (administrative and teaching principals), location (rural or urban) to represent each school context as equally as possible. While five was the initial target of schools set out and agreed by the researcher and supervisors, six seemed more suitable as the project progressed. This was due to the school types recruited and the option to do some cross comparison studies between school size and type. This number is in line with Eisenhardt, 1989 and Creswell and Creswell, 2018, who suggest between three and ten cases is sufficient. Another school was contacted on March 15th through professional contacts. Three of the six schools initially contacted participated in the case study.

At this stage specific school types were identified. Ethical approval was for school types in the Leinster region, this was primarily to include schools outside of Dublin as the majority of schools in the greater Dublin area are led by administrative principals. Over half of primary school principals nationwide are also full time teachers in classrooms or SET positions and juggle the same challenges as their administrative counterparts while also being responsible for educating a class or supporting multiple classes as an SET. In the 2020/21 school year there were 1698 teaching principal posts and 3104 mainstream primary schools, meaning 54.7% of principals were teaching principals (DE, 2023). It was an important consideration to reflect this cohort and include as broad a selection of school types as possible while being mindful that this research was to be conducted by a single researcher, also teaching full time.

Having identified ideally an Educate Together National School or a Community National School to contrast with the Church of Ireland School that was participating, the researcher downloaded the Multi-denominational school list from the DE website. As a DEIS boys' school had been secured, the researcher was eager to recruit a DEIS girls' school to compare school sites and as the initial three confirmed school types were small schools with under 200 pupils, the researcher was anxious to include a large school if possible to contrast with. Forty-eight schools were contacted by the 26th March 2021 (the day of the Easter holidays) and this was done by a combination of calls and emails. As a class teacher, teaching sixth class at the time finding opportunities to make calls during the school day was challenging. A fourth school was secured during the Easter holidays. Five more schools were contacted in April on the return to school. Each school was contacted by email initially and then followed up with a phone call after a few days. By the middle of May another fifty-seven schools were contacted. The researcher contacted all large schools in Leinster (with 300+ pupils) as per the DE

database. Seventy more schools were contacted the week of the 17th of May. This was followed the next week by another thirty schools being contacted. In total two hundred and ten schools were emailed and follow up phone calls were made to over one hundred and eighty schools. Eventually two more schools agreed to participate. An anonymised list of case study schools is presented below in table 3.1. Schools will be referenced to using pseudonyms.

Table 3.1 Case Study Schools

Case Study Schools							
School	School Ethos	Size	Teachers	Gender Type	Socio-economic status	Admin principal	Location
Newtown School	Church of Ireland	165 pupils	8.5	Mixed	Non DEIS	No	Rural
St John's NS	Catholic	120 pupils	7	Mixed	Non DEIS	No	Rural
St Stephen's BNS	Catholic	158 pupils	20	Boys	DEIS 1	Yes	Urban
St Mary's NS	Catholic	1000 pupils	65	Mixed	Non DEIS	Yes	Urban
St Anne's GNS	Catholic	145 pupils	16	Girls	DEIS 1	Yes	Urban
Sacred Heart School	Catholic	441 pupils	26	Mixed	Non DEIS	Yes	Urban

Table 3.2 Case study interviewees

School	Principal	Mainstream Class Teacher	Special Education Teacher (SET)
Newtown School	Louise (PS1): Recently appointed teaching principal (in second year), an outside appointment to the role (teaching 9 years), with Masters qualification and pursuing Doctorate.	Sinéad (MS1): Experienced (teaching 6 years) with different class levels, currently teaching multigrade.	Mary (SS1): Experienced in role as SET (teaching more than 20 years), completing Graduate Diploma in Inclusive and Special Education.
St John's NS	Áine (PS2): Experienced teaching principal (10 years plus), working in the same school for over 20 years.	Donal (MS2): Experienced mainstream teacher (teaching more than 10 years), currently teaching multigrade.	Elaine (SS2): Experienced in role as SET (teaching more than 15 years) with a number of SEN qualifications to Masters level.
St Stephen's BNS	Rachel (PS3): Experienced principal who worked in the school prior to being appointed principal (teaching more than 15 years).	Deirdre (MS3): Experienced mainstream teacher, teaching over 20 years.	Bláithín (SS3): Experienced in role as SET (teaching more than 20 years) with a number of SEN qualifications to Masters level.
St Mary's NS	Daniel (PS4): Experienced principal, leading the school for over 30 years.	Niamh (MS4): NQT in second year of teaching.	Jacinta (SS4): Experienced teacher (teaching more than 15 years).
St Anne's GNS	Síle (PS5): Deputy acting as principal for a number of years (teaching more than 20 years) with SEN qualifications.	Amy (MS5): NQT in second year of teaching.	Clare (SS5): Experienced teacher (teaching more than 15 years).
Sacred Heart School	Vincent (PS6): Experienced principal, previously principal elsewhere, teaching over 30 years.	MS6: No teacher provided at interview phase.	SS6: No teacher provided at interview phase.

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in the researcher's school prior in March 2021. The questionnaire was distributed via the principal initially and interviews were conducted the following week. Several teachers volunteered to interview but the researcher chose

to stick with the trio of principal, one SET and one mainstream teacher to keep the pilot study as similar as possible to each case study. There were seventeen responses to the questionnaire which was shared with twenty-one teachers. This gave a response rate of 81%. These responses helped to modify the final questionnaire in terms of arranging the number of years teaching into bands rather than leaving it as an open-ended question. Conducting the interviews gave experience with the pacing of questions and suitable follow up probes to have ready. Some of the answers referring to PL encouraged the researcher to separate the questions a little more in the final instrument and include additional opportunities for participants to reflect on their own practice as teachers and/or leaders. The researcher had previously only interviewed children as part of her Masters research and so the experience of the interviewing adults and their comments were useful for final instrumentation revisions. Conducting the interviews on Zoom as per the study also afforded the opportunity to test the recording and elements such as volume and internet connection speeds. Pilot testing as Creswell and Creswell (2018) comment 'also provides an opportunity to assess how long the study will take' (p. 154) and it was apparent from feedback from colleagues that the questionnaire was doable within the specified time indicated on the information shared with potential case study schools at the recruitment stage. The pilot study established the theoretical boundaries and ensured the data gathering protocols and tools were workable for the actual case studies. A timeline of the data collection for the present study is presented at figure 3.3 below.

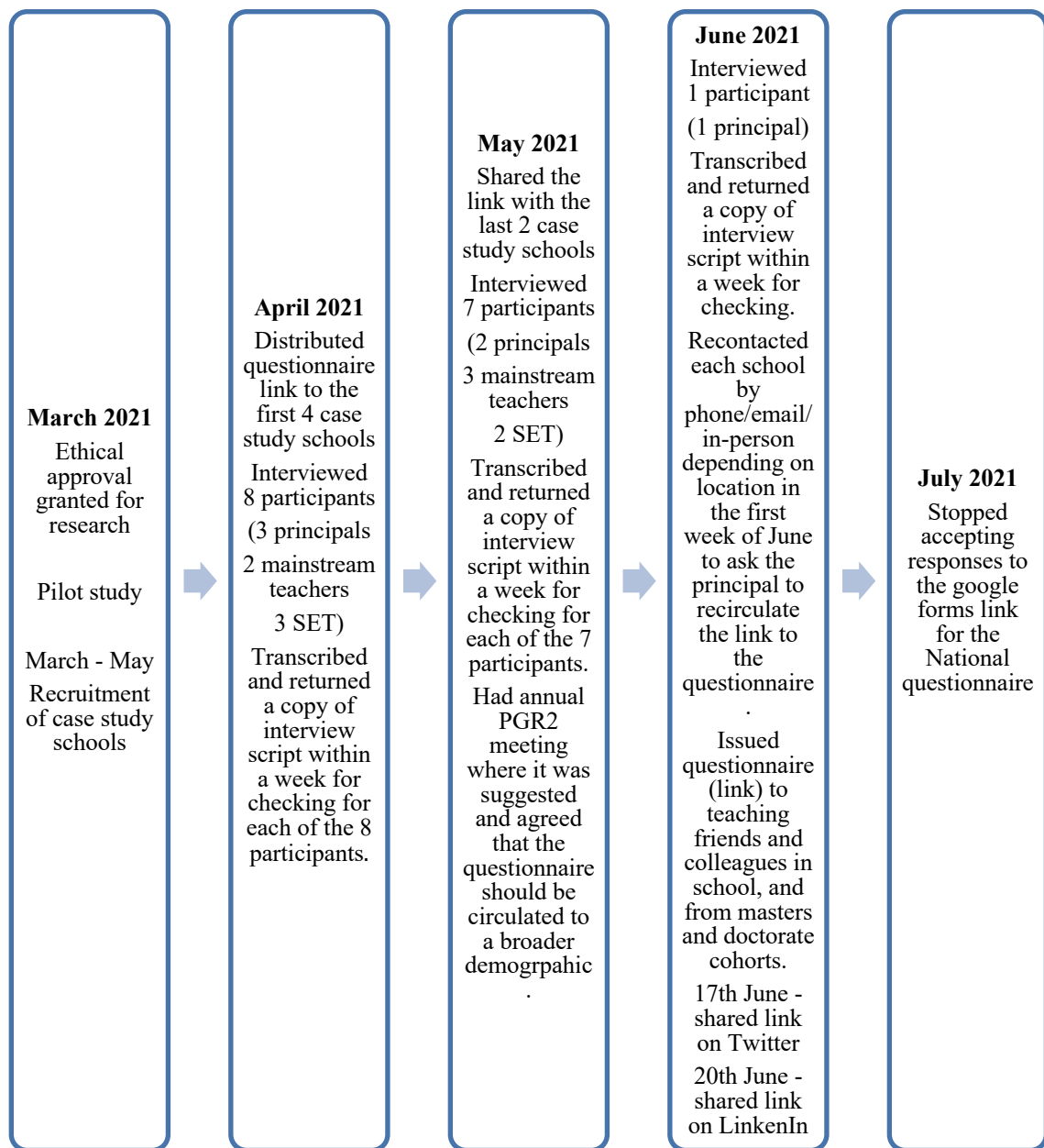


Figure 3.3 - Timeline of data collection

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval by Dublin City University (DCU) was for school types in the Leinster region, this was primarily to include schools outside of Dublin as the majority of schools in the greater Dublin area are led by administrative principals (Appendix A). Further ethical considerations were in relation to maintaining the anonymity of participants during the data collection phase. Prior to the commencement of the study the Plain Language Statement (PLS), (Appendix B) was shared with participants. This explained the outline of the study, research method proposed and data analysis methods

to be implemented, measures to protect anonymity taken and potential risks and benefits. Participants were reminded about the right to withdraw from participating in the project at any time without consequences. Information regarding data storage and deletion was also shared. The researcher shared her email for any queries or questions that participants might have, none such queries arose. Respecting the anonymity of participants was planned for in the ethics form. Support for participants was another area of concern ethically, should an interviewee become anxious or upset, however all interviews were conducted without any such difficulties. Principals and interview participants were sent an informed consent form (Appendix C and Appendix D). This detailed the research study title, the purpose of the research, confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the PLS and confirmation that involvement in the research study is voluntary. These were signed and dated and returned by post or via email to the researcher. Participants at interview stage were reminded again of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time prior to initiating the Zoom recording. It was explained further that the interviews were being recorded in order for the researcher to transcribe the information gathered and once the interviewee was happy with the data then the original recording would be deleted. There were no issues at this stage and all interviewees indicated they were happy with the transcription of their interview.

3.9 Data collection instruments

This study involved the distribution of questionnaires initially to participating case study schools and this phase was followed by semi-structured interviews with three participants (mainstream teacher, SET and principal) being the target per case study school. The questionnaire will now be discussed in terms of development, distribution and analysis and this will be followed by an explanation as to how the interviews were conducted, how participants were recruited, and how the data was coded and analysed.

3.9.1 Questionnaires

The questions used in the questionnaire stemmed from the review of literature on the topic of teacher resilience, and work carried out previously in relation to teacher resilience, notably: Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Day and Gu, 2014; INTO, 2015; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019. The questionnaire contained thirty-one questions, a mixture of open ended and closed or multiple-choice answers. In total there were nineteen closed

questions and twelve open ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three sections which are presented in table 3.3 below. A copy of the case study questionnaire is in Appendix E.

Table 3.3 Case Study Questionnaire Instrument Items

Section	Question number	Focus
1. Teacher profile	1-7	Demographic information about the participant, school, role and any intentions for upskilling, applying for promotion or to leave teaching
2. Resilience	8-21	Characteristics of teacher resilience Support in school Impact of school culture and leadership Impact of systemic changes Factors which have made teaching more/less challenging Identifying attributes of a resilient teacher
3. Future of teaching	22-31	Job satisfaction Supports needed for teachers/leaders Systemic changes rating TPL Suggestions to sustain resilience

3.9.2 Distribution of questionnaire

Questionnaires were used initially to elicit teachers' attitudes around teacher resilience and the inclusion of unstructured questions allowed for elaboration regarding systemic changes. These were administered online using Google Forms following the DCU Data protection guidance on the use of Google Forms and took approximately fifteen minutes to complete. The link to the questionnaire was forwarded directly to the principal in each of the six case study schools. The researcher relied on the principal to share this link with their teaching staff. Follow up emails and phone calls were conducted to check that the link was shared. Some principals reported that they had forwarded the link to all their staff and others sent it in an email directly to a group of teachers they felt would respond, or chose not to send it in a group mail as there were several staff on leave. The researcher relied on the good will of principals to do this and

maintained regular contact with the principals throughout the process. Responses were anonymous. The questionnaire contained an embedded PLS for participants and the consent form to be clicked before participants could answer the questions. Included at the end of the questionnaire was a live link to the researcher's email address should respondents wish to express an interest to participate at the semi-structured interview phase. This maintained the anonymity of the respondents at the first phase as per ethical approval. Many participants for the second phase opted to connect in this way, while in some other cases principals asked staff directly to be involved, this was mainly due to staff shortages and a lack of substitute cover available in some roles.

Following the researchers Annual Progress Report meeting in 2021, it was felt circulating the questionnaire to a broader demographic of teachers in Ireland may provide for greater analysis of the study and show a truer representation of teacher resilience as experienced by teachers and principals in many different school types. This questionnaire heretofore will be referred to as the national questionnaire as respondents were nationwide. Contact was made with approximately thirty teacher friends and they were asked to circulate the link to the questionnaire where possible. Responses were monitored for a week and then shared via the social media platforms of Twitter and LinkedIn and this appeal saw the researcher exceed the target of one hundred responses by the end of June 2021 (a copy of the recruitment notice for the national questionnaire is presented at Appendix F).

3.9.3 Response rate - questionnaires

In total thirty one responses were received to the case study questionnaires. This was a 21.68% response rate given the number of potential responses stood at approximately one hundred and forty three. In order to ascertain this response rate the researcher contacted the schools several times, and mentioned the circulation of the questionnaire to each of the three participants from each school (principal, SET and mainstream teacher) at their interview phase or when sending a copy of the transcript for checking. Schools were recontacted once more on the week of the 8th June 2021 to have a final push in reaching the target of thirty responses at a minimum. One principal emailed to say they had re-circulated the email to teaching staff and another who reported staff shortages and difficulties with sourcing cover for Covid related leave said she had forwarded the email to four staff on leave. One hundred and six respondents

took the national questionnaire. A breakdown of the roles of the respondents is shown in Chapter Four (see Table 4.2 and Table 4.3).

3.9.4 Questionnaire analysis: an overview of the data analysis process for the quantitative findings

The closed questions were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), (Version 28.0.11: IBM Corp., 2021). The data was downloaded from Google Forms onto Google sheets and Excel, which helped to tabulate the quantitative information and worked seamlessly with SPSS as a transfer method. By printing out this data the researcher was able to manually analyse the open-ended questions from a more thematic perspective to elicit the main themes that emerged and determine how many respondents contributed to each theme. Subsequently for example in terms of teaching qualifications, the researcher was able to categorise those who had a Bachelor of Education, a Postgraduate qualification in education, a Masters qualification etc. Many participants had multiple qualifications in the area of education. Once the data was checked for errors, organised and prepared, the next step was to prepare for data coding (Gray, 2022). This involved assigning numbers for each survey response option and observational category. Returning to the questionnaire, each question was re-read and an SPSS variable name and coding instructions or values were attributed. In terms of analysing and presenting the quantitative data the correct measure also needed to be assigned, for categorical data for example gender – nominal, years teaching – ordinal. Gray (2022) explains that nominal data are a record of categories or names where there is no ranked order, whereas with ordinal data there is an intended ordering of categories (p. 678). The nominal and ordinal variables were analysed descriptively in terms of frequencies and percentages. Differences between participants in relation to their response patterns based on type of school, school size, years of experience and current position were conducted using non-parametric inferential statistics. Non-parametric tests were chosen as there was no guarantee as to the randomness or distribution of the data. Open question responses were read and in the case of suggestions for TPL for example the ideas generated were tallied. For other questions the researcher used these comments alongside the interview data to see if views were influenced by such factors as context, length of time teaching, current position in school.

As with the first questionnaire (outlined above), the national questionnaire asked the same questions with additional questions asking about school type, school ethos and

school size (Appendix G). The national questionnaire contained thirty-five questions, again a combination of open ended and closed questions with twenty-two closed questions and thirteen open ended questions. Organisation and analysis of quantitative data followed the same procedures as the case study questionnaire. SPSS screenshots demonstrating data and variable views are presented at Appendix H. National questionnaire respondents (n=106) were assigned a code based on their answer to: “I am currently working as” - mainstream teachers were allocated M for mainstream and then a number, those in role as SET were given S and depending on principal status A was assigned to administrative principals and T to teaching principals. An example of each type would be M1 - mainstream teacher one, S2 - SET two, AP2 - administrative principal two and TP1 - teaching principal one. A sample of the inferential statistics, demonstrating an analysis of the responses to the Likert scale questions according to current position is viewable at Appendix I.

3.9.5 Interviews

Interviews provided participants with the opportunity to have their voices heard and to expand on further generalised answers to the questionnaire. In resonating a point made by Quierós, Faria and Almeida (2017), interviews as a qualitative approach capture emotions, behaviour and changes of emotions of participants with ease. This qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews with sixteen participants, six principals, five teachers in an SET role and five mainstream teachers from the six case study schools. Each school was asked for three participants in each of the roles, the sixth school failed to provide participants for either teacher interview. After checking with my supervisors I decided to proceed with interviewing the principal. Due to the school size the data yielded would be comparable with another principal interviewed previously and initial contact suggested that both principals may have similar experience leading in terms of length of service.

These Zoom interviews took place between the 15th April 2021 and 1st June 2021 using the researcher’s DCU Zoom account. A copy of the interview questions is provided at Appendix J. Each interview took place individually. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and returned to the interviewee for checking within a week of the interview taking place. Participants were then allocated pseudonyms for the purpose of retaining the transcripts. The interviews were arranged for a date and time that suited participants. In some cases these were conducted before or straight after

school and in other situations the participants elected to be interviewed in the evening time. Interviews varied in length from twenty-five minutes to one hour in duration. Participants all spoke openly and freely about their concerns, experiences and individual settings. The interviews were on the whole very positive and although as the researcher I felt a little apprehensive or nervous at times, I managed to maintain my professionalism and rather enjoyed the opportunity to converse with participants about their lived experiences of teacher resilience across different school types.

3.9.6 Selection of participants for interviews

Participants were invited to self-select to take part in this stage of the research by following a link at the end of the Google form (questionnaire, see Appendix E) and a brief outline of what this phase would entail was shared initially with the principal in each school. Further information was given in the plain language statement for participants and the informed consent forms. Participants completed and returned these via email prior to being interviewed.

3.9.7 Interview coding and analysis: an overview of the data analysis process for the qualitative findings

The qualitative data refers to the data gathered via interviews and analysed as per the Braun and Clarke reflexive approach to thematic analysis (2006, 2022) using NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 20.4.1). Table 3.4 below shows how the six-phase process (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the qualitative data.

Table 3.4 – Six phase process (Braun and Clarke, 2006) adapted for the present study.

Phase	Stage guidelines	The present study (2021)
Phase 1	Familiarising yourself with the data	Initially, the interviews were listened back on, transcribed into Microsoft Word, and transcripts were then emailed to interview participants for member checking. They were read and re-read by the researcher and initial observations were noted (see Appendix K – Codebook – Phase 1)
Phase 2	Coding	The interviews were printed out, manually highlighted and summary notes were made (see appendix K for an example from school 1). Then the interviews were imported to NVivo and words and phrases were coded for the dataset. This led to 19 initial codes shown at appendix K. Initial codes were identified by popularity/frequency and relevance to the RQ. These were a mixture of semantic and latent codes such as ‘behaviour’, ‘CPD’, ‘culture’, ‘pressure points’ and ‘relationships’. As each code was named a description or code label was entered alongside this – see Codebook – Phase 2 (appendix K).
Phase 3	Generating initial themes	Provisional or candidate theme names were generated at this point with the researcher revisiting the codes from phase 2 and using inferential knowledge from the interview phase in relation to leadership, school size, context etc. Phase 3 saw the reorganisation of initial themes into themes and subthemes. It saw the elimination of ‘behaviour’ as an independent theme, renaming ‘experience’ to ‘career wide resiliency’ as an umbrella term and deciding what other initial themes were linked together. Initially ‘leadership’ was viewed as a challenge, then re-organised as a distinct category.
Phase 4	Developing and reviewing themes	Phase 4 saw revisions made to phase 3. A further review of the references and the process of categorising and interpreting what each participant meant. In some cases the original transcribed interview was consulted. The codes were reviewed to ensure coherency in relation to the research question and sub-questions and re-organised as per the core idea or focus. See appendix K – Codebook – Phase 4.

Phase 5	Refining, defining and naming themes	Phase 5 saw the refinement of subthemes and reorganisation in terms of importance and relevance of the themes. For example, although the challenges had been identified by phase 3 and the researcher was satisfied the subthemes related to and covered the main challenges raised by participants these were refined further to challenges affecting leadership and management. In some instances the researcher needed to go back to phase 2 or 3 to check organisation and evolvment aligning with the non-linear progression warned by Braun and Clarke (2022). See appendix K - Codebook – Phase 5.
Phase 6	Writing up	At this stage the researcher linked the themes, and subthemes to the Mansfield <i>et al.</i> , (2012) <i>Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resilience</i> (appendix K – example of conceptual mapping) to determine if they were profession related, emotional, motivational or social themes. This helped to provide clarity to the researcher in terms of the trajectory of the dataset, help determine the importance and prevalence of the themes in terms of answering the research questions and the order in which they would be presented and discussed.

More details of the process undertaken are viewable in appendix K, where the refinement of the themes through the various phases is broken down. A visualisation graphic is also provided re same (see appendix K – example of flow from codes to categories to themes).

3.9.8 Research reflexive journal

A reflexive journal was utilised during the data collection phase. This acted primarily as a diary of the project, recording a summary of the recruitment procedures followed, and the actions taken by the researcher in contacting the schools. All schools contacted at the recruitment stage were recorded to keep track of the number of schools contacted. In terms of the case study schools the researcher noted the dates the interviews were scheduled for, ticked when the participants had returned consent forms and once the interviews were transcribed and checked a code was given to each participant in order to provide anonymity at the analysis stage. In terms of circulating the questionnaire to a broader demographic of teachers and principals the researcher noted who had been contacted, the method (WhatsApp or email) and the date. The

number of responses to the Google forms (questionnaire) link were checked daily and this was recorded in the notebook, this was in an attempt to ensure an adequate number of responses were received. The reflexive journal also helped to reduce researcher bias by maintaining a factual account of the process.

3.10 Validity, reliability and generalisability

Validity is concerned with accurate and credible data in a research study (Gray, 2022). Case study research in its reliance on multiple methods and sources of data collection generates rich data and by its nature reduces subjectivity and increases construct validity. Construct validity is the measure of abstract concepts and traits and is concerned with what you are trying to measure. Through the pilot study instruments were accurately measured and were clear. Interview questions were taken from existing literature. This study measured the impact of systemic changes on teacher resilience. Data triangulation from questionnaires and interviews provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon (teacher resilience) and the inclusion of multiple cases strengthened the internal validity of the study (Yin, 2018). Triangulation as understood by Biesta (2017) is the convergence of data from two or more methods which enhances the strength and validity of the findings.

The reliability is measured in terms of how accurately the research reflects the participants' meaning. According to Connolly (2007) reliability concerns the consistency and trustworthiness of measures used. Put simply, reliability is the degree to which an instrument will produce similar results at a different time (Gray, 2022). This is accounted for by the researcher at the interview stage by asking the participants to member check the transcript of their interview. In terms of quantitative data collection, the use of the pilot study helped to restructure any poorly worded questions that could be perceived as difficult to understand or that had room for error, e.g. the question asking participants the number years they had been teaching, where as a result of error in the pilot study the researcher moved to using pre-defined bands for the answers in the research study. The pilot study also helped with the interview. In terms of the case study approach Yin advises the use of case study protocols and databases to ensure replication is possible (Yin, 2008). Reliability is strengthened by multiple replication of the same or similar cases (Gray, 2022). The case study replication method followed is presented at Figure 3.2 above.

Generalisability is the extent to which the results of a study based upon evidence drawn from a sample can be applied to a whole population (Gray, 2022). In terms of generalisability, while interviews ‘do not aspire to generalisability, their findings can have implications for other settings’ (Mears, 2017, p. 188). Generalisability can also be referred to as external validity. Generalisability in relation to case studies is recommended in terms of replication of a study three or four times in different settings (Yin, 2008). While this study is not generalisable the careful research design and audit trail enhance replicability. Achieving replicability relates to the transparency of the work (Mears, 2017).

3.11 Limitations of the study

This study took place in the final term of the 2021 school year. This was a particularly challenging year for all schools in relation to Covid-19 and these challenges continued during the return to school after the remote learning period. It was difficult to speak with principals directly, many arranged phone calls were cancelled or rearranged due to them covering for staff shortages or dealing with suspected Covid cases. In a number of schools due to the Government's directive at the time there were principals who were working remotely or on leave due to pregnancy related Covid leave or other illnesses. Acting principals were not always able to participate, due to other constraints. In one of the case study schools the principal interviewed was the acting principal (the deputy principal of the school), who had been acting up for two full school years. In another case study school, the principal was eager to be interviewed but no staff member elected to participate at the interview stage. This was disappointing given the size of the school. Regarding the participation of only one member from school six at the interview phase, this was seen as an outlier. The idea of having a representative of each role (principal, SET and mainstream class teacher) from every school was to determine if teacher resilience was context or role specific, or the extent of the link between these.

In many schools when conducting follow up calls, several days after sending the email to the addresses on the DE website or on the school's own website, the researcher was asked to forward to the principal directly for his/her consideration. In other cases some schools had already given a commitment to other Masters/Doctoral students for the 2020/21 school year. Some schools acknowledged the request and looked for further information about the study but then didn't participate. The recruitment process did take

a considerable amount of time, energy and organisation. The researcher was fortunate to have an SET available to come in and lead lessons in the classroom as the preferred time for phone calls to principals seemed to be at approximately ten o' clock. Given the class the researcher was teaching at the time had no full time SNA and pupils with SEN in the class requiring support at all times this was an invaluable support, to be able to continue to teach the class and not worry about their safety and successfully recruit participants for the research stage.

Regarding the questionnaires, the researcher was hoping that by contacting a range of school sizes there would be no difficulty in succeeding in yielding three responses from each school at a minimum. Schools were recontacted in early June to ask the principal to reshare the link to the questionnaire with all teaching staff. This was in an attempt to reach the desired target minimum of thirty responses. While this target was achieved, in reality there could have been over one hundred and forty responses from the schools involved. Although the sample size is small, it is felt it is an adequate sample which still yields important information regarding teaching and leading at primary level.

A number of interviews had to be rescheduled due to Covid-19 also, in some cases participants themselves were ill and in two other situations participants had to bring their children for tests close to their designated interview time. This resulted in three interviews being conducted on the one day in one instance. While not ideal, the researcher was grateful to have the opportunity to discuss the study with participants and elicit their on the ground experience in their context in relation to teacher and principal resilience during the past five school years.

Limitations of methodological approaches relevant to this research study include a low response rate to the case study questionnaire. There was repetition in the data between the answers to Q12 and Q25 (case study questionnaires) which centred on the degree to which the systemic changes challenged participants. Managing the data from the national questionnaire, parallel to the case study questionnaire using SPSS involved the process of the raw data being converted to standardised numbers that could then be used in statistical analysis. This was time consuming, and if the questions had lined up the two datasets could have been merged but the addition of the extra questions in the national questionnaire also helped establish the demographic contributing to the knowledge in the field in terms of the school type, ethos and size.

3.12 Conclusion

This research is situated in an evolving climate where teachers and principals are required to adapt and change practices because of policy development, the adaptation and implementation of initiatives from the DE and other educational stakeholders amidst the global pandemic of Covid-19. This chapter outlines a mixed methods case study approach, which worked well given the time frame and the climate in which the research took place. Online completion of the questionnaire and remote interviews facilitated participants in terms of suitability for the interview schedule and ensured the research was completed within the specified time frame. Recruiting schools and participants proved challenging at times but the target number for both questionnaires and interviews was eventually achieved. This was a steep learning curve for a novice researcher which tested resilience at every step of the journey but equally proved to be a journey of self-discovery in teaching and leading and reignited the flame to teach to the best of one's ability which as Gu and Day (2013) state, 'has always required resilience' (p. 22).

This chapter discussed the philosophical assumption of the researcher and the research design undertaken. The following chapter will present the findings from the mixed-methods case study.

Chapter Four: Research findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the research findings from the mixed-methods multiple site case study across six primary schools in the Leinster region between April and June 2021 and the subsequent follow up questionnaire shared between June and July 2021 referred to as the national questionnaire. The discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter Five. This research aimed to ascertain the extent to which participants demonstrated resilience throughout the systemic changes introduced in Irish primary schools over the period from 2016-2021. The main research question (RQ) was: What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?

The subsidiary questions were as follows:

1. What supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals?
2. What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?
3. How does lived experience impact on resilience for teachers and principals?

Using the Mansfield *et al.*, (2012) *Four Dimensional Framework on Teacher Resilience* and drawing influence from Boon (2021) *Lived-in Resilience Framework* the researcher situates the data within the four dimensions of resilience framework; profession related, emotional, motivational and social. Career wide resiliency and the lived experience of participants is viewed as a central focus with the systemic changes impacting on all aspects (see figures 2.1, 2.2; Chapter Two). The research comprises two phases, quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews). First the quantitative findings will be presented. The findings are explored through the six key themes which emerged; career wide resiliency, challenges, leadership, collaboration, role specific and context specific. These will be discussed further in section 4.3.

Table 3.2 (Chapter Three) shows a brief description of the interviewees, these participants were involved at both phases, initially completing a questionnaire and subsequently being interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The profile of respondents to the national questionnaire is discussed throughout the six main themes.

4.2 Questionnaire findings - descriptive statistics

4.2.1 Questionnaire respondents

As outlined previously in the methodology chapter (Chapter Three) a link to the questionnaire on Google Forms was shared with each of the six case study schools initially. Despite emails, phone calls and in-person reminders, there were 31 responses to this phase of data collection out of a perceived 142 possible responses. Table 4.1 below shows a breakdown of case study questionnaire respondents. The national questionnaire respondents had one month to take the questionnaire which was shared initially through professional contacts and then via the social media platforms Twitter and LinkedIn. The breakdown of national questionnaire respondents is shown in table 4.2. In this chapter, reference to questionnaire respondents includes a combined figure (n=137), unless otherwise stated, in which case they are referred to as the case study questionnaire and the national questionnaire.

Table 4.1 – Case study questionnaire respondents (n=31)

Case study questionnaire respondents by role			
Principal	Administrative 4	Teaching (Mainstream/multigrade) 1	Teaching (SET) 1
Mainstream teacher	15		
SET	10		

Table 4.2 – National questionnaire respondents (n=106)

National questionnaire respondents by role			
Principal	Administrative 5	Teaching (Mainstream/multigrade) 3	Teaching (SET) 2
Mainstream teacher	46		
SET	50		

The open-ended questions sought the views of participants regarding self-description; teaching qualifications including post graduate qualifications obtained in the area of education; intentions to upskill, apply for promotion, change schools or leave teaching; the impact of school culture and leadership on participants' professional lives; factors that have made the role more and less challenging in the past five years;

their view on the skills, attributes or characteristics a resilient teacher would possess; describing their job satisfaction; the supports they feel are necessary for teachers or leaders going forward; other areas of TPL which may be beneficial; what they currently enjoy most about teaching or leading in their school and what changes or initiative would they recommend to sustain resilience in teaching.

Once the data was presented using descriptive statistics further illustrations of nominal data using pie charts and bar charts for example were created and are inserted throughout this chapter where appropriate to present the data in an easily accessible format, for example gender (see Figure 4.1 below).

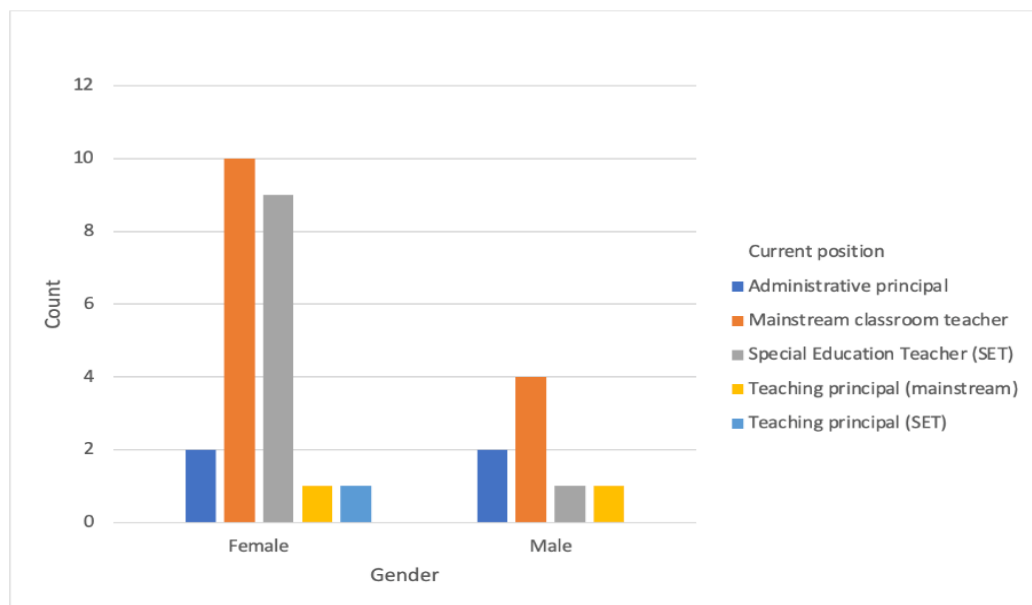


Figure 4.1 – Case study schools information on gender and current position in school (n=31).

4.2.2 Gender and representation in primary teaching

Primary teaching in Ireland is a female dominated occupation at present. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), report that on average in OECD countries women make up two-thirds of teachers from pre-primary to tertiary education. Eurostat data gathered in 2017 shows the gender distribution of teachers in the European Union (EU) from primary to upper secondary school. Of the six million teachers this data refers to, the EU average was 75% female and 25% male.

In terms of gender profiling, among the case study schools the response rate was 74.2% (n=23) female and 25.8% (n=8) male. This was in comparison with 88.7% (n=94) female and 11.3% (n=12) male from the national questionnaire responses. Of the interviewees (n=16), 81.3% (n=13) were female and 18.8% were male (n=3). Government statistics indicate that in the 2020/21 school year there were 35,518 female primary teachers (including principals) and 6,494 male primary teachers (including principals). These figures indicate that females represent 84.5% and males make up 15.5% of the primary teaching population. Government statistics from the 2021/22 school year show sustained percentage rates at 84.5% for females and 15.5% respectively.

In terms of principal numbers, Government statistics show that 2,157 females (67%) are primary principals and 1,061 males (33%) in data relating to the 2020/2021 school year (DE, 2022). Data from the case study schools (n=6) supports this statistic with 66.7% of case study schools (n=4) led by female principals, while 33.3% of case study schools (n=2) had male principals. Of the principals (n=10) who participated in the national questionnaire, 60% (n=6) were female and 40% (n=4) were male. Data from the present study mirrors national statistics on gender and role.

For the purpose of this chapter, the findings from both of the questionnaire respondent cohorts will be analysed separately and together alongside the qualitative data. Answers provided to the questionnaires will also be dispersed throughout the key themes arrived at through the qualitative findings which will be examined next.

4.2.3 Interview findings

Table 3.4 (Chapter Three) outlines the six-phase process (Braun and Clarke, 2006) followed by the researcher to analyse the qualitative data. Through this process the researcher arrived at six key themes which will now be explained.

4.3 The six key themes

A screenshot from NVivo (Figure 4.2 below) outlines the final six key themes arrived at through the examination of participant responses and the undertaking of the reflexive thematic analysis process described above. The six key themes are:

- T1 – Career wide resiliency
- T2 – Challenges
- T3 – Leadership
- T4 – Collaboration
- T5 – Role specific
- T6 – Context specific

The subsequent section will discuss each theme and subtheme in more detail drawing upon data findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research to support this. While the themes are listed in terms of their impact and partially by order of frequency and participant determined importance through the use of NVivo, they will be presented in a non-sequential manner to allow for a natural flow to the chapter.

Name	Files	References
○ T1 - Career wide resiliency	16	63
> ○ T1.1 - Initial teaching experience	12	30
> ○ T1.2 - Developing personal resilience	16	88
> ○ T1.3 - CPD	16	59
> ○ T1.4 - Support Network	14	36
> ○ T1.5 - Professional Experience	14	37
○ T2 - Challenges	16	93
> ○ T2.1 - Leadership & management	12	40
> ○ T2.2 - Stressful challenges	16	108
> ○ T2.3 - Negative challenges	16	100
> ○ T2.4 - Systemic changes including Covid-19	14	63
○ T3 - Leadership	16	57
○ T3.1 - Modelling leadership	6	14
○ T3.2 - Positive leadership	8	16
○ T3.3 - Distributing leadership	4	4
○ T3.4 - Approaching leaders for support	4	5
○ T3.5 - Role of leadership	6	9
○ T3.6 - Changes in leadership	5	6
○ T3.7 - Realisation it can't all be done	4	7
○ T3.8 - Teaching principal	2	5
○ T4 - Collaboration	14	33
○ T4.1 - Collegiality	9	18
○ T4.2 - Planning	5	8
○ T4.3 - Problem solving	7	9
○ T5 - Role specific	16	79
> ○ T5.1 - Confidence	16	51
○ T5.2 - Job satisfaction	16	27
○ T6 - Context specific	16	70
○ T6.1 - Culture	16	28
○ T6.2 - Organisational structure	16	42

Figure 4.2 Screenshot from NVivo of the phase five themes and subthemes.

4.4 Career wide resiliency

Career wide resiliency is examined in this research as the role of experience in teacher resilience across one's teaching career. It is an umbrella term which encompasses initial teaching experience; developing personal resilience; TPL; support network and professional experience as participant determined subthemes. In figure 4.3 below the overarching theme of career wide resiliency is shown alongside five subthemes generated from the interview data. Subsequent subthemes are informed by codes and presented in the codebook in appendix K. There were 250 references to the subthemes, with developing personal resilience and TPL (referenced at interview phase as CPD) mentioned by all interviewees.

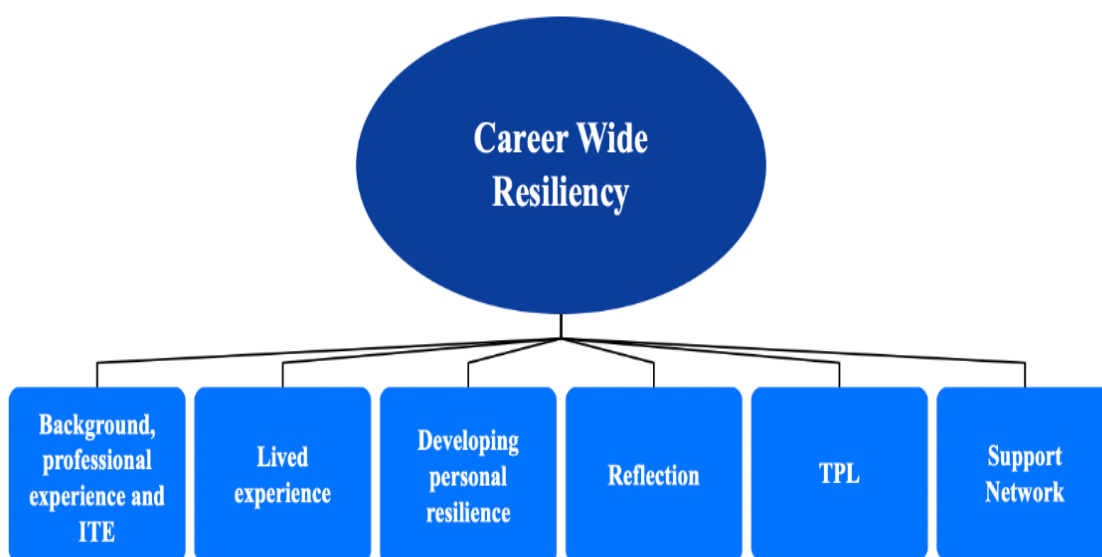


Figure 4.3 Theme 1 – Career Wide Resiliency and subthemes associated with this overarching theme

Acknowledging the participants have varying levels of experience in teaching and leading schools, this section will examine in the first instance the experience of participants in terms of years teaching and in addition the length of time they have worked in their current setting, looking at the case study schools first and then the national questionnaire in the same format. As per the case study schools questionnaire, Table 4.3 below shows the experience of participants in terms of years teaching and years in current school.

Table 4.3 - Years teaching and years in current school of case study questionnaire participants (n=31)

	Years teaching		Years in current school	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
< 5 years	5	16.1	11	35.5
6 – 10 years	5	16.1	6	19.4
11 – 20 years	13	41.9	11	35.5
21 – 30 years	5	16.1	2	6.5
31 years plus	3	9.7	1	3.2
Total	31	100	31	100

Table 4.4 - Years teaching and years in current school of national questionnaire participants (n=106)

	Years teaching		Years in current school	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
< 5 years	23	21.7	48	45.3
6 – 10 years	25	23.6	20	18.9
11 – 20 years	43	40.6	34	32.1
21 – 30 years	8	7.5	3	2.8
31 years plus	7	6.6	1	0.9
Total	106	100	106	100

By comparison the same information, years teaching and years in current school are presented above in Table 4.4 to reflect the data from the national questionnaire. Of interest to the researcher is that participants teaching 11-20 years is reflective of both questionnaire cohorts in terms of the highest number of respondents. The researcher would also fit into this category and wonders if this is a factor in the response rate certainly among the national recirculation which was shared initially with colleagues from her Masters and Doctoral colleagues. Among both data sets the lowest response rates were from those teaching in advance of 31 years, which is arguably reflective of primary teacher retirement trends witnessed and experienced by the researcher across schools she worked in in addition to the *Teacher Retirement Statistics 2020* (DE, 2021c) which state “the most common age of retirement for primary teachers in 2020 was age 60 (16.9%, 108 retirees)” (p.4). Appendix L (DE, 2021c, p.11) shows that of

the 667 primary teachers who retired in 2020, 322 or (48.3%) retired before age 60. This said, 36% or 237 retirees were 61 and over.

4.4.1 Background of participants, their professional experience and views on ITE

Initial teaching experience includes teaching practice placement (now known as school placement), observations made regarding teaching and learning opportunities both as a student teacher and in the initial years, it includes NQTs and the Droichead process which for most schools would have been a new initiative in the five years prior to gathering this data and therefore forms part of the systemic changes. As part of the questionnaires, participants were asked to indicate their teaching qualifications and any postgraduate qualifications obtained in the area of education. Of the case study participants (n=31), 51.6% (n=16) had completed BEd qualifications to enable them to teach at primary level, in addition 25.8% (n=8) of these participants had a further postgraduate qualification in education with four having more than one qualification, eg PGSEN and MEd SEN. 48.4% (n=15) had completed post graduate or masters qualifications in primary education, and seven of those had an additional post graduate qualification in education.

From the national questionnaire (n=106), 53.8% (n=57) indicated they had completed a BEd degree, of these, 22.6% (n=24) listed additional postgraduate or master degree qualifications, with three indicating they had obtained these and were finished or completing doctoral degrees. One had completed a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) and two listed themselves as doctoral Doctor of Education (EdD) and PhD candidates. 45.3% (n=48) had completed either postgraduate or master qualifications to teach at primary level. There was one National Teacher, a graduate of the last of the two year course.

Professional experience in the present study is reported through the participants' views on their own professional journey. In answering the interview question, "is experience relevant to a teacher's resilience?" participants had differing views, with 14/16 believing that the personal journey teachers have been on in their lives to that point impacts on their capacity to be resilient. This included all principals, four mainstream teachers and four SETs. In case study one, case study two and case study four all three interviewees referenced the role of experience and how teachers and leaders demonstrate it. Donal (MS2) explained "it's personal how much you let your experience affect your teaching" with Louise (PS1) supporting this by emphasising that

experience and resilience don't always correlate, rather "different people have different levels of comfort with what they're willing to share with others within the staff". Rachel (PS3) referred to the "very strong willed younger teachers" she has encountered.

Personality types influencing experience is also raised by Daniel (PS4) who elaborated that;

some people are lucky that they probably have it inbuilt in them, they're good, strong characters and maybe they've been independent from an early age, we all have different personality types and I think a lot depends on where you're coming from yourself in your journey in life – Daniel (PS4).

The evolving nature of the role of principal is expressed by Louise (PS1) who concedes that with "experience and time things are getting easier". Similar sentiments were expressed by seven interviewees in their respective roles as principals, mainstream teachers and SETs. The acknowledgement that life experiences (not necessarily school related) help shape and prepare for challenges and problems which are a part of teaching and leading on a daily basis was shared by ten interviewees. Sinéad (MS1) explains that while "experience does help, it's not essential. You get some people coming straight out of college and they're just resilient individuals anyway and nothing phases them". Elaine (SS2) affirmed that experience outside of school is important to consider. Across roles participants believed personality type and level of support received influenced experience and the capacity to be resilient.

4.4.2 The role of lived experience in career wide resiliency and the impact relationships and staff changeover has on collegiality in schools.

The lived experience of participants is understood as their experience both from a professional basis and personal experience in terms of their own resilience. These findings demonstrate the role of relationships in supporting resilience. When asked what influences or hinders your capacity to be resilient one interviewee, Amy (MS5) a who was in her second year of teaching reflected on her experience on school placement. Her rating in terms of how she perceived her own resilience was an eight out of ten, and she compared this with placement when she felt she would have been a four out of ten and described the experience as being "thrown to the sharks, as tough as it gets". Another teacher Niamh (MS4) commented on the realities of teaching when compared with placement. Even though both teachers experienced challenges in their

first year of teaching due in part to Covid-19, both identified the collegial support of colleagues and the role of the principal in demonstrating leadership. Amy (MS5) explained that when you are on placement you don't really build a relationship with the principal in the school you are assigned to or teaching in, however, from her experience, once qualified she felt that she was mentored by her principal among others and could ask any number of colleagues for support, reflecting the role of relationships in supporting resilience.

Several interview participants referenced changeover of staff as impacting on resilience. Jacinta (SS4) mentioned there would be on average twenty NQTs joining their staff each year. All principals (n=6) mentioned the impact this had on their school in the past five years. Of the interviewees (n=11) who mentioned this, there was only one mainstream teacher. Four SETs commented on the changeover or change in leadership in their schools. It was pointed out that now, more than ever new staff are not always NQTs but may be returning from teaching overseas for a number of years or new to an area for family reasons amongst others. Every school culture is different. This was commented on by questionnaire and interview respondents. An experienced SET Mary (SS1), shared between two schools, noted that very little was explained to her in her cluster school even though it had a completely different set up in terms of size and organisational structure. Preliminary findings from questionnaire and interview data suggests a link between school culture and teacher resilience. Jacinta (SS4) reflects on the large turnover of staff and number of NQTs joining annually.

Jacinta (SS4) - I think acknowledgement of their experience should never be dismissed, there is so much to be learnt from years but also I do see our school we get around twenty NQTs nearly every year, you know the old can learn something, a lot from the new teachers coming in as well and not to dismiss them either so I suppose to ensure there is respect there from all sides and sometimes that doesn't necessarily happen.

This sentiment was shared by the principal in case study six who spoke of the mutually beneficial relationships between NQTs and more experienced teachers.

Vincent (PS6) - It helps young teachers you know joining the staff that they know they can talk to somebody and they can plan and the older members benefit as well because there are some fantastic ideas you know particularly digitally that the younger teachers who are just out of college are bringing in, all kinds of ideas.

The triad of teachers interviewed from case study one all referenced the changeover of staff in their school and the close relationships which had been established as a result of this change. Sinéad (MS1) acknowledged the support she had received during the Droichead process and how she found herself as a mentor and in a leadership position only a few short years later. Many interviewees (n=6) referenced Droichead and the positive impact the process has had in their school. This is one systemic change introduced during the period (2016-2021) under examination by the researcher, linked to staff turnover and pertaining generally but not exclusively to NQTs. Daniel (PS4) echoes the thoughts of other participants in terms of career wide resiliency and how classrooms have been opened as a result of participating in the Droichead process and how the process has enabled sharing of best practice among staff and colleagues.

Daniel (PS4) - I think people's new understanding of the Droichead process has been really helpful. I wouldn't always have been a fan of Droichead and I see problems with it still, however, I do think it has opened up classrooms and opened up discussions and built great friendships among teachers and colleagues who have been involved in it. It has taken away the sense that maybe people were being marked or judged instead of supported. Now that people feel I'm supported or that even experienced teachers can experience difficulty and that in sharing that with newly qualified teachers and sharing their experiences they build up those friendships, those relationships and the ability to say I need help, that's probably the biggest thing.

A Droichead mentor and experienced mainstream and SET teacher SS5 explained the benefits from her experience, again echoing the open door policy mentioned previously.

Clare (SS5) - I think the atmosphere in the staff that we've definitely got a more open door policy now I think Droichead brought that in, we also had a changeover in staff so people had more open ideas to talking about things and trying to solve problems if there is a problem.

Of the interviewees, six felt Droichead supported resilience, and while initial hesitancy was noted by two experienced principals, they too were in favour of the process and the positive impact it had on the culture of their school generally and not limited to those involved in the Droichead process. In terms of the questionnaires, participants were asked if they found Droichead challenging. Of case study respondents, 64.5% (n=20) did not find Droichead challenging, this was similar to the views of the

national questionnaire respondents, of whom 67.9% (n=72) stated that it did not challenge them.

4.4.3 Developing personal resilience

Questionnaire participants were asked to choose three characteristics which can influence a teacher’s capacity for resilience in terms of which are most important to you. This was to determine if participants felt that personal resilience could fluctuate or be developed with support. Table 4.5 below shows the total response rate to each characteristic in ranked order combining the case study respondents (n=31) with the national questionnaire respondents (n=106). Well being was identified by 57.1% of total questionnaire respondents as the most significant characteristic with job fulfilment, relationships and work context identified as the other top four significant characteristics overall.

Table 4.5– Total questionnaire respondents’ views on characteristics which can influence a teacher’s capacity for resilience in ranked order.

Ranking	Characteristic	Total responses (n=137)	
1	Well being	84	57.1%
2	Job fulfilment	63	42.9%
3	Relationships	62	42.2%
4	Work context	54	36.7%
5	Life changes	35	23.8%
6	Sense of self-identity	30	20.4%
7	Values	19	12.9%
8	Self-efficacy	18	12.2%
9	Commitment	17	11.6%
10	Unprecedented events	14	9.5%
11	Beliefs	12	8.2%
12	Academic optimism	3	2%

In terms of developing personal resilience, interview participants shared their views with one participant describing it as a “lifelong learning process” – Elaine (SS2). Almost half of interview participants (n=7) spoke about feeling slightly disillusioned after a challenging year and questioning their career path, this was across all roles in four cases. Two were principals, one experienced, one relatively recently appointed, two mainstream teachers, both teaching 11-20 years and three SET with between 11-20

and 21-30 years service. This finding is reflected in the comment below from Donal (MS2).

Donal (MS2) - I think teachers are, we're valued, there's little wins for teachers along your career, you get little wins along the way but I don't know if there's enough for forty years...if they are going at the rate they are going for me in my career then I don't know if they are enough and that is something that I'm struggling with in terms of teaching at the moment is that value in terms of my professional career, value of the job or value of the job for you or something like that, self-efficacy.

This reinforces the points made by participants in relation to resilience and experience and that the personal resilience of individuals should be considered and factored in terms of how systemic changes impact the career wide resiliency of participants, both teachers and leaders. Louise (PS1), Sinéad (MS1) and Bláithín (SS3) were all of the opinion that experience does help but is not essential. For the experienced teachers in this study, several explained what makes a resilient teacher with personal anecdotes that demonstrated times when they had shown resilience and overcome challenges of a personal and professional nature. Bláithín (SS3) and Daniel (PS4) explained how people learn through experience and through going through the motions, meeting the difficult parent, dealing with something new and so you gain resilience.

Depending on school size and location different opportunities for promotion may be apparent and equally for a lack thereof, in smaller schools. This is noted by Donal (MS2), Bláithín (SS3) and Jacinta (SS4). Donal (MS2) explained if you know there are no opportunities for promotion for a long time it can be difficult to maintain your resilience, it can be threatened. Jacinta (SS4) detailed how in her school they were all encouraged to apply for promoted positions but she doubted her own ability, although by her own admission this had improved with experience and recognising her own resilience.

Building from this, while interview participants mentioned comparing themselves to other teachers in terms of displays or work ethic and other schools in terms of resources and funding, one teacher mentioned it in a significant way. She said she felt supported and was extremely complimentary of the leadership, colleagues and collegiality in her school, but commented on perceived pressures which may be realistic for others too, particularly at an earlier stage of their career. This quote also

demonstrates the isolated nature of teaching that was prevalent during the 2020/21 school year and raised by respondents from Newtown School also in terms of lack of movement between classrooms to see what is going on.

Amy (MS5) - sometimes the pressures of seeing what other teachers are doing and feeling you're not, you're not enough and hearing stories like a class that's completely different to yours and a teacher might be doing this amazing lesson, this amazing topic and you're just like I don't think my class would ever, that would ever happen in my classroom and sometimes you just feel less than I find so maybe I'm not sure maybe yeah I'd say it's not feeling like you're doing enough when you probably are doing more than enough but I think you sometimes have to remember the circumstances that are in everyone's classroom are so different.

Another early career mainstream teacher spoke of expectations when comparing to others at different class levels and realising pressures aren't necessarily coming from management or more experienced teachers. She elaborated how her colleagues can seemingly just produce the displays, manage work, assess where appropriate and complete notes at a quicker pace and how the reality for her was completing some of this unseen work such as correcting at home to facilitate a work life balance that suited her family. The comments by participants in relation to comparing to others (n=6) were not always of a negative tone.

While the majority of participants mentioned comparing to others in their own schools, Rachel (PS3) commented on the different systems in places in schools nationwide. She explained that she couldn't compare her role and responsibilities as principal in a city school with what friends who teach rurally might consider challenging in their setting. She detailed form filling and supporting parents who may not complete or be able to complete the forms unless the school does them with them, collaboratively.

Interviewees were asked; how do the three aspects noted by Day and Gu (2014) as fostering resilience impact on your lived experience of teacher resilience. These were: social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure. Of the interviewees, 56% (n=9) chose social relationships as the most meaningful or significant for them, spread across roles, three each and across schools one to five. Both teachers from Newtown School, St Mary's NS and St Anne's GNS chose this option. In terms of suggesting any other feature or aspect interviewees were divided. 13/16 offered ideas on

this. Bláithín (SS3) explained the importance of finding balance, personal balance, maintaining good academic standards, eating well, sleeping well, exercising and keeping friendships. As teachers you are “in it for the long haul, it’s not just a short race”. Feeling valued within the system, feeling respected, communication and professional development were also suggested.

4.4.4 Reflection

Interview participants were asked if they engaged in self-reflection in order to support or foster their resilience. Many spoke about separating school from home and striking a balance, Louise (PS1) and Donal (MS2) spoke about their commute and how it offered time for reflection and “time to think”. Louise (PS1), Sinéad (MS1), Deirdre (MS3) and Niamh (MS4) mentioned to-do lists and reflection boxes in their plans, Bláithín (SS3) tried to keep a diary and Amy (MS5) and Mary (SS1) spoke about informal reflections and check-ins that they might have either with themselves or with colleagues. Some interviewees did not elaborate at the time but mentioned reflection at another point in their interview. Daily reflection, was engaged in by seven interviewees, across various roles. Daniel (PS4) spoke about the constant nature of reflecting in terms of leading a school.

Daniel (PS4) - I don't think you can avoid it. I think it comes as part of it and if you don't do it others will do it for you. I think we all do and of course you're reflecting you know it's a constant journey isn't it and so is life and schools are, there are changes to staff, changes to circumstances and changes to how you as principal will adapt to that and then work with people and so on and so I think we're constantly reflecting.

Reflection for principals as shown above and in other examples by Áine (PS2) and Rachel (PS3) was seen as supportive to resilience as it helped them think about what is happening in their schools and what they need to prioritise to lead teaching and learning in their schools.

4.4.5 Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)

Other supports to building career wide resilience include engaging in professional learning. Engaging with TPL was identified as a support for sustaining resilience spanning across the career bands in both questionnaire and interview data.

Here, an experienced SET shares her reason for engaging in TPL in response to interview question 19 (Appendix J).

Bláithín (SS3) - It's both probably more role specific because I find that most of the courses I do are related to special needs I mean that would be very, very valuable for class teachers as well but I do think class teachers are not as engaged in CPD as they should be probably because they just don't get the time to, to reflect really and just see, see the necessity of doing that, so I think probably more role based but again context based as well because we're a DEIS one school and we need to update on a lot of things.

Questionnaire respondents were asked to identify which three areas they would like to prioritise for TPL or support going forward. Participants could choose from: SSE; teaching/leading during Covid; planning (paperwork); digital supports for teaching; SET model; PLC; Droichead; wellbeing; child protection. Across both questionnaire cohorts, wellbeing had the highest preference with 54.8% (n=17) case study participants and 56.6% (n=60) national questionnaire respondents respectively choosing this. Figure 4.4 below shows the results from the national questionnaire respondents.

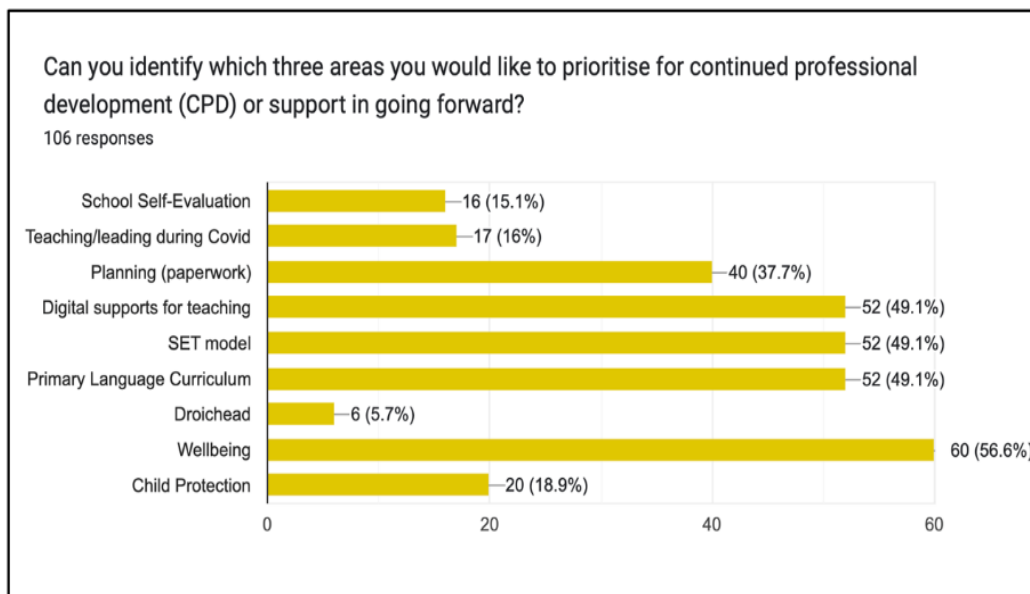


Figure 4.4 – TPL preferences of national questionnaire respondents (n=106)

Open ended questions permitted for respondents to identify and elaborate on any other area of TPL which may be beneficial. Some of the themes that emerged were: support for pupils with SEN or SET upskilling (n=11); digital support/technology (n=10); collaboration - for planning and team-teaching (n=8); ASD (n=8);

anxiety/trauma (n=8); dealing with challenging behaviour (n=5); Maths (n=3); Gaeilge (n=3); wellbeing (n=3); PLC (n=3); restorative practice (n=3).

Participants were asked if the courses they have engaged with previously were role or context specific, many agreed that CPD was for both depending on their school and context and future ambitions. In choosing face-to-face courses as a preference many said it was because of Covid and they expect a big jump in the number of participants choosing face-to-face courses while 37.5% spoke about meeting others working in a similar setting and “as a much better environment for things to be organically discussed and ab-lib debates coming up” Niamh (MS4). Further respondents explained that they would choose face-to-face as a preference but due to the timing of courses and family commitments they usually find themselves completing online ones at present. Deirdre (MS3) justified their decision from experience.

Deirdre (MS3) - I would pick face-to-face, just from my experience of doing courses. I did a really good one a few years ago on Autism and Behaviour and I just enjoyed it, it was nice to be out of the classroom with other teachers in similar situations.

Access to online webinars was praised by 31.25% (n=5) who spoke about the flexibility and choice of courses on offer from the ECSI. One principal said it was nearly a problem now being back in school as there were still so many interesting webinars on offer and you had to pick and choose. Another participant in a rural location explained she would have never been able to access these face-to-face from her location and that moving them online opened up this possibility and exposed teachers to a wide range of courses.

In total, seven interview participants, five principals and two teachers spoke about completing leadership PL. The opportunity to engage with others was noted, to think outside the school building, to engage with webinars by the CPSMA, and supports on offer were mentioned from leaders with differing levels of experience. “Space to think” was highlighted by Louise (PS1) and “having the time to get away from school and reflect with other leaders” was cited as being really helpful by Daniel (PS4) who works as a leadership coach with the CSL. The pro-active nature of teachers equipping themselves to be more resilient and be prepared for their setting is highlighted by interviewees (n=6) who mentioned completing postgraduate courses in SEN. In addition to these, some recommended courses by the NCSE and courses in Autism which were attended also by two of the principals and they found it useful in terms of

practical strategies for behaviour. Maths Recovery training had been completed by two participants. Participants reported they generally chose EPV summer courses relevant to their setting.

4.4.6 Support network

This subtheme comprises communication, internal support and external support. It was examined through quantitative data collection and teased out further with interviewees. It was envisaged by the researcher as a support network or professional network of people, teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals can discuss situations with either within their school or outside of their school. Case study participants reference mentoring and leadership in terms of supporting their resilience. The questionnaire asked if there was a member of staff participants could approach for support or advice on a personal or professional matter. All case study respondents and 98.1% (n=104) of the national questionnaire respondents said yes.

Questionnaire and interview respondents discussed the support network and structure in their schools. In response to the open-ended question, “how does the school culture and leadership of your school impact on your professional life?” - an administrative principal in the national questionnaire explained their view on support and the challenge it poses. “I am trying to actively create a supportive and open school culture as principal, but as I am the principal it can be difficult for me to seek support sometimes” (AP3).

Positive leadership in terms of support was identified by national questionnaire respondent M26, “the culture and leadership in my school is very positive and helpful, it makes professional life easier as I feel I have support in all areas when necessary” (M26). This aligned with the views of teachers at interview phase (n=6) who spoke favourably about principals and leadership teams focusing on their wellbeing and resilience.

Of the interviewees, two remarked that they felt unsupported, one identified their own uncertainty around their role as a mainstream class teacher and where they were in terms of their career development. Another identified being overloaded with work from management and not being given time to do it as a threat to resilience. The lack of structures in school and lack of support in a situation handled by management in terms of whole school approaches to behaviour were seen as challenges by this teacher.

At the interview stage discussing social relationships and collegiality led to all participants discussing communication and support. Interviewees identified a range of supports from their experience which were relative to resilience, mostly teacher led and from within the school. Sinéad (MS1) explained as teachers it feels like there isn't a huge amount of support available apart from in your school. Elaine (SS2) championed talking with colleagues and the importance of having "a small amount of colleagues around you, who you can lean on for support". This sentiment was shared by the Rachel (PS3) who noted the value of offloading and feeling supported. Similarly, Niamh (MS4) commented on the value of seeking a second opinion from colleagues you "trust and appreciate". Clare (SS5) also highlighted the importance of feeling connected and supported in her setting. Across the roles and cases support was viewed as enabling and fostering resilience with a lack of support understood to hinder resilience.

The importance of a good network or support system outside of school was raised by six interviewees. These include professional contacts, two principals spoke about engaging with other principals, one in a newly appointed principal group and the other through engagement he has with the CSL. Daniel (PS4) stated he had been advised to "buy in the expertise" to support staff. Principals and SETs who identified outside or external support as beneficial all referred to the sharing of knowledge with others in similar situations. Sinéad (MS1) also shared the belief that it is valuable to have external support and explained there is so much to learn from other teachers and leaders both nationally and internationally. Donal (MS2) critiqued the lack of support or systems there to foster resilience for experienced teachers, questioning if such systems exist. Across cases the need for external support, a confidant, or the opportunity to network with other teachers and principals is verified and endorsed across roles also.

When asked which of the three aspects identified by Day and Gu (2014) as fostering resilience - social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure, are most meaningful or significant for you, two principals chose collegiality. Louise (PS1) chose collegiality in the understanding "it is so close to home and you have to ask for help if anything goes wrong, collegiality to the people you work with day in and day out". Vincent (PS6) identified collegiality as the most important and said along with culture that it's something he mostly promotes "to try and get teachers talking to one another, having those professional conversations and it's something we have worked hard at, at staff meetings and so forth to get that exchange of ideas and it particularly helps". Other interviewees referenced the importance of collegiality but chose social

relationships 9/16, organisational structure 3/16, or saw the value of all three equally 2/16. Social relationships was the choice of all interviewees from St Anne’s GNS. In Newtown School, two of the three interviewees chose social relationships and in St Mary’s NS, two of the three interviewees chose social relationships. Two mainstream teachers chose organisational structure and two SETs saw the value in all three.

4.5 Context specific

This theme is understood in the context of relating to the school/community directly. The subthemes are culture and organisational structure. School size is also connected with the context respondents are referring to. There are 70 references across the two subthemes by all interviewees. Figure 4.5 below shows the theme and subthemes to be presented.

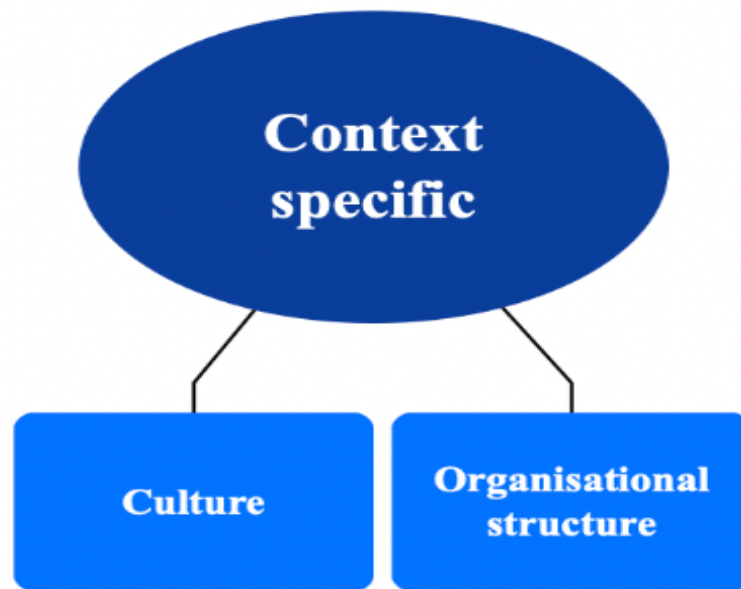


Figure 4.5 – Theme 6 – Context Specific - subthemes identified under this theme

Culture was viewed by participants as the beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, relationships, unwritten rules or expectations in a school. Although not explained or defined to the interviewees, it was evident they had the same understanding of it by their answers. In response to “how does the culture and leadership of your school impact on your professional life?” questionnaire respondent M19 answered “I feel

respected and trusted in our school – the management aren't looking over our shoulders or checking up on us. There is a culture of collaboration in terms of planning". S40, again at questionnaire phase, describes the impact culture has on their ability "to enact change". Of the interviewees, Louise (PS1) mentioned the staff who may be more established in a place and know how events run, concerts for example or the teacher who always teaches Junior Infants in terms of establishing school culture. Culture is also discussed by Vincent (PS6) below:

I suppose the most important thing is the culture you set in the school so I would think that is one of the most important things that a leader can do is set a positive culture and a safe culture and a culture that encourages innovation but also makes it safe for people to fail – Vincent (PS6).

The impact of Covid on the organisational structure of schools is raised by Louise (PS1) in terms of organisation and opportunities to mix. Donal (MS2) commented you never hear about the organisational structure if it's running well but you immediately know about it if it breaks down. Deirdre (MS3) warned about the lack of structure in her school, in the same school Rachel (PS3) admitted organisational structure was very important and something she may not be good at, while praising the previous principal for their organisational talents in terms of timetables. Bláithín (SS3) agreed organisational structure was something they needed to work on, with certain aspects done really well and others lacking consistency. Organisational structure was selected as the most important factor of the three factors listed by Day and Gu (2014), by two mainstream teachers, Donal (MS2) and Deirdre (MS3) and one principal Daniel (PS4).

If I was to be cold about it I think the organisational structure is probably most important in my role. I am answerable to the Board of Management, to the parents, to the Department of Education and that's a very heavy, there is a very heavy burden in that, so I can, it's nice to be nice to people but we all have responsibilities I think they come before the collegiality which you know is also hugely, hugely important - Daniel (PS4).

Respondents were clear about the impact of culture and structure on teacher resilience and associated teacher resilience within the professional context of their schools. Connections were made in terms of relationships and collegiality supporting a positive culture and the sense of belonging and feeling supported came through in the data also.

4.6 Challenges to the development of resilience

This second theme was referenced by all respondents across 16 interviews with 311 references to the four main subthemes (figure 4.6 below) arrived at through careful consideration of the phase five themes (see Chapter Three; Table 3.4, p. 74) and figure 4.7 below. The following section will present the data from these subthemes in relation to the quantitative and qualitative datasets.



Figure 4.6 – Theme 2 – Challenges - subthemes identified under this theme.

Theme/Sub-theme	Files	References
T2 - Challenges	16	93
T2.1 - Leadership & management	12	40
T2.1.1 - Decision making challenges	5	9
T2.1.2 - Leadership challenge	11	24
T2.2.3 - Department of Education	4	7
T2.2 - Stressful challenges	16	108
T2.2.1 - External challenges	9	21
T2.2.2 - School Size	8	10
T2.2.3 - Relationships	16	65
T2.2.4 - SEN	5	8
T2.2.5 - Gaps in the system	4	4
T2.3 - Negative challenges	16	100
T2.3.1 - Pressures	16	88
T2.3.2 - Negative situations	2	6
T2.3.3 - Pupil's behaviour	4	6
T2.4 - Systemic changes including Covid-19	14	63
T2.4.1 - Systemic changes	9	13
T2.4.2 - Covid-19	14	50

Figure 4.7 - NVivo screen grab of phase 5 – Theme 2 – Challenges

The NVivo screen grab presented in figure 4.7 above shows the themes identified through participant responses alongside the number of files that referred to the theme with the number of references also listed. The following sections will present the areas with significant data in relation to the impact of the challenges on teacher resilience beginning with the subtheme of leadership and management.

4.6.1 Leadership and management

This theme has been divided into several smaller themes: decision making challenges; leadership challenge and the DE. These were generated from an analysis of the content of the coded responses under leadership and management. Findings relating to decision making challenges varied depending on role. According to principals staffing schedules, classroom accommodations, appeals, uncertainty around projected numbers, class splits and appointments were some of the decision making challenges they face annually. Investing in iPads which was met by opposition by one school community was the most stressful decision making challenge one particular principal had encountered. Another principal gave the example of interviews, and in particular interviews for posts of responsibility knowing all candidates would enrich the school.

Louise (PS1) spoke about the “unattainable expectation” on principals and teaching principals in particular. Donal (MS2) said he questioned whether he would stay in teaching or not. The lack of career opportunities in this school were highlighted and the lack of value which Donal (MS2) felt was impacting on his resilience. When asked how she managed the pressure of paperwork Áine (PS2) explained, “I prioritise. I decide what needs to be done, what can be left and what doesn’t need my attention, what can be given to other people”. These findings indicate interview respondents are aware of what challenges their capacity to be resilient and what decisions they need to take to support their resilience development.

The enormous pressure on principals was acknowledged by interview respondents who were sympathetic for the most part to the demands placed on their principals. Interviewees (n=11) made reference to leadership challenges with Elaine (SS2) stating that management in schools have so much to do that they are nearly at “breaking point”. The accountability of the role and the juggling nature, the multiple hats worn by principals on a daily basis from the lived experience of principalship is demonstrated in the above quote and through the data. The ultimate responsibility lying with the principal is also portrayed by Daniel (PS4).

There is great accountability in all aspects and I think possibly principals are not fully ready for what is really needed from them because my job will involve dealing with architects, accountants, auditors, the Department of Education, health and safety, builders, contractors, licensing agreements, fund managers, areas that I have not been prepared for and again possibly it depends on the size of the school but in this school while it's very exciting in lots of ways to be part of all of that, it does not allow you to engage in the way that you could and should with the teaching, learning, knowing the children, supporting the teachers but it's equally important and has to be done and unfortunately it falls only on one person because it can't fall anywhere else – Daniel (PS4).

The “firefighting” as Rachel (PS3) describes and unseen roles which are undoubtedly important and imperative to pupils and their parents. An issue implicitly raised is that of the Board of Management (BOM) and the relationship the BOM and principal have. Previous comments by Rachel (PS3) about juggling leading teaching and learning emphasise the need to review the role of the principal, called upon also by the IPPN, (2022). Principals report spending a huge amount of time on non-educational work and the question remains to be answered if the BOM or Patron bodies should have

some responsibility for these tasks which as Rachel (PS3) points out takes principals away from leading teaching and learning in their schools.

4.6.2 Stressful challenges:

This section includes external challenges; school size; relationships; SEN and gaps in the system. Both questionnaire respondents and interviewees commented on the DE. Questionnaire respondents called for clarity from the DE, meaningful engagement and less demands. A more supportive role for the DE was advocated for as a suggested change to sustain resilience. Interview respondents mentioned the communication challenges they experienced in particular during the previous school year, this was particularly relevant to principals.

Áine (PS2) - I think the Department really needs to get its act together in a big way... sending out circulars to principals on a Friday evening and sending out circulars during holiday time we haven't had a chance to switch off I would say since March twelve months back, March 2020, you know it's just been constant, we've had to work through the summer, we're working through and anybody who has got building projects as well, you're working Saturdays you know, you could even be here on a Sunday if needs be.

Of the five respondents who referenced the DE, four were principals - Áine (PS2), Rachel (PS3), Daniel (PS4) and Vincent (PS6), who cited the responsibilities to return certain information at different times, the sending of circulars to principals on a Friday evening and the changes in application and paperwork requirements by the DE.

Questionnaire respondents were asked about particular factors that have made their role more or less challenging in the past five years. The main themes which arose are presented. In the case study schools, table 4.6 below demonstrates the issues raised in terms of factors that have made participants' roles more challenging. Table 4.7 which follows relates to the national questionnaire, where n=22 did not offer a comment.

Table 4.6 – Case study schools – Factors that have made your role more challenging (n=27)

Factors that have made your role more challenging:		
Ranked order	Factor	Number of respondents
1	Increase in parental demands	6
2	Paperwork demands	5
3	Changes in personal circumstances	3
4	Change of staff	2
5	Curriculum overload	2
6	Social media	2
7	Agencies	2
8	Class size	2
9	Poor leadership	2
10	Change of roles	1

Table 4.7 – National questionnaire – Factors that have made your role more challenging (n=60)

Factors that have made your role more challenging:		
Ranked order	Factor	Number of respondents
1	Paperwork	14
2	SEN	12
3	Change of roles	9
4	Lack of support	6
5	Parental expectations	5
6	Covid related	4
7	Technology	4
8	Personal challenges	3
9	Lack of jobs	3

In terms of making participants' roles less challenging, case study respondents identified the following factors presented in table 4.8 below, with the national questionnaire responses shown in table 4.9. Fewer respondents offered answers to this question in both questionnaires which might indicate several did not think their role was less challenging or could not identify any factor that has made their role less challenging.

Table 4.8 – Case study schools – Factors that have made your role less challenging (n=16)

Factors that have made your role less challenging:		
Ranked order	Factor	Number of respondents
1	Support	5
2	Droichead	4
3	Gaining experience	3
4	Good relationships with colleagues	2
5	Change in leadership	2

Table 4.9 – National questionnaire – Factors that have made your less more challenging (n=41)

Factors that have made your role less challenging:		
Ranked order	Factor	Number of respondents
1	Collegiality	14
2	Changing setting	9
3	CPD	4
4	Online resources	4
5	Droichead	3
6	Experience	3
7	Change in principal	2
8	Increase in in-class/SET support	2

Similar results across both questionnaires indicate how participants feel in relation to the challenges of teaching. In the case study schools 19.4% (n=6) reported that teaching was much more challenging now than five years ago, 51.6% (n=16) said it was somewhat more challenging and 29% (n=9) felt it was about the same. In the national questionnaire 22.6% (n=24) thought teaching was much more challenging, 57.5% (n=61) thought it was somewhat more challenging, 17% (n=18) felt it was about the same and 2.8% (n=3) thought it was somewhat less. When the case study respondents were asked if they liked challenges, 9.7% (n=3) strongly agreed, 64.5% (n=20) agreed, 22.6% (n=7) neither agreed or disagreed and 3.2% (n=1) disagreed. In terms of the national questionnaire 14.2% (n=15) strongly agreed, 56.6% (n=60) agreed, 17.9% (n=19) neither agreed or disagreed and 11.3% (n=12) disagreed.

Interview participants (n=9) in discussing what influences or hinders your capacity to be resilient alluded to external challenges and how for both teachers and pupils that external factors can impact their school day. Sinéad (MS1) described this as:

really anything that's happening at home, we always talk about our buckets being half full when we come in or sometimes we're about to tip over, sometimes we are right on the edge just before we come in because there's been screaming matches at home and you're trying to get the dog out the door and things like that can really make some days more difficult – Sinéad (MS1).

The need to and difficulties in striking a work-life balance were discussed by five participants, with two discussing the need to debrief before they go home.

4.6.3 School size

Schools in the case study were recruited by the researcher and therefore their size is known, see Chapter Three, (Table 3.1). These varied in size from a school with seven teachers, 120 pupils to a school with over sixty teachers and 1,000 pupils. On average the school sizes were 338 pupils, with twenty-three teachers in each school. In the national questionnaire participants were asked about school size, type (DEIS and non-DEIS) and ethos, with schools from all patron bodies represented. Figure 4.8 depicts the information in relation to school size from the national questionnaire.

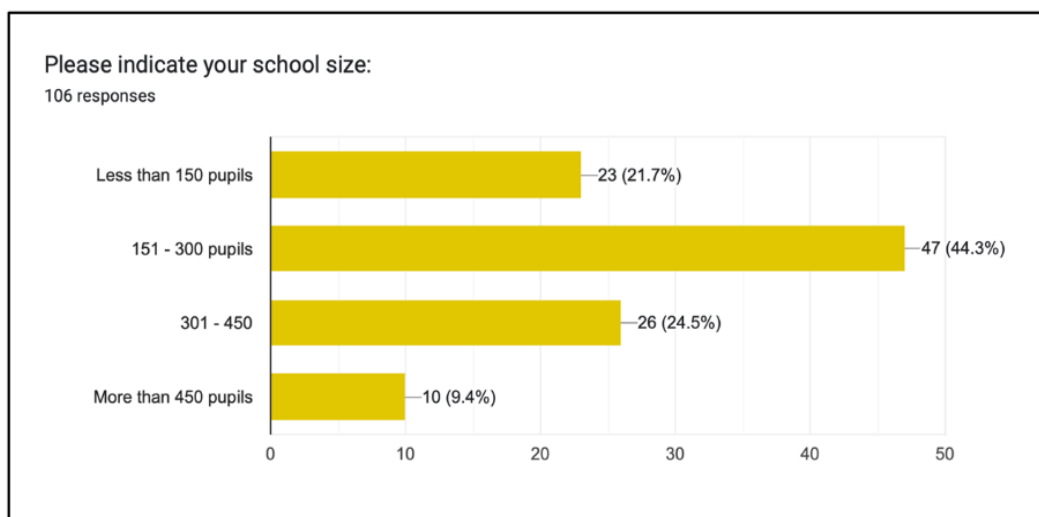


Figure 4.8 – National questionnaire responses to school size (n=106)

DE Statistics (2022) indicate that in the 2021 school year 1,296 (41.8%) schools met the criteria for small schools – defined as schools with four mainstream class teachers or less. Interestingly only 13.3% of pupils (71,724) were enrolled in small schools, compared with 465,642 pupils in schools with more than four class teachers. As the researcher previously taught in a rural setting, she is acutely aware of challenges

faced by small schools in terms of staffing schedules, teacher retention, pupil retention. Although at the time the researcher worked in a school with 150-300 pupils, the surrounding “country schools” all had teaching principals. Preliminary data based on September 2020 enrolments indicated that 24.8% of schools in Cork County Council were designated small schools with between 1-60 pupils, that represents 5.3% of pupils in small schools and is above the average for the whole country of 23.6% small mainstream primary schools and 4.6% of pupils (DE, 2021d).

Participants were asked to describe their school type; DEIS 1, DEIS 2 or non DEIS. These are presented in figure 4.9 below. Enrolment figures from the DE (2021a) show that for the 2020 school year there were 561,411 pupils enrolled in primary schools, of whom 108,449 (19.3%) were in DEIS schools and 452,962 (80.7%) in non-DEIS schools. With the questionnaire data there was no statistical difference between the responses of participants to all Likert scale questions according to type of school, school size, years of experience and current position.

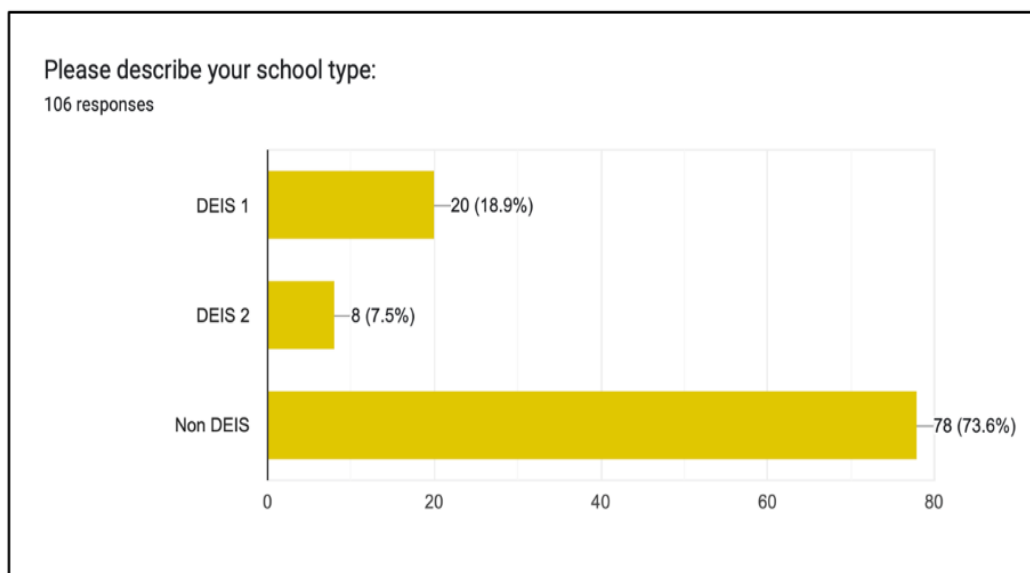


Figure 4.9 – National questionnaire response to school type (n=106)

Interviewees were asked if they perceived school size to inhibit or enhance the potential to foster and instil resilience. Louise (PS1) felt in a smaller school more attention is given to NQTs which nurtures their resilience. Mary (SS1) spoke from experience about the contrast of working her current role in a small school compared with her previous role as SET in a thirty-six teacher school where she felt she knew no-one and had to cope on her own. Bláithín (SS3) spoke of the almost family relationship

a smaller school has. Jacinta (SS4) detailed her experience of returning after maternity leave in a large school with a high turnover of staff to people who don't recognise you, where she felt she had to reintroduce herself as a teacher who had worked there for fifteen years previously, "you have to find where you belong again". Amy (MS5) explained "it can be tough being the only First Class teacher, especially being new as well" and that she would prefer if there were two of each class, or if you could logistically be in a classroom next to a teacher of a similar class band. By comparison the principal of a large school with over sixty teachers and eighty staff on a given day offered this insight on the difficulty of school size:

Daniel (PS4) - In our school for example, collegiality has developed because we're a very large school, spread over three buildings, which has caused great difficulties which will not be recognised by the Department of Education. And you've got a choice, do you come up to the mark and make things happen and work with people to ensure that the best education is provided for the children, that the school runs efficiently and so on, or do you not.

Differing views on the impact of school size on teacher resilience are shown by the interview respondents. An awareness of and understanding of collegiality and the importance of good relationships was evident among all roles and cases. Findings in relation to challenging relationships will be considered next.

4.6.4 Relationships

The role of relationships in hindering teacher resilience was raised by four interview respondents. Relationships are a fundamental aspect of teaching. There are many relationships to consider (see figure 4.7 above which shows coding related to pupils, parents, staff and external relationships which participants commented on in terms of impact on teacher resilience) While challenging behaviour (pupils) was acknowledged by participants it was not seen to negatively impact on resilience from the evidence in the present study. Developing relationships between pupils and teachers and in particular teachers in SET were seen as a foundation to help with the little wins, behavioural challenges, and being adaptable to diverse needs. Of the interviewees, 12/16 referenced pupil relationships, this varied from communication to classroom management and challenging behaviours impacting on resilience. Relationships and demands from parents were seen as a source of stress. Findings from the interviews

show 14/16 interviewees commented on relationships with parents. Sinéad (MS1) found the biggest challenge she has faced is managing the expectations of parents;

the expectations are so different depending on the parent, you don't know what you're going to get until they walk into the room and tell you, the only thing I could do to help with that is listening to them and taking time to think about them.

Donal (MS2) referenced parents venting as a way of expressing their frustration about something that isn't even fully to do with school and Rachel (PS3) offered a similar explanation in that parents may have a mental health issue or socio-economic issue which is deflected back on the school through anger or aggression, but really the bigger problem lies elsewhere. Niamh (MS4) commented on the shift from teachers and parents being in alliance to becoming separate entities, almost to the point of exhaustion.

Staff relationships were spoken about by 15/16 interviewees. Bláithín (SS3) - also in role of DP, cited building staff relationships as the greatest demand she faces at present. Niamh (MS4) listed isolation and a lack of support from staff as threats to resilience. Clare (SS5) explained the changeover in staff can lead to a disconnect and a need to establish and build relationships once again. Vincent (PS6) explained the end of the year time is when they noted staff fall outs and tension and pressure so their role becomes one of firefighting and trying to get everybody to the end of the year. Louise (PS1) listed communication with staff as the most challenging and demanding aspect of her role. Áine (PS2) emphasised the need for collegial relationships to be positive. Across cases and roles this notion is supported.

4.6.5 SEN

Findings from the questionnaire list more funding and increased resources for SET as a significant challenge (n=3). Upskilling for SET (n=4), and onsite or school shared therapists and psychologists/ multidisciplinary team (n=7) were also advocated for. More demand to know about SEN and Autism was raised by Niamh (MS4) at the interview stage who explained that she received very little training in this area in college in her ITE. Challenges of increased need among pupils is raised by interview participants – Bláithín (SS3), the time needed for profiling and assessing also – Mary (SS1) and planning and collaborating with mainstream teachers – Síle (PS5). During the 2020/21 school year the provision of in-class support was greatly affected due to Covid-

19 and the precautions and measures taken in schools at a local level varied from school to school. Of the references to SEN in terms of challenges on NVivo by five interview participants, four were in role as SET. To the researcher this could potentially demonstrate the lack of awareness of the role of the SET from principals and mainstream teachers and emphasises the need for more informed PL opportunities for principals in the area of SEN.

4.6.6 Career progression

Feeling valued – Donal (MS2) and feeling a sense of progression in your career – Bláithín (SS3) were raised as something that is missing at present in the education system from experienced teachers. Jacinta (SS4) mentioned a career development review and her opinion that there is the need for something like this in teaching, ‘parents get parent teacher meetings but teachers never get teacher-teacher meetings’. Amy (MS5) reflected on the need to feel respected and regarded in the workplace. Several of these were also raised by participants in the questionnaire responses in terms of changes/initiatives they would suggest in order to sustain resilience. Suggested solutions include: systems where teachers feel rewarded at all levels and part of the system, supports (n=7), review meetings or appraisals (n=3), opportunities to visit other schools (n=2), collaboration between other schools (n=3) and school counsellors available to advise teachers (n=2).

4.6.7 Negative challenges

This includes pressures, time management as a challenge, paperwork, pressure points during the year, negative situations and classroom management which had 100 references from interviewees. All interviewees (n=16) were asked about pressure points throughout the year. 13/16 referenced time management as a challenge and 12/16 mentioned paperwork as a significant challenge. Time management was viewed as a challenge by interview participants, particularly principals, in terms of studying part time and working full time - Louise (PS1), in terms of collaborating (among mainstream class teachers and SETs), in terms of planning, changes, and organisation. PS5 explained her process for organising in terms of time management. ‘I prioritise which tasks I think need, definitely have to be done, and then the other things I have a tray and I have: very urgent, not quite so urgent and I might sometime this year get to it’. Although she spoke about physical organisation, other respondents referred to

compartmentalising their role or their day and using the school building or gates as boundaries. Paperwork is seen as a challenge across all roles and expectations around paperwork vary from school to school as well as being impacted by the pillars of systemic change (see Chapter One, Table 1.1, p. 7), where schools at an individual level may decide on a template for recording their weekly, fortnightly and monthly records, with additional paperwork requirements brought about by policies, the PLC (NCCA, 2016; 2019) for example. Áine (PS2) spoke about the demand for paperwork which is a huge issue for a teaching principal.

You don't have to have a bit of paperwork for everything that we do. It's kind of like just ticking a box just to prove that it was done you know, whereas before, I don't think the quality of teaching has changed or improved by having all this mass of paper requirements that we have you know, and there is a curriculum overload – Áine (PS2).

Síle (PS5) demonstrated leadership in that where possible she offers supports or time to complete paperwork if she knows someone is struggling once they communicate this. Sinéad (MS1) acknowledged that paperwork is becoming easier with experience but it still takes time. Donal (MS2) indicated his approach is to dedicate the first couple of months setting up the paperwork and establishing a two year cycle on rotation as a multi-grade teacher and then update them minimally. An increase in the demands for paperwork was seen as a source of stress in previous research (INTO, 2015; 2022), however, there have been many additional requirements for paperwork placed on teachers and leaders since 2015. For example, Covid-19 brought about additional form filling, processing and organising which was another task to be managed by principals, among other increased paperwork demands.

As all interviewees were asked about pressure points during the school year, the outcomes were significant in terms of roles. Four principals listed September as a particularly busy time, with June being mentioned by four also and Christmas by two. Vincent (PS6) really summed up what had been mentioned individually across roles.

First of all getting re-opened for the new school year, have everything ready for both staff and pupils when they arrive, make sure there's a seamless opening. The second pressure point is the month of December, when there are so many things happening. Then the last term is particularly fraught because you are closing off one year and yet you're looking forward to the new year and again there are a lot of things happening in school from standardised tests....Staff, you can have little fall outs, tension, pressure you can have issues with pupil behaviour, things you might not see for the rest of the year so you're doing a lot

of fire-fighting and keeping everything oiled and trying to get everybody to the end of the school year – Vincent (PS6).

Mainstream teachers reported May/June to be busiest with testing and reports. SETs said September and the end of terms with one Jacinta (SS4) saying things were easier when interviewed with Covid that pressures were reduced. Clare (SS5) described challenges and pressures which may arise as in her role:

I don't have a post of responsibility but I would still feel there would be certain triggers during the year, where I am a Droichead mentor, I also would be part of the Literacy team, the SEN team and just the way life happens in schools and there's events. It might be Literacy Week, you might also have the NQT who is needing a lot of support and you want to be there, so it's just knowing which path to take or who to focus on, prioritise I suppose between your students, your colleagues and all the other things under the umbrella of teacher I suppose – Clare (SS5).

The uncertainty brought about by Covid-19 led to additional pressures in the 2020/21 school year. The pressure points that were raised by participants were associated by role and not context specific. Unilaterally, principals found September, December and June the busiest months. This was typically true for those in role as SET also, whereas classroom teachers found June busiest.

Of the interviewees (n=16), a quarter viewed classroom management as a challenge. Deirdre (MS3) described where a pupil had displayed violent behaviour which resulted in injury to other pupils. Louise (PS1) described the initial challenges NQTs have when faced with challenging class management. Rachel (PS3) acknowledged in her setting a teacher is overwhelmed by classroom management challenges which affected her resilience. She described what they have done as a school to support, by putting two SNAs in the room, allocating additional SEN support and asking the SET to teach a lesson on a Friday etc. Similarly, Rachel (PS3) and Clare (SS5) comment on classroom management challenges as reflected in the following response, “you will have days where they're [pupils] totally unruly depending...you might have a year where you just have a really difficult dynamic in a class”, Rachel (PS3). In her school, Clare (SS5) explained parental support is sought when dealing with serious behavioural issues, but in her experience discipline in the classroom has changed and issues are evolving. For example, it was noted that schools increasingly seek advice in dealing with self-harm and sexting.

I was in the senior classes before I was in SET and I still work with the senior classes and they've become more what I would have expected in secondary school you know the challenges have definitely become more adolescent that I would have faced before, like I never thought I would be dealing with kids self-harming and even sexting and things like that that I never imagined when I qualified in primary school teaching that these were things I'd have to deal with and bring in parents and look for advice for that so that would be the classroom challenge – Clare (SS5).

As demonstrated by the findings, while there are various challenges that impact on resilience, such as classroom management, the participants identified that their resilience can be supported through collegial relationships, mentoring and collaborative practices.

4.6.8 Systemic changes including Covid-19

The questionnaire had two questions related to the systemic changes and additional opportunities for participants to volunteer information and suggestions which often alluded to the systemic changes, e.g. TPL areas that should be prioritised, supports to sustain teacher resilience. The first question asked participants to rate how the following systemic changes: Droichead; revised SET model; PLC; Coronavirus/remote learning and policies (digital, wellbeing, child protection and admissions) have impacted on their capacity to teach/lead in the context of their role.

In answering this question case study respondents were of the overwhelming opinion that Droichead did not challenge them. One participant (3.2%) indicated the revised SET model was extremely challenging. Three (9.7%) found the PLC extremely challenging and sixteen (51.6%) found Coronavirus/remote learning extremely challenging. While six participants found policies very challenging (19.4%), none indicated they found it extremely challenging. A breakdown of the national questionnaire responses can be found in figure 4.10 below.

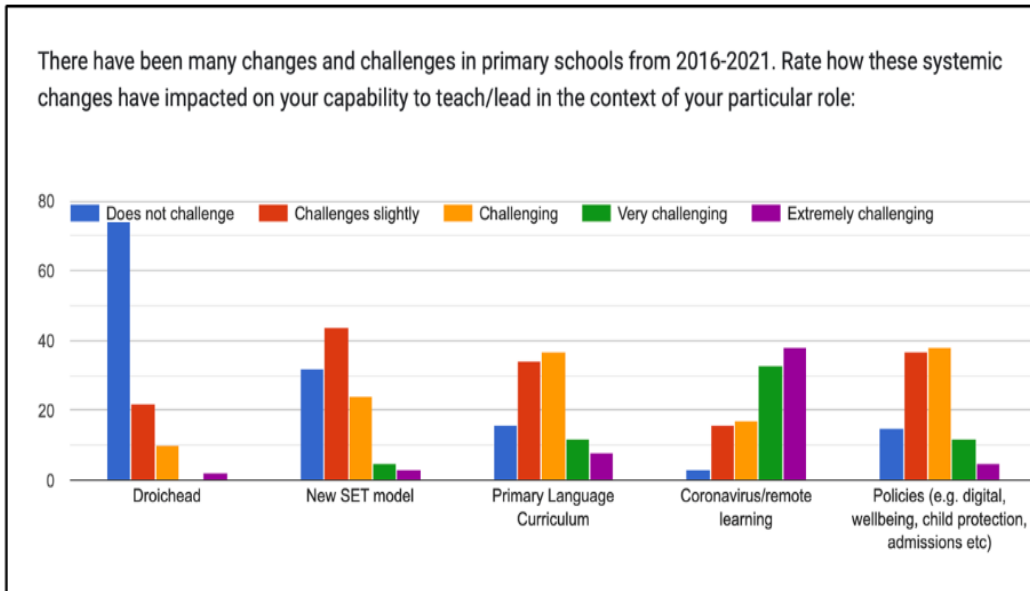


Figure 4.10 National questionnaire – results by count in relation to the impact of these systemic changes (n=106)

Questionnaire respondents were secondly asked to rate the following factors in terms of how they challenge their professional role on a daily basis; implementing the revised SET model, collaboration for pupils with SEN, PLC, Digital learning plan, Droichead, implementing policies, teaching/leading during Covid and paperwork requirements. Across questionnaire respondent cohorts, paperwork, teaching and leading during Covid and the PLC collaboration were viewed as the most challenging by participants. 50% of respondents to the national questionnaire found paperwork very or extremely challenging. 45.2% found teaching or leading during Covid very or extremely challenging and 20.8% found the PLC very or extremely challenging.

Notable in both sets of results is approximately 30% of teachers found both teaching and leading during Covid and paperwork requirements to be extremely challenging. While the consensus from both questionnaires was that implementing policies was not extremely challenging for anyone. On the other end of the scale almost two thirds of teachers and leaders who took the case study questionnaire (64.5%) felt that Droichead did not challenge them, this was very similar to the respondents from the national questionnaire who felt the same. For the case study schools the digital learning plan didn't challenge one third of respondents approximately (32.3%), while with the national questionnaire respondents 27.4% weren't challenged by implementing policies.

At the interview phase, four mainstream teachers interviewed referred to the challenges associated with the implementation of the PLC. One teaching principal also mentioned how they had approached it as a whole staff and continued to discuss challenges faced by staff in implementation at staff meetings. Curriculum overload was explicitly referenced by one principal – Áine (PS2) and one SET – Jacinta (SS4). The principal of St Stephen’s BNS explained in relation to the SSE process it is hard to choose one area when you know there are about twenty areas that need improving.

Covid-19 was considered and identified by interview participants (n=14) as a challenge in itself, in terms of isolation, negative press and remote learning. In the larger schools, isolation presented as a split in the school and the introduction of staggered break times for junior and senior pupils. Teachers mentioned the lack of movement around schools and limited opportunities for teachers and pupils to mix outside of their own classroom or pod. SET mentioned that not as much support was available or able to be offered – Mary (SS1) and the impact on relationships was also discussed. Síle (PS5) noted she did not have as much interaction with pupils as previously. Vincent (PS6) spoke about the leadership challenge this isolation presented.

Now everybody found themselves in unknown territory and leaders as well and I personally did as well because you were dealing with the unknown, like how were you going to manage this and suddenly you were isolated from your staff, you weren’t picking up the cues like you would in the school if you were walking around, your antennae weren’t up and you weren’t able to read the situation – Vincent (PS6).

All interviewees (n=16) referenced the negative press towards teachers since the Covid-19 pandemic. Niamh (MS4) spoke about the loss of camaraderie when working from home and Different news channels, newspapers and news sources were referred to and being bombarded by teacher bashers. Louise (PS1) added that the negative perception can impact on teachers’ resilience in terms of questioning what the function of teachers is. The description of ‘schools as babysitting grounds and teachers as babysitters’ bringing down the job they actually do and questioning the ‘level of professionalism’ is also raised by Louise (PS1).

Six respondents also factored in the role of social media as a primary source of information for younger teachers and families of pupils.

It would worry me that people’s views could be skewed by what is put up on social media because I’m not sure that is the real world and I think as a young teacher you might get the wrong impression that everybody is against you or

people have a negative perception of teaching and teachers by looking and engaging or listening to the wrong media source and I think as people get older you maybe are a little bit wiser and know what to avoid and don't take as much offence to it - Daniel (PS4).

The relationship between this negative press and mental health implications was also raised. Áine (PS2) acknowledged it was very hard for teachers to 'keep going'. Clare (SS5) said she would have much sooner returned to work than to log in to the social platform Seesaw for another day. She spoke about the anxiety with the announcements and leaks from the media. Remote learning was a new concept for all participants and identified by questionnaire and interview participants as a challenge for a number of reasons. It was a challenge to completely change the way you teach. Áine (PS2) felt she had to work five times as hard to target one block of work. Amy (MS5) spoke of the challenges of teaching from home with her own children present and how she could spend 18 hours at work between correcting, making videos, pre-recording videos in the early hours of the morning when the house was quiet. Síle (PS5) mentioned she spent most of a week they had off from school at contact tracing. Vincent (PS6) summarised the sense of newness and togetherness which was echoed by five participants, whilst also acknowledging the additional challenges posed to leaders.

Delivering remote learning was new to us all and you had a balancing act because some teachers wanted to race forward and introduce platforms that the others weren't ready for, so you had to sort of hold back the front runners a little bit and move up the other ones. That became obvious with the second lockdown when everybody moved at more an even space, that everybody, mostly everybody had kind of caught up at that stage and that's why it worked better the second time round but I must say the, I would have found last April somewhat scary and threatening myself as we headed into that unknown – Vincent (PS6).

4.7 Leadership

From the interview data the following subthemes (figure 4.11) were identified in terms of leadership based on the participants' discussion on the topic. All interviewees spoke about the role of leadership in developing and sustaining teacher resilience and there were 66 references to eight subthemes which are displayed below (figure 4.11). For the purpose of this chapter the focus will be leadership and the role of the principal.

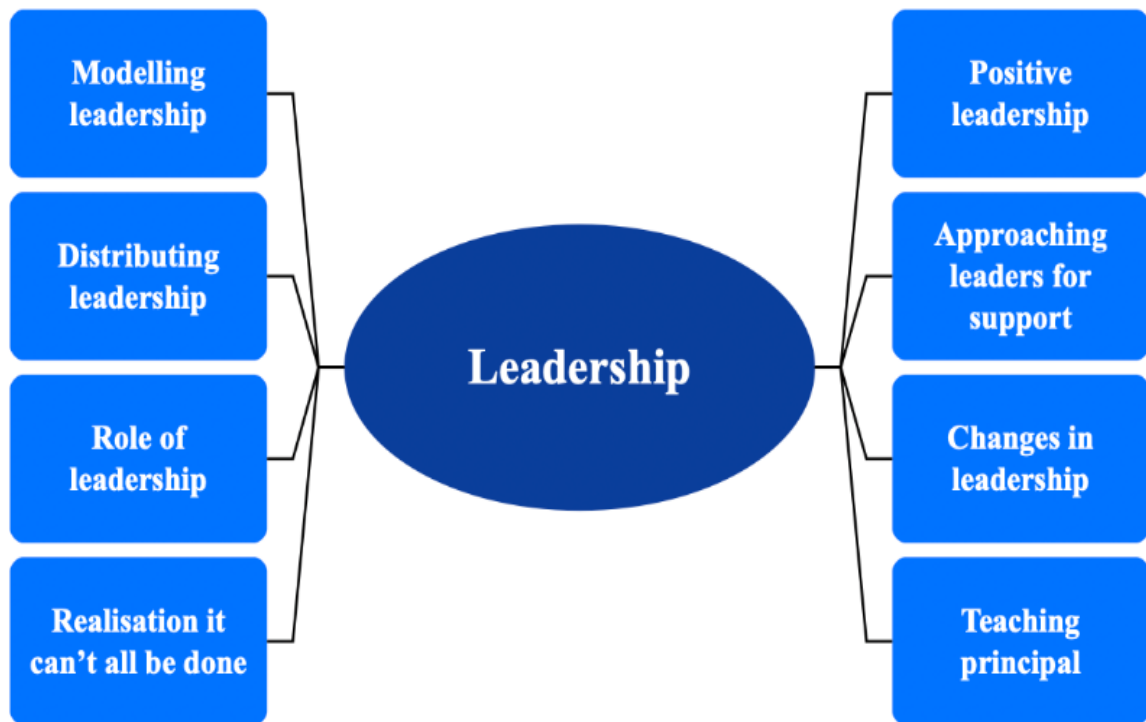


Figure 4.11 – Theme 3 – Leadership - subthemes identified under this theme

In terms of modelling leadership, Louise (PS1) spoke about leading by example which was reiterated by her staff when Mary (SS1) said ‘our principal works with us and I always get the impression that she would never ask you to do anything she's not willing to do herself, which to me is great’. Sinéad (MS1) spoke about demonstrating leadership in that she feels supported because management show they have confidence in her. Síle (PS5) explained about the open door policy she employs and how being a leader is demonstrating good listening and enabling communication. Vincent (PS6) related leadership to the culture in the school and a coaching mentality.

I suppose the most important thing is the culture you set in the school so I would think that is one of the most important things that a leader can do is set a positive culture and a safe culture and a culture that encourages innovation but also makes it safe for people to fail. So I think, if you're a warm person, if you approach it with a coaching mentality and again as I say make it, of course have your expectations and have your standards but at the same time, not to be going around being authoritative or pace setting or any of those leadership styles so I think having a warm, friendly, supportive culture is the first building block in strong teacher resilience - Vincent (PS6).

Many of the respondents to the surveys and interviewees spoke fondly of their school, the culture within the school and the leader at the helm. Of the interviewees

8/16 mentioned the role of positive leadership in fostering and sustaining resilience. Three of these were mainstream teachers, three were SETs and two were principals. As a school, Newtown School referenced the change of management and the impact positive leadership has. The new principal was aware of the dynamics. Sinéad (MS1) gave this response which showed the power of positive leadership on her capacity to be resilient.

The past few years we've seen changes in leadership here and I worked in another school for a couple of years too so I've seen a few different leadership styles and things like that but I have noticed that at the moment I'm much more resilient myself because it's such a positive place to be, I find the support from the leadership team has really, really, helped me and I always look forward to coming to school now. Now there were days in the past where I didn't want to, there were times where I was like is this what I want to do, I knew it was what I wanted to do but I didn't know if I could really continue and that was only a couple of years in – Sinéad (MS1).

Four interviewees referenced directly or indirectly distributed leadership. Of these, three were principals and one was a mainstream teacher. Louise (PS1) detailed how everybody is given an opportunity to lead in her school. Daniel (PS4) spoke about the importance of shared leadership among other leadership styles. Vincent (PS6) relayed how several teachers oftentimes young and with no leadership post have volunteered to lead art or yoga or another initiative and the importance of teachers taking ownership. Niamh (MS4) spoke of the positives of being in a large school and how there is always someone ready and available to offer support, even if a lot of it isn't official leadership, she might view someone as a leader to her regardless of whether they have a formal leadership position or not.

Similarly, 14/16 interviewees mentioned seeking support. All were teaching, three mainstream teachers and one SET. Elaine (SS2) spoke of the luxury of knowing she could approach her leadership team if she needed support. Amy (MS5) spoke of the huge guidance afforded to her by her principal and that she has no problem approaching management.

When things go wrong the only way to right them again is really to talk to somebody else about it, there's nobody there who has witnessed them and can step in, you have to, your management has to be approachable and they are essential – Amy (MS5).

Both teachers in St John's NS mentioned being able to ask their principal for support. The other two teachers were two new recently qualified teachers who both discussed the constant support they received, with Niamh (MS4) acknowledging that those she sees as leaders may not have an official leadership role. The broader sense of leadership in schools came through from interview participants, who referenced the DP and others on leadership teams also. The role of the principal will now be presented.

4.7.1 Role of the principal

An open-ended question was posed in the questionnaires – “how does the school culture and leadership of your school impact on your professional life?” TP1 commented on the role that school culture and leadership plays with the following reply, “having worked in many different schools, I believe that the school culture is influenced by the leadership of the school, so the leadership team in place is an important influence and shapes my professional life”. This reflects a range of responses which consider the influence exerted by the leadership team in each school setting.

Interview participants were asked about the role of leadership in teacher resilience. Three principals and two other teachers offered detailed answers in this area, one teacher was in mainstream and the other in SET. Bláithín (SS3) offered thoughts on being seen to be fair, ‘being honest, being transparent and seeing the value in people, giving them an opportunity to lead, trusting them to take control of different areas’ as a leader. In answering the same question Daniel (PS4) offered the following response:

I think, first of all the realisation that you're not the boss or you are not actually, the world doesn't revolve around you and to acknowledge the importance of sharing the workload and responsibility where possible and I say where possible because there may be times when people who have a post of responsibility might not be willing to actually to shoulder the burden to the extent that you would like but having good people working with you, it's probably the secret to it really and a sense of shared leadership – Daniel (PS4).

Vincent (PS6) recalled the “transformational effect” that praise had in his early teaching days and explained how as a leader he tries to find opportunities for public and private praise for new staff or early career teachers.

Changes in leadership were acknowledged by several participants at both the questionnaire and interview phases. 5/16 of interviewees mentioned changes in leadership. In one case study school the lack of experience of the leadership team was

noted. Clare (SS1) and Sinéad (MS1) credited the change in their management with positive outcomes for staff and pupils. Áine (PS2) acknowledged their school had experienced a rough few years due to changes in their management style. Síle (PS5) explained that she interviewed for deputy and then suddenly found herself successful in her interview and acting up as principal, which was quite hard as she didn't feel she would get the deputy position:

maybe going forward I'm going to find it hard to be a vice principal because I haven't really done that yet, because I've gone from getting the job and then I spent the last two years most of the time acting up or we've been closed for Covid so you know that will be a new challenge I suppose, how to work with someone when I'm not the one that's the leader – Síle (PS5).

In answering about the role of leadership in teacher resilience respondents there were many succinct answers about realising the work won't and can't all be done, particularly from principals themselves with 4/6 referencing this. Prioritising, organising and delegating were identified as supports for principals by themselves in their interviews. The dual role of teaching principal is also raised in this quote from a multigrade teaching-principal.

Definitely, initially when I became principal I felt I had to be this wonder woman who was going to do everything and had to do everything and then you just learn it's not possible. With the additional requirements of the Department over the years you have to say look it, there are only 24 hours in a day, you've got to get a few hours sleep in that, and you've got to teach, for a teaching principal that comes first as well, while you're leading teaching and learning my priority is my class during that time and then what comes after you know is admin principal work – Áine (PS2).

The 'horrendous' workload (Áine - PS2) of teaching principals was shared within the questionnaire and interviews. Louise (PS1) spoke of the importance of administrative days and how on the last administrative day she had to cover a class for part of the day and that led to tasks not being completed from the to-do list for that week. Áine (PS2) added that she doesn't think people comprehend the workload of teaching principals. In an open-ended questionnaire question into culture and leadership TP3 stated the importance of effective planning. 'Effective planning is very important to me in my role as teaching principal. I have to have everything well structured and ensure all staff clearly know their roles'. Collaboration between different roles; teachers

and teachers, and teachers and leaders was explored in a significant way and these findings are now presented.

4.8 Collaboration

Collaboration in the context of this study was understood as team work, working together, relying on colleagues for support, team teaching, sharing resources etc. It is viewed as a theme to include collegiality, planning and problem solving. There were 35 references across three subthemes shown at figure 4.12 below, referenced by 14 interview participants.

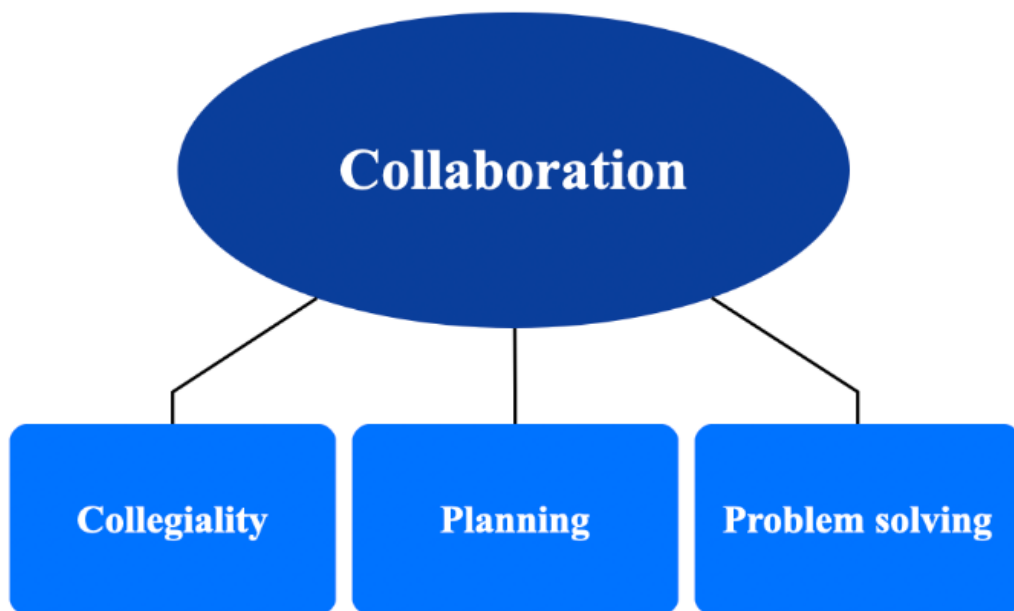


Figure 4.12 – Theme 4 – Collaboration - subthemes identified under this theme.

Questionnaire respondents were asked to what extent more time for collaboration in school would help to make their role more satisfying. The overwhelming majority of the national questionnaire (80/106) indicated that more time in school for collaboration would help make their role more satisfying (see figure 4.13 below). Time for collaboration was also identified as a support needed going forward by 18.8% of case study participants and 5.7% of those who completed the national questionnaire. When the same participants were asked to suggest changes or initiatives to sustain resilience 6.5% of case study participants and 14.2% of national participants named time for collaboration as a suggestion. Collaboration between schools and

opportunities for teachers and leaders to visit other schools of similar size was also suggested.

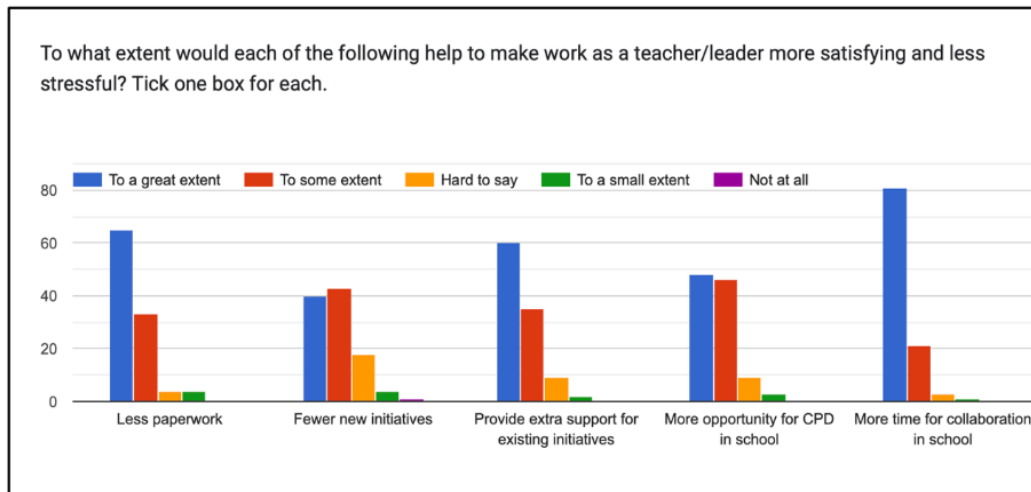


Figure 4.13 - National questionnaire results by count to what extent would each of the following help to make work as a teacher/leader more satisfying and less stressful (n=106)

Across roles, 5/16 interviewees referenced planning, these were: two principals, one mainstream teacher and two SET. Teachers and principals identified more time to plan as a support which could help them going forward (9.4% of national questionnaire respondents). Louise (PS1) spoke of working together during the Croke Park hours to plan how the new PLC or SET model or any policies or initiatives fit the school they work in. Jacinta (SS4) described how the five Junior Infant teachers and two SETs in her school have a WhatsApp group for planning and they share resources or ideas via this group. Clare (SS5) explained in her school that the staff work collaboratively to build up policies together and they have team groups for subjects and a shared approach to planning. Vincent (PS6) encourages team planning and the sharing of ideas at staff meetings.

Problem solving was referenced by 7/16 interviewees. This comprised three principals, two mainstream teachers, and two SETs. Louise (PS1) facilitates opportunities for staff to problem solve and supports them to offer solutions to help each other. She highlighted the importance of “working with other staff and having the opportunities to problem solve and having the chance to work on school policies and initiatives together” as being very important to resilience (Appendix O). Amy (MS5) described how she is sharing ideas with her more experienced SET and that the other

teacher may come back with different ideas or feedback and this has supported her growth as an NQT. Vincent (PS6) opened up about teachers sharing burdens with each other in an effort to problem solve. Additional references were made to principals being open to solving problems regarding classroom management. This demonstrated leaders in tune with the priority concern of their teachers. Autonomy in effectively managing the skillset of SETs and deploying resources where they are most needed showed the problem solving approach to collaboration in place in case study schools.

4.9 Role specific

This theme is understood as role or personal factors affecting resilience. Two main subthemes emerged from an analysis of the data. The first is confidence, which includes participants offering a rating for their confidence at interview stage and the second is job satisfaction which was queried across all phases. Figure 4.14 below depicts this theme and subthemes to be discussed. There were 78 references to this theme (role specific) across all interviewees.



Figure 4.14 – Theme 5 – Role Specific - subthemes identified under this theme

In relation to the length of time in role, seven interview participants mentioned this in relation to pressures, demands and experience. For two participants they were in their second year of teaching as fully qualified teachers, but due to Covid closures had never experienced a full uninterrupted year of teaching. Both teachers had the same

class level again the following year and felt this was a support because they were familiar with the curriculum, notes and expectations for the class level. One had colleagues teaching the same level and could rely on them for support, while the other felt unsure at times but acknowledged the support and mentorship shown by both her principal and SET. This reflects back on the teacher isolation concept discussed in Chapter Two and literature from Miller, 2003; Gibbs and Miller, 2014; Wilcox and Lawson, 2018.

Two leaders had moved from SET to principal roles within the past five years and noted the advantages in being familiar with paperwork and filling in forms associated with SEN and the SEN coordinator role. Another interviewee spoke of how the move from mainstream to SET had changed her perspective on teaching and added that experience teaching had also helped her realise it's quality over quantity, "you're still doing great teaching but you don't have to be putting in the hours and just be assured that your teaching is still a good high standard" – Jacinta (SS4). Mary (SS1), teaching between 20-30 years, explained from her perspective the length of time in role is relevant to resilience;

I suppose when you've been around as long as I have you've kind of, not that it doesn't get to you, it does but I suppose like your initial reaction is always going to be the same, but I think you kind of bounce back quicker – Mary (SS1).

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 presented previously show the trends in movement in education with teachers moving schools. When questionnaire respondents were asked if they had plans to upskill, apply for promotion, change schools or leave teaching 14.3% (n=21) of total questionnaire respondents (137), indicated they intended to change schools. As this was an open-ended question some respondents gave details citing family reasons, childcare support and looking for leadership positions closer to home as reasons. Principals also referenced the changeover in staff with all (n=6) at interview phase mentioning the impact that this can have on the relationships and level of experience within schools. These findings indicate the length of time in a role is impactful on the contextual resilience of a school but that individuals have to consider what is best for them in terms of satisfying and sustaining their career wide resiliency.

Teachers and principals at interview stage were asked how they perceive their resilience and it was explained to them that this could be a comment or a rating. Some respondents found it challenging to give a rating, instead saying this was difficult and

dependent on the situation – Sinéad (MS1), Áine (PS2) said she was quite resilient and had the support of a very good team in school and at home. Donal (MS2) admitted to feeling disillusioned with teaching but acknowledged it was a personal thing. Rachel (PS3) indicated they were a glass half full person. Of the respondents who did give a rating (9/16) the lowest score was a 5/10. These are displayed in table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10 – Confidence rating of interviewees (where provided)

School	Principal	Mainstream teacher	SET
Newtown School	8		5-6
St John’s NS			6
St Stephen’s BNS		7	8
St Mary’s NS	8-9		5
St Anne’s GNS		8	
Sacred Heart School	7-8		

As shown above, three principals gave a rating averaging 8/10. Two mainstream class teachers gave a rating, averaging 7.5/10 and four SETs gave a rating averaging 6.25/10. Here is an example from an individual who did not give themselves a rating in terms of how they describe confidence and by default experience and career wide resiliency.

I’m quite resilient because things have happened in my life that I have overcome, I don’t know if I’d give myself a rating because I’m human like everyone else, I’m not like superwoman, things will get me down but then that could be a positive because you could use that experience of not being able to cope with something to learn from it a little bit – Síle (PS5).

Confidence was also expressed as a measure of succession or accomplishment. Louise (PS1) reported ‘people take great pride in having conquered the whole digital technologies realm’. Jacinta (SS4) spoke about the confidence a compliment can bring and gave the example of the SENO visiting her classroom setting at the end of three years there and saying to her you are doing an amazing job, that was a high point professionally and brought about confidence. Vincent (PS6) reminded that we can lose confidence for a while and resilience may suffer. Finally, Daniel (PS4) examines confidence in terms of leadership and resilience.

Wellbeing is one of the buzzwords at the moment and some people have a great sense of themselves and comfort in themselves and know themselves very, very

well and I think that plays a huge part in it. If you are confident in yourself, it doesn't mean you have to be empowered or empowering towards other people but if you have acquired that quiet confidence in yourself and in your work and you're comfortable in the profession that you've chosen so that you're knowledgeable about it and possibly have world experience in dealing with people and being able to acknowledge where they're coming from and understand where they're coming from I think that might go a long way – Daniel (PS4).

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rate their job satisfaction at present in 2021 and given five options: high, low, higher than five years ago, lower than five years ago and the same. Figure 4.15 below depicts the national questionnaire graphic.

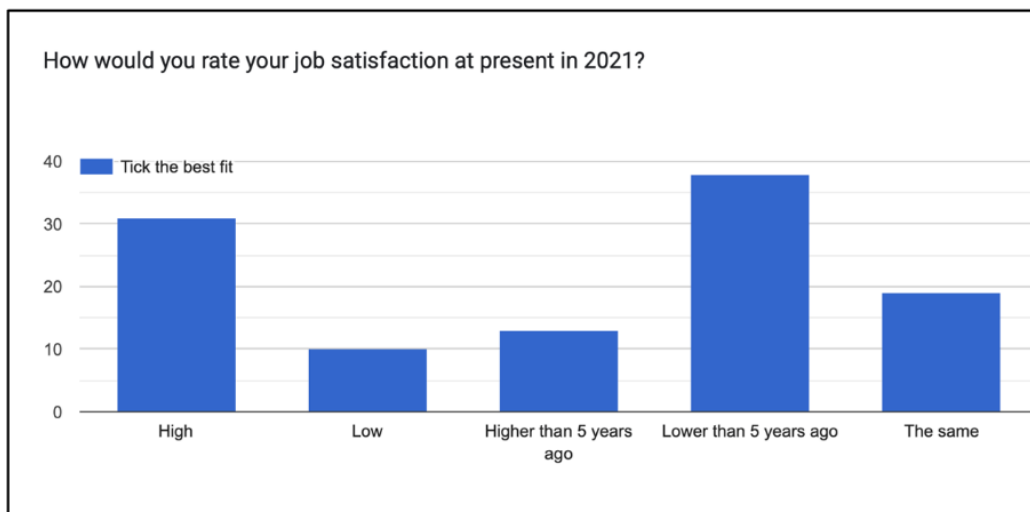


Figure 4.15 – national questionnaire responses to how would you rate your job satisfaction at present in 2021? (n=106)

Participants were then asked to explain why they chose the answer they did in the next open-ended question. Permanency, changing location/moving home, on career break or growth with experience were listed as factors in respondents choosing high or higher than five years ago. For those who indicated their satisfaction was low or lower than five years ago pressures due to planning, parents, little options for career progression, unnecessary curriculum changes and Covid were among the most cited reasons. Several participants who chose the same wrote I love my job or I enjoy my job, I'm happy, I enjoy the school I work in etc.

Questionnaire participants were also asked to elaborate on what they enjoy most about teaching. 48% (n=15) of case study respondents chose children, with 55% (n=59) national questionnaire choosing the same. 13% (n=4) of case study respondents chose a

supportive workplace with 20% (n=21) national questionnaire respondents. AP4 liked the variety of each day and the feeling of making a difference, while M42 said the different and unexpected perspectives of the pupils, the support and kindness of my colleagues and the open-mindedness of the management.

Interviewees were asked about job satisfaction also. Louise (PS1) and Sinéad (MS1) indicated working with children was their favourite part of the job. Mary (SS1) remarked about witnessing a child have a lightbulb moment after a period of little progression. Elaine (SS2) explained teaching the younger children how to read is her favourite part of her role. Niamh (MS4) gave the example of significant progress with a particular child. Daniel (PS4) found it difficult to answer the question and then explained:

I think it is the best job in the world and the worst job in the world and there have been times when I've enjoyed it beyond belief and there's times when I felt it's time to go, so I mean the times that you really enjoy it are probably in the occasions when you actually have meaningful engagement with the teachers and pupils in the normal sense of what you would expect in school and the frustrations are when that's happening and you have obligations elsewhere that force you not to be part of what is the real heartbeat of the school – Daniel (PS4).

This quote emphasises the demands on principals, even very experienced principals. It also shows the importance of relationships for sustaining resilience and that those relationships are between peers, teacher to teacher, teacher to principal and teacher to pupil. Role specific resilience focused on confidence and job satisfaction. Data shows us how relationships and experience impact on these.

4.10 Chapter summary and conclusion:

This chapter sought to present the quantitative and qualitative findings from the questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data indicated that teachers and leaders at every career phase participated in this study. These teachers and principals worked primarily in Catholic, non DEIS schools of between 151-300 pupils. The case study schools varied from seven to sixty-five teacher schools, or from 120-1000 pupils approximately. Presenting these results in a thematic format allowed for cross-participant discussion throughout.

The findings show the perspectives of principals, mainstream class teachers and SETs in relation to the impact of systemic changes on their career wide resiliency. In using SPSS, a non-parametric independent sample median test found no significant differences between the responses of participants to all the Likert scale questions according to type of school, school size, years of experience and current position. This suggests in this study the demographics did not impact on the capacity to be resilient across the various career phases and irrespective of school size and type. Key findings from the questionnaire data include: in terms of characteristics which can influence resilience, almost 60% of questionnaire respondents chose wellbeing, followed by job fulfilment (42.9%) and relationships (42.2%). In terms of systemic changes, Covid-19 and remote learning were viewed as most challenging, followed by the PLC and policies. The revised SET model and Droichead were least challenging. The culture and leadership of a school were identified as having a significant impact on the resilience of teachers and principals working there. Based on interview responses, SETs had the lowest rating in terms of their own resilience, followed by mainstream class teachers, with principals demonstrating the highest rating in terms of resilience.

Across certain schools, patterns emerged; Newtown School had undergone a change in management over the previous number of years which was significantly referenced. St John's NS felt supported but there was a sense of uncertainty for two teachers, in terms of promotion and career development. The principal felt well supported despite the arduous workload of a teaching principal. St Stephen's BNS lacked organisation by the admittance of all especially in relation to organisational structure, they were conscious of the importance of relationships and facilitating the holistic growth of pupils. St Mary's NS emerged as a school where school size impacted relationships and yet encouraged a strong sense of collegiality and collaboration. Meaningful relationships were prioritised, despite organisational challenges due to school size and arguably a high turnover of staff. St Anne's GNS had some leadership challenges, and all parties were in agreement with regards the strong sense of collaboration which was described with positive reference to the Droichead process and the participants lived experience as mentors and mentees. Sacred Heart School had only had one participant at interview phase and therefore could not be compared across all roles in terms of patterns and the contextual impact of resilience.

Chapter Five will present a discussion on the findings, linking the six main themes (career wide resiliency, challenges, leadership, collaboration, role specific and context specific) to research in the area.

Chapter Five: Discussion of the Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the impact of systemic changes on the career wide resiliency in the Irish primary context from the perspective of principals, mainstream class teachers and SETs. The conceptual framework used in the present study draws upon a combination of the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) *Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resilience* and the Boon (2021) *Lived-in Resilience Framework*. This chapter will present a brief summary of the key findings, contextualise the findings with existing theory and research, discuss the implications from the study and address the limitations of the findings.

It is important to mention that case study six – Sacred Heart School, was an outlier in this research study as only one participant (the principal) took part at the interview phase. While the principal interview contributes to the study and the experience this participant had contributes to the concept of career wide resiliency, it was hoped to have respondents in each role from participating case study schools. Therefore, in this case there is only representation of one role.

The findings from Chapter Four were presented under six key themes: career wide resiliency; challenges; leadership; collaboration; role specific and context specific. These themes will now be examined under each RQ (table 5.1 below) underpinning this cross-case study. This chapter will begin by looking at the impact of systemic changes on career wide resiliency.

Table 5.1 – Research questions and subsidiary questions underpinning the present study

RQ	What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?
SQ1	What supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals?
SQ2	What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?
SQ3	How does lived experience impact on resilience for teachers and principals?

5.2 What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?

The RQ explored how the impact of systemic changes affected the career wide resiliency of principals, mainstream class teachers and SETs in the Irish primary context over the five year period from 2016-2021. As discussed in Chapter Two, career wide resiliency as a concept in this study encompasses the four dimensions of teacher resilience as described by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) in the multi dimensional framework including; profession related; emotional; motivational and social. A considerable number of the themes and subthemes identified by participants in the present study related to “what makes a resilient teacher?” could be situated with ease within these various dimensions for example: reflection skills could be situated within profession related and emotional dimensions and personal resilience could be relevant to profession related, emotional and motivational dimensions. TPL was an area which could be situated within any of the four dimensions depending on the context and the participants' responses at interview phase. The motivation to complete TPL can be for emotional reasons, professional or social. The support network that teachers and leaders rely on can be social or profession related. The dynamic nature of the dimensions is reiterated by Lemon and McDonough (2023) who emphasise that the dimensions each inform the other and acknowledge from their study that “skills, strategies and capacities could have been applied across multiple dimensions” (p. 6). From the perspective of the present study, career wide resiliency and the lived experience of participants was relevant and impacting on all four dimensions. This reflects the findings of Mansfield *et al.* (2012) who reported that 80% of participant responses on resilience could be situated in more than one of the four dimensions.

The questionnaire phase of the present study examined how the participants viewed and understood teacher resilience as a concept. The results from the open-ended question are shown relative to the eleven most popular aspects of resilience reported by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) in table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 – The most popular aspects of resilience according to Mansfield *et al.* (2012) with comparison references from this study.

11 most popular aspects of resilience according to Mansfield <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Mansfield <i>et al.</i> (2012) n=200	Present study (2021) n=137
Capacity to bounce back	22%	2.2%
Coping	21.5%	8.8%
Flexible/adaptable	21.5%	28.5%
Being positive/optimistic despite challenges	20%	24%
Seek help and take advice from others	15%	5%
Focused on learning and improvement	14.5%	0%
Problem solving	13.5%	7.3%
Healthy work/life balance	13%	6.6%
Persistence	12%	0.7%
Reflective	11%	6.6%
Confidence and self-belief	10%	24.8%

Table 5.2 shows that Irish participating primary teachers and principals had differing views to their Australian counterparts regarding popular aspects of resilience. Two of the four most popular themes from the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) study also featured as popular responses in the present study, being flexible/adaptable and being positive/optimistic despite challenges. Teachers in this study also favoured confidence and self-belief as a notable important aspect of resilience with almost a quarter of participants selecting this option. The cultural differences are likely to have impacted on responses in the two studies.

In the present study, a significant number of respondents also mentioned remaining calm (17.5%). Additional responses offered by participants could be due to the Irish context of this study or the evolution in responses ten years later. The differences in choosing the “capacity to bounce back” suggests teachers in the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) study were knocked down more than the Irish teachers in the present study. The four aspects with the most responses in the present study were being flexible /adaptable (28.5%), confidence and self-belief (24.8%), being positive/optimistic despite challenges (24%) and remaining calm (17.5%). These can be related to the professional dimension (being flexible/adaptable), motivational (confidence and self-belief and being positive/optimistic despite challenges) and

emotional (remaining calm). These choices are all impacted by systemic changes and participants lived experience as teachers and leaders. When the present study was conducted teachers and principals were arguably required to demonstrate flexibility and adapt to remote teaching and learning.

Interview participants were asked what makes a resilient teacher and Elaine (SS2), an experienced teacher suggested the following answer: “someone who is confident and who can see things in perspective”, she went on to explain her answer by way of someone who is able to maintain the professional side and doesn’t take things personally, “someone who has a store of resources within themselves to be able to deal with situations”, that store may be built up through experiences along your career. This response shows the impact of career wide resiliency on a teacher’s capacity to be resilient, is reflective of many of the participants at both questionnaire and interview phases and echoes the traits identified above and common to the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) study which highlight how lived experience impacts on resilience for teachers and leaders. It builds on previous definitions offered by the researcher in Chapter One and Chapter Two to include teachers’ perspective of confidence as being relative and impactful on resilience as well as having the capacity to maintain perspective, regardless of the situation.

In relation to how teaching has changed in the 2016-2021 period, approximately 80% of respondents indicated teaching was more demanding, challenging and hectic. As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, the 2022 research report (INTO, 2022) into teacher workload examined the acceleration of teacher workload in the previous decade. These studies are beneficial for comparing career wide resiliency as they did not specifically target new or early career teachers.

When asked how has teaching changed, approximately 90% of respondents indicated that teaching was more or much more stressful, demanding, challenging and hectic (INTO, 2015). In both the INTO study (2015) and the present study the demanding option had the highest response. In the present study this had the same percentage as challenging, both at 78%. Table 5.3 below shows the responses to the INTO study (2015) side by side with the responses to the present study. Irrespective of

percentages it is noteworthy to comment that the dimensions are ranked almost identically in both studies.

Table 5.3 – How teaching has changed in the last five years with respect to positive and challenging aspects, comparing the results of the INTO report (2015) with the present study.

Dimension	INTO report (2015) n=332 More/Much more	The present study (2021) n=137 Somewhat/Much more
Demanding	94.4%	78%
Hectic	91.5%	77%
Challenging	88.2%	78%
Stressful	87.9%	66%
Trying	77.1%	62%
Worthwhile	22.5%	31%
Rewarding	20.9%	30%
Satisfying	19.2%	27%
Enjoyable	17.5%	23%

Of note, in the present study, 66% suggested that teaching was somewhat more or much more stressful. This was down 20% on the previous study. Although two thirds of participants felt teaching was more stressful, when probed reasons for participants to indicate their roles were the same or less stressful included changing schools, changing roles in schools, and securing permanent employment. Data at both questionnaire and interview level reconsiders the impact of systemic changes on participants in terms of their resilience. Responses suggest while systemic changes can be linked to stress not all changes affected participants equally and participants demonstrated resilience in responding to change. In the present study, 62% identified their role being more trying. Less than 25% said their role was somewhat or much more enjoyable. In terms of job satisfaction, 27% of respondents said their role was more satisfying, with 54% saying their job satisfaction levels were about the same as five years ago. This is in line with the INTO report (2015).

Interviewees in the present study called for a reform of the education system in the midst of the intensification of teachers' work, whereby an increased amount of work is expected in the same time period (Apple, 1986; Allen *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, the INTO report (2022) recognised that teachers' job satisfaction remains high despite an increased workload and recommended a review of the current primary education system. Motivation to teach and lead is raised by interview participants and will be discussed in the sections that follow. The sub research questions will now be addressed in turn before the chapter summary will consolidate the findings from this study with existing literature to fully ascertain the impact of systemic changes on teacher career wide resiliency.

5.3 What supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals?

A range of factors that supported teacher resilience were identified by participants. These include Droichead, adapting to move to online teaching and learning during Covid-19, relationships and collegiality within the school setting and leadership support. Interview participants were asked what strategies they used to foster their own resilience. The range of responses included: exercising from two principals and one SET, switching off and separating school from home from four mainstream teachers and chatting with colleagues from two SETs. In terms of fostering resiliency in schools, overall management and staff relationships/camaraderie were the two aspects offered most frequently with over 66% of interviewees giving one or both responses. Interestingly, the Droichead process was reported as supportive to staff resiliency and this will be discussed further now.

5.3.1 Droichead

While wide ranging reforms at an international level have exerted pressure and resulted in an increased workload for teachers (Gu, 2014), many of the systemic changes introduced in the period from 2016-2021 in the Irish context were seen as favourable initiatives by the participants. Droichead was seen as one such initiative which "opened doors" – Clare (SS5) and led to enhanced collaborative experiences in schools. In terms of the pillars of systemic change considered for this study (Chapter 1;

Table 1.1, p. 7), Droichead (TC, 2017) was a directive issued by the TC and impacts on all primary schools as it replaced the inspectorate model. Although the phased introduction of the process was met by some resistance and hesitancy by a range of educational stakeholders; teachers, principals, the INTO, in its infancy, respondents in this study were in favour of the process (INTO, 2016). Interviewees who had engaged in the process as NQTs felt supported and encouraged by it and members of the PST in case study schools, including principals, while acknowledging their initial hesitancy felt it had renewed resilience and promoted collaborative practices. Daniel (PS4) explained the Droichead process had opened classrooms, initiated discussions and established friendships among staff. Approximately 2/3 of interview respondents felt Droichead did not challenge them and found it to be a positive aspect of school life, this was in line with the data from the questionnaire cohorts also. It was interestingly the area that participants identified as needing the least amount of TPL in. This emphasises the important role of collaboration and collaborative PL in sustaining and developing resilience.

5.3.2 Adapting to move to online teaching and learning during Covid-19

In terms of navigating remote learning and Covid-19, positive outcomes from questionnaire and interview data include increased interaction between teachers, students and parents. This was highlighted by St Stephen's BNS, a DEIS band 1 school, where all participants emphasised the role technology played in building connections. From their experience, utilising Google classrooms had afforded parents the opportunity to see what was happening in their child's classroom and this relationship continued to grow on the return to school and through the use of social media platforms such as Seesaw. The strengthening of relationships between home and school through the advances made using technology helped to support teacher resilience. These sentiments are shared by Lemon and McDonough (2023) who echo the transformative power of technology to strengthen and sustain parental involvement and develop teacher resilience.

Even though technology and the move to online teaching and learning was recognised as a challenge in terms of lack of PL available initially, unfamiliarity with

platforms and equity to access resources, participants at both questionnaire and interview level spoke of the pride in mastering it, the sense of accomplishment it brought them. It was noted that everyone was in the same boat and the collective achievement in mastering the skills necessary to provide online teaching was celebrated by the staff in Newtown School. Again collegiality is evident from schools in relation to discussing remote teaching. Vincent (PS6) mentioned keeping everyone at the same pace, as those with proficient technological skills were eager to move ahead but through collaboration and experience by the second lockdown everyone was at a similar level. This was associated with the motivational dimension of teacher resilience (Mansfield *et al.* 2012) and a sense of positive self-belief which provided them with the motivation to engage in remote learning (Lemon and McDonough, 2023).

5.3.3 Relationships and collegiality within the school setting

Áine (PS2) acknowledged relationships were hugely impactful on the collegial output of schools. Using the relational model of resilience (Gu, 2014) in placing relationships at the centre of teachers and leaders lives, recognises the collective sense of collegiality as a measure of collaboration. “Collegial, emotional and intellectual connections with colleagues” were identified by Gu (2014, p. 513) as fostering the capacity to sustain a sense of effectiveness. The positive impact of collegiality on resilience was also evidenced in the present study. Across roles and cases it was apparent that social relationships and internal support played a big factor in supporting resilience with 91% of questionnaire respondents reporting the positive benefits of collegial and collaborative support on their morale and capacity to teach to their best. Good relationships among leaders and chairpersons of the BOM were also identified as a resilience building strategy. Elaine (SS2) explained that “knowing we have the support of the other teachers, and we have each other’s back always” fosters resilience in her setting. Building on previous research concerning contextual resources (Day and Gu, 2014; Mansfield *et al.*, 2016b) collegiality in this study is seen as a significant factor in terms of the impact on resilience, the relationship between collegiality and PL, and supporting one another is made strongly by teachers at interview phase.

5.3.4 Leadership support

Much of the support for maintaining teachers' beliefs in their efficacy comes from the leadership of schools (Gibbs and Miller, 2014). The teachers in Newtown School and St Stephen's BNS explicitly reference the support and guidance of their management teams and principals in terms of fostering their teacher resilience (see Appendix O for an example of the responses from Newtown School). This is in line with Gu (2014) who found that teachers value leaders who recognise and acknowledge their work and trust in them. In the present study at the interview phase, Sinéad (MS1) commented that nearly every day she was asked by one or other of the principal and deputy in her school how things are going and if she needs any support. This was an experienced teacher, already in a middle management position but her comment showed that the wellbeing and resilience of all teachers and leaders was being supported. Deirdre (MS3) also noted the contribution the role her management team made to fostering her resilience as a teacher.

The value of leadership support is acknowledged by teachers through questionnaire and interview data. Many of the principals interviewed referenced the supports and training available and undertaken by them in their capacity, mentioning the Oide leadership initiatives, and the role of the CPSMA and the CSL from the viewpoints of both newly appointed principals and experienced coaches and mentors.

Klap, MacCallum and Mansfield (2021) report on the benefits of the *Mindful Leaders* programme in Western Australia – completed by 350 principals by December 2019. The concept of the programme is that leaders can take care of themselves, in an attempt to be better equipped to take care of others. Just as teachers need to feel supported and valued, the principals at the interview stage all referenced the support network or the positive school culture/attitude needed to sustain their resilience.

Droichead, adapting to move to online teaching and learning during Covid-19, relationships and collegiality within the school setting and leadership support were identified by questionnaire and interview participants as supporting or fostering resilience for teachers and principals. The present study, asked interviewees which of; social relationships; collegiality and organisational structure (Day and Gu, 2014) would be most meaningful or significant to them in terms of their resilience. Across roles and

case study schools 56% chose social relationships. While the three constructs are impactful on teacher resilience, it is interesting that both teachers from Newtown School, St Mary's NS and St Anne's GNS chose this option. Schools of varying sizes, with different organisational structures in place, but where staff relations and positive atmosphere and culture were seen as conducive to building and fostering resilience. The section that follows will examine what inhibited resilience for teachers and leaders.

5.4 What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?

Questionnaire and interview data demonstrated there were a range of elements that inhibited participants' resilience. Questionnaire data in the form of an open-ended question allowed respondents explain why they chose their previous answer in relation to their job satisfaction over the previous five years. Answers included: continued pressure of planning and paperwork; increased demands (from parents, the DE); increased workload; curriculum changes viewed as unnecessary; negative perception of teachers in the media and feeling overwhelmed. Interview participants identified paperwork and relationships as the most demanding aspects of their roles (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 – What is the most demanding aspect of your role as a teacher or leader?

	P	M	S
Newtown School	Communication	Paperwork	Parents
St John's NS	Paperwork	Planning Paperwork	unexpected behaviours/ challenging pupils
St Stephen's BNS	Supporting the whole child as a DEIS 1 school	New PLC Paperwork	Relationships Communication
St Mary's NS	Finding time to interact meaningfully - teachers, pupils and parents	Relationship with parents External factors	Returning to work after maternity leave
St Anne's GNS	Lack of supports acting up, paperwork	Planning Assessment	Paperwork Work-life balance
Sacred Heart School	Complexity of role Multiplicity of demands on you		

Across all cases pressure from parents and maintaining a work life balance were raised as emerging challenges that negatively impact on resilience. The INTO (2022) report also found that through advancements of technology and social media there were additional demands for contact with parents which led to an increased workload for teachers. Teachers in the present study drew connections between an increase in communication through social media apps and the expectation by parents for a response. Additionally, the acknowledgement of difficulties in one's personal life impacting on the ability to be resilient professionally was spoken about by respondents across roles in all cases. Issues relating to school culture and the value of contributions are raised in two of the six case study schools which show that teachers view these as factors that may inhibit their resiliency.

Interview participants were asked to identify what influences or hinders their capacity to be resilient. Respondents identified the following as hindering their capacity to be resilient: teachers' own confidence and whatever else is going on for them at the time professionally and personally, the support or lack of support of other staff members. Subsequent discussions cited lack of sleep, the school context, self-efficacy, value of the role, lack of opportunities for progression and adapting to big changes in a small time period as stressors. Daniel (PS4) mentioned being aware of those who disagree with you and are open about it in an undermining way as opposed to working with you. Paperwork demands and additional form filling, documenting plans and decisions were recognised by teachers and leaders as a stressor. Similarly, paperwork demands was reported as a source of stress in the 2015 and 2022 INTO reports. Insufficient support for SEN and the lack of time for collaboration were also raised by the present study and the INTO (2022).

The complexity of the nature of the profession undergoing constant change and reform is recognised by Fullan (2016). McKay and Barton acknowledge the pressures that teachers are under in "an era of accountability" (2018, p. 356). High attrition rates globally are associated with the "intensification of teachers' work" (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012). Teacher attrition is linked with high workloads, lack of support, challenging student behaviour, complex and diverse needs and low professional status (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012). In the present study high workloads and increased demands, including the demands of paperwork were highlighted by respondents at both

questionnaire and interview stage. The lack of support from the teacher union, the INTO is cited by a number of principals as are the additional requirements of the DE over the previous five years. The negative attitudes reflected on the scrutiny by the media of teachers and the negative press teachers received during Covid-19. While challenging student behaviour was mentioned by St Stephen's BNS participants it was not an overarching finding. Managing expectations and the evolution of bullying to include online and alternative forms was raised by Jacinta (SS4). SETs commented on the diverse learners and needs they cater for, but again the pupils' needs were not viewed as a challenge or inhibiting the capacity of teachers to be resilient. The low professional status referenced by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) was not raised as a major issue for teachers in Ireland who took part in the present study.

5.4.1 Teacher professional learning (TPL)

The lack of TPL and reduced opportunities to attend face-to-face professional sessions during 2020/21 was acknowledged as a hindrance to resilience. However, the notion of PL moving online was viewed mainly as a positive opportunity particularly by those teachers and leaders in rural settings. Áine (PS2) commented on the range of courses available as this was an area with rapid growth in line with technological advancements. Bláithín (SS3) commented on the lack of training available to mainstream teachers (presumably during school time) in the area of SEN, maintaining that those in SEN were aware of the approaches suggested by external agencies, recommended in reports etc but the classroom counterparts needed additional support and training in the area. The inaccessibility issue which was evident for teachers in special classes in terms of professional learning mentioned by St Mary's NS was due to Covid-19 and face-to-face courses paused. While there are echoes of Stevens and O' Moore (2009) PL accessibility calls for special class teachers, many interviewees reference the abundance of webinars on offer and the range of materials covered. This was an area of professional growth during the 2020/21 school year and recognised as supporting teacher resilience.

5.4.2 Teaching during Covid

Similar to the present study, research by Lemon and McDonough (2023), had a sample of 137 participants, and aimed to identify what challenged and supported teachers in teaching remotely and the impact of these challenges in terms of work and workload. They also applied the four dimensions of teacher resilience (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012) as a lens for analysis.

While the literature review provides definitions on teacher resilience accepted in the context of the present study, teaching and navigating teaching and leading during the school year when this data was collected (the 2020/21 school year), provided an ‘authentic context’ to consider teacher resilience (Lemon and McDonough, 2023, p. 11). It is apparent regardless of when the study was completed that teachers are always subjected to considerable demands from a range of sources (Gibbs and Miller, 2014) and important to recognise Covid-19 as only one such source and contributor over the five year period. A positive factor of both studies, Lemon and McDonough, 2023 and the present study is that participants were able to articulate personal resilience building strategies and identify what supports or hinders their capacity to be resilient.

5.4.3 Collaboration

The lack of time for collaboration was raised by participants of the present study is a well documented issue in Irish education as a challenge to meaningful collaboration for inclusion (INTO, 2022; King, Brennan and Gorman, 2023). Additional barriers were in place during the 2020/21 school year due to the response to Covid-19, with school size impacting on the configuration of staggered lunches, teachers grouped in pods and generally limited opportunities to mix with staff on a personal or professional basis. According to interview participants, collaborative planning opportunities in groups or in class bands were replaced with individual planning time. Jacinta (SS4) emphasised the role that the WhatsApp group had for the Junior Infant teachers and SETs supporting their classes. Sinéad (MS1) and Mary (SS1) explained there was a lot of informal collaboration in their small setting naturally, but Covid-19 had separated teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and they felt the only collaboration in place was between each mainstream teacher and the relevant SET, but the supportive element

from colleagues in a staff meeting had vanished. The need to discuss issues and plans as a staff was still there, but groupings and current accommodations at the time of interview impacted on the feasibility of collaboration. Across cases this was echoed with principals especially in larger schools emphasising that social collegiality helped to build the professional relationships and collaboration but due to the organisation of classes and pods, logistically and structurally within schools and separate buildings the natural collaborative opportunities did not exist. Fullan (2015) reiterates the value of collaboration and the debilitating effect of isolation is highlighted in many studies (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Sharratt and Fullan, 2009, 2012; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Fullan and Quinn 2015). Collaboration is particularly important for inclusive education and in the context of the revised SET model.

In developing and sustaining resilience, the role of collaborative professionalism is explored by Hargreaves and O' Connor (2018). They propose collaboration embedded in the culture of the school, with educators supporting each other to promote collaborative work inclusive of the culture and community of the school. While collaborative practice was recognised as supporting resilience and fostering collegial relationships it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Covid-19 had on this practice among schools. The issue of teachers collaborating with outside supports and agencies was raised with questionnaire respondents and the lack of opportunities to do so was viewed as a barrier to inclusion (Travers *et al.*, 2010; Brennan, 2017). In order to support these issues going forwards respondents identified dedicated time for collaboration, in fact 134/137 questionnaire respondents felt more time for collaboration in school would support their resilience. The establishment of role specific cluster groups who would have regular meetings, the review of the supply panel role to provide cover for collaborative activities, and the establishment of onsite supports which could be shared between schools, a multidisciplinary team were also advocated for by questionnaire respondents and interviewees in the present study. The ESCI network facilitates some cluster meetings and schools have local arrangements in place nationally for organising cluster meetings for SEN.

5.4.4 Work-life balance

Challenges raised by participants in the present study in terms of ‘always on’ or the ‘right to disconnect’ may not have been prevalent in other school years or without the period of remote learning, where teachers and principals spoke about the lack of boundaries and the difficulty in separating home and school life, while the teachers in school 2 also spoke about the need for work-life balance and further supports for well-being. “The collapsing of the geographic boundaries between home and work as a result of the shift to remote learning” are raised by Lemon and McDonough (2023, p. 12). It is explained because teachers are not provided with a work phone it is almost impossible to switch off from the communications outside of school hours (INTO, 2022). Ten respondents suggested more supports for teacher wellbeing going forward, with additional calls for an awareness of the unseen duties of teachers among policy makers and principals. The role of teacher wellbeing in the resilience process is viewed as a positive influence and important outcome (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016; Hascher, Beltman and Mansfield, 2021).

5.4.5 Leadership challenges

The role of the teaching principal was highlighted in the INTO report (2015) report as being particularly challenging. Of the principals interviewed in the present study (n=6), two were teaching principals. Louise (PS1) commented on the unattainable expectation and the culture of trust needed to sustain or develop teacher resilience as well as the importance of leadership and the unpredictability and challenges of the role. Áine (PS2) spoke about prioritising and delegating, taking time to come back to people if you don’t have the answer straight away and the importance of the support of a good team around you. The unsustainable demands on principals are recognised in the INTO (2022) report, alongside the increasing expectations being placed on schools which ultimately contribute to teachers’ workload and the workload of principal teachers.

The present study demonstrates the insufficient number of ISM roles and calls for the restoration and an increase in posts of responsibility which was also found in the INTO report (2022). Circular letter 43/2022 set about the revised allocation of assistant principal posts effective from 1st September 2022 (DE, 2022c). This may explain why

principals noted unrealistic and unsustainable expectations and the lack of evidence of distributed leadership in practice in the two datasets. The isolated nature of the role as described by Rachel (PS3) at the time, could further explain how and why delegation was not prioritised.

Teacher shortages and substitutions were raised as inhibiting resilience due to the requirements in place to stop the spread of Covid-19 and the guidelines for close contacts and testing. Rachel (PS3) spoke about having her lunch by herself and missing out on the comradery of the staffroom as a social hub. The issue of teacher shortages and substitutions continues to be an issue in the 2023/24 school year with many unfilled positions at present in primary schools (INTO, 2023). This is an on-going challenge for principals, particularly those in the Dublin region who are often left with little choice but to deploy an SET to cover for an absence. Indeed, recently published figures estimate so far this year 5,214 days of substitution have been provided by SETs which has a direct impact on SEN provision (INTO, 2023).

Prior to Covid-19, there was much discussion about an international crisis in terms of teacher recruitment and retention which was experienced in the United Kingdom and elsewhere (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019). Such crises saw teachers leave Ireland in high numbers to take attractive salary packages that often included rent and/or transportation.

5.4.6 Lack of motivation

Donal (MS2) was unsure if Covid-19 was to blame for his lack of motivation and interest in teaching since returning from working abroad. Lack of opportunities for promotion contextually were also identified as an inhibitor to developing teacher resilience. Regardless of career phase, teachers reported a demotivation if no opportunity for career progression was apparent (Donal -MS2, Bláithín - SS3, Jacinta - SS4). Through anecdotal responses generated in interviews, these three teachers all had a range of experience and additional qualifications. However, the school size and context impacted on the opportunities for promotion. Bláithín (SS3) associated lack of motivation with frustration with the system, but acknowledged that people learn from experience and gain in resilience as a result. Gibbs and Miller (2014) relate a lack of

morale and motivation to isolation, or feeling isolated, removed from peers, and the support of managers and leaders. This was not a significant factor from questionnaire respondents.

5.4.7 Teacher isolation during Covid

Cultivating a healthy social culture in schools impacts on how teachers fulfil their professional responsibilities (Gu, 2014) and relationships and collegiality which will be elaborated on as individual dimensions. Many respondents spoke of the isolated nature of teaching during Covid-19. Principals mentioned being in school buildings without pupils. The staggered return to school and the periods of remote learning were part of an ambiguous time for teachers regardless of experience. Questionnaire respondents commented on the additional stress placed on them at home, listening to negative media attention in an open-ended question. Teachers explained they felt less engaged and connected when teaching from home. Teachers at the interview stage mentioned relying on spouses or friends for support but that they didn't fully understand. Confidence in teaching and decision making were identified as stressful factors for teachers during this time. Sinéad (MS1) commented that the pandemic really separated teachers "we don't have as much support and we can't have as much support" as was the norm in their school. This is aligned with the collective teacher engagement dependent relationship with collective efficacy, agency and emotional resilience (Wilcox and Lawson, 2018).

5.4.8 Relationships

The changeover in staff and the loss of relationships was cited by Louise (PS1) as a problematic factor. She had invested time in supporting and developing her leadership team but due to staff relocating and taking up promoted posts in other schools her ISM had dissolved. In large schools, relationships during Covid-19 were strained. Respondents at interview stage commented on their groupings and pods and how the school buildings and layouts often acted as a barrier to collaboration and forming relationships with colleagues. As part of the relational model of resilience, Gu (2014) places relationships at the centre of teachers' work and lives. Through this

teacher resilience is heavily influenced by the “multi-layered relationships in which teachers’ work and lives are embedded” (p. 521). Collegial relationships are viewed as a positive influence in the present study, with a supportive workplace and collegiality or comradery listed by almost 20% of questionnaire respondents as what they enjoy most about their job. While previous research highlighted the importance of relationships (e.g. Gu, 2014), across all data in the present study relationships had a significant impact on resilience.

5.4.9 Lack of understanding of SEN

Respondents to the INTO survey (2015) outlined additional support for children with SEN as the most important factor in limiting workload stress. Central to the new SET model as outlined in circular 13/2017 (DES, 2017c) is the idea of improving the learning outcomes and opportunities for all learners in an inclusive environment, which reforms the traditional withdrawal model of support favoured in Irish primary schools for an in-class, team teaching approach. SET allocations are based on the profiled needs of each individual school and acknowledge the varying school types and populations that encompass the education system. During the 2020/21 school year, schools took a different approach to their SET, for many reasons. Case study schools outlined the roles that the SET team had in covering classes due to Covid-19 substitutions, which was necessary but impacted on the educational outcomes and performances of pupils with SEN. SETs complained of a lack of understanding from principals and more prevalently from class teachers as a hindrance to their resilience and ability to make progress with their pupils. Of the interviewees in the SET role, three out of five had postgraduate qualifications in SET. In one of the other schools, the acting principal (usually the deputy principal and SEN coordinator also had postgraduate training in SEN).

It was apparent in the interview data of the lack of awareness of the role of the SET from principals which demonstrated the need for PL in the area. When the revised SET model was launched in 2017 there was limited PL available to schools facilitated through the ESCI on team-teaching for inclusive practice but schools were only permitted to send one SET and one mainstream class teacher to this PL. While schools can apply for sustained support from the NCSE in relation to implementing the SET

model, these visits and school support from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is generally targeted towards the SET team rather than mainstream teachers. Whole school training in SEN to build inclusivity should be looked at. The questionnaire data and open-ended responses substantiated claims for more fundings and increased resources for SEN. In total, 40% of questionnaire respondents indicated they had postgraduate certificates or master degrees in education with 20% (n=28) specifying the qualification was in the area of SEN. This indicates a highly qualified cohort of respondents, there were however 46% of respondents working in SET positions and so a number may not have qualifications, and this may explain the demand for additional supports and PL in the area of SEN. The paperwork and time to complete forms for external agencies and organisations were seen as a challenge by SETs. As noted in the INTO report (2022), the present study demonstrates the need for resources to support holistic development and behavioural needs

5.4.10 Lack of support

Participants in the present study discussed external support networks and the importance of collegiality. However, some respondents did reference the lack of support as explained by an administrative principal at the questionnaire stage; “I am trying to actively create a supportive and open school culture as principal, but as I am the principal it can be difficult for me to seek support sometimes” – AP3. The lack of inter-agency communication and overloading is raised by the INTO (2022). Principals at interview stage referenced the lack of clarity from the DE during the 2020/21 school year, circulars being issued typically on a Friday and being unable to network at conferences such as the IPPN as these were moved online due to Covid-19.

The sudden move to online learning is also recognised as an area which had little planning and support for. Principals at interview stage spoke of those teachers who were racing ahead with it and how it was important to keep everyone at the same level in terms of engagement with pupils – Vincent (PS6). Panos-Castro, Arruti and Korres, (2022) discuss the challenges faced by teachers in the Basque Country during the move to online learning. They explain in the virtual scenario, the requirement was on teachers to have “technological and pedagogical-digital knowledge in order to innovate, reflect

and transform their teaching ideas” whilst meeting curricular objectives (Panos-Castro, Arruti and Korres, 2022, p. 96). Teachers globally were developing competencies and skills without having received any formal training in them. The digital divide is mentioned in that study and it did feature in this study also with acknowledgement in DEIS schools of the role of the Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator (HSCL) in navigating challenges for parents and in one school when the person in this role was on leave that the principal was dealing directly with parents more. One DEIS band 1 school explained they step in and support parents who otherwise couldn’t make referrals to services such as the Health Service Executive (HSE) Primary Care, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and additional outside agencies. Dealing with the social and emotional issues that arise from families and from their children then takes Rachel (PS3) away from leading teaching and learning.

In summary, this section discussed the factors that inhibited resilience for teachers and leaders. Communication, paperwork and parents were identified as challenges generally by participants at questionnaire and interview phases and shown in Table 5.3 which reflected interviewees responses. The lack of PL for specialised settings and the move to online webinars was an aspect directly affected by Covid-19. Teaching and leading during Covid was arguably a challenge but through personal resilience building strategies and collegiality, participants felt a sense of pride from mastering this move to online learning. Finding time to collaborate which typically takes place in-person during Croke Park hours in many schools, was replaced by individual planning during the 2020/21 school year, teachers found this isolating. Maintaining a work-life balance was difficult especially when teaching and leading from home. Leadership challenges, a lack of motivation and career progression opportunities, teacher isolation during Covid, relationships, the lack of understanding in SEN and the lack of support from agencies and a lack of understanding of the role of teachers and leaders is also discussed in this section. Next, the lived experience of participants is considered in terms of resilience.

5.5 How does lived experience impact on resilience for teachers and leaders?

Personal and contextual risk and protective factors impact on teacher resilience (McKay and Barton, 2018; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019; Peixoto *et al.*, 2020; Lemon and McDonough, 2023). The previous material available on this topic centred on the lives and experiences of teachers and leaders in Australia and the United Kingdom primarily and this emphasises the gaps in the Irish primary system other than the reports sanctioned by the union body of primary teachers in Ireland, the INTO (2015; 2022). This section will discuss the findings on teacher resilience in relation to the specific roles and contexts in which they worked. Boon proposed a “lived-in” resilience piece which includes positive adaptation, coping and the ability to function effectively across all domains of life (2021, p. 271). The framework takes into account contextual social factors and support and how they impact an individual. Teacher effectiveness is seen to have a dual influence on the physical and psychological resilience and also on student performance. Boon advocated for further studies of teachers who had remained in the profession and continued to maintain resilience as well as those who had left. The lived experience of participants forms part of Boon’s “lived-in” resilience framework. This differs from the perceived psychological resilience studied in much of the literature in teacher resilience to date. The present study explored the career wide resiliency of participants from an Irish context and assessed what supported and impacted on their capacity to be resilient.

Morgan *et al.* (2010) play out the notion of negative emotions coexisting with positive emotions. They argue that focusing on negative events overlooks the positive. In terms of the present study, the researcher fully expected Covid-19 to dominate the conversation and interviews in relation to challenges faced by participants, as a teacher throughout the pandemic the researcher knew first-hand the struggles faced by teachers and leaders as a result of this unprecedented time in education. The reality was that although teachers and leaders acknowledged the pandemic, they didn’t focus on it entirely, and their resilience was not significantly impacted as a result. Indeed, through their lived experience of teaching and leading through the pandemic, the interviewees were able to share their coping strategies, identify what supported or hindered their capacity to be resilient and suggest ways of sustaining and developing resilience going

forward. Covid-19 was certainly a professional work challenge for all in the education domain, but how teachers navigated this challenge could help to sustain their resilience moving forward. The acknowledgement of teaching as an intellectually and emotionally demanding job, with the ability for resilience to fluctuate is expressed by Gu, 2014; Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018. Teacher resilience is viewed through teachers' inner and external professional worlds. The present study explored the lived experience by asking participants to reflect on the past five years of their professional career and to evaluate what challenged them, what supported and inhibited resiliency for them. Role specific and context specific findings on teacher resilience will now be discussed.

5.5.1 Role specific

In the present study, a non-parametric independent sample median test found no significant differences between the responses of participants to all of Likert scale questions according to type of school, school size, years of experience and current position. This demonstrated that teachers across all career phases managed to sustain teacher resilience in line with previous research by Day *et al.*, 2006; Gu and Day, 2013. This data suggests that the role respondents have does not impact significantly on their capacity to be resilient. Experience in one role was suggested by interviewees as supporting and preparing participants for taking up another role, for example class teachers who had moved into SET, teachers who had become principals, deputy principals who were acting up as principals. Gu (2014) reports that teacher resilience is role specific in that teachers display capacity for growth and fulfilment in search of personal and professional goals. Through the semi-structured interviews participants were asked about their perception of their own resilience, how they compare teaching now with teaching previously and whether they will continue in their role. One teacher spoke about doubting herself on her return to work after maternity leave, to new faces in school and feeling guilty when she had to take a day off when her child was sick. Her experience enabled her to survive in her role, as a teacher and to switch off and over to her role as a mother once the school day ended. Rachel (PS3) also spoke about commitments as a mother, in that role and the commitments she faces as a principal. Síle (PS5) mentioned she was spending time with her family when she received a call in

relation to contact tracing from the HSE. Again, this emphasised the “always on” notion mentioned previously which became a part of teaching and leading during Covid-19. Gu (2014) relates the need for “everyday resilience” (Day and Gu, 2014) with the challenges specific to the professional phase of teachers’ and leaders’ lives. This requires teachers and leaders to maintain commitment and agency on a daily basis. This study viewed role specific resiliency as one aspect of resilience. Themes which emerged among roles in the present study will be discussed now beginning with principals.

5.5.2 Principals

While it should be stated that the questionnaire data did not suggest any significant statistical difference across roles, of the interviewees who rated their own resilience, principals averaged the highest rating of 8/10, followed by mainstream classroom teachers with 7.5/10, with SETs averaging 6.25/10. This is interesting in comparison to the INTO study (2015) which found principals were more likely to state their job had become less rewarding and their role had become more stressful. Arguably, a plausible explanation could be that principals believed they had good resilience but felt their role was stressful. The sustainability of leadership has been surveyed by the IPPN in 2022 and 2023 respectively. An average rating of 3.96/10 was given in 2022 from over 1000 respondents, while in 2023 this rating fell to 3.63/10 for all principals (IPPN, 2022; 2023). The present study heard from respondents about the vast nature of the role and the constant demands from multiple sources taking time away from the core focus of leading teaching and learning in schools. The Irish Principal and Deputy Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey (2022) identified the top two stressors as the sheer quantity of work and the lack of time to focus on teaching and learning.

The limited qualitative data in the present study is concurrent with the INTO study (2015) in terms of the job satisfaction of SETs who were more likely than class teachers to state their role had become more stressful. This could be attributed to the increased demands on SET teachers and the implementation of the revised SET model. Principals identified their strengths with ease and what supported their individual context to develop and grow. The INTO report (2022) found that principals spent on

average 13 hours and 38 minutes outside of normal school hours on school related work. This was on the basis of a five week study in the first term of the 2021/22 school year and acknowledges the results would differ in June for example when reports are due and recruitment may begin. This seems in line with the high workload elaborated on by the principals at interview stage of the present study.

5.5.3 Mainstream class teachers

By and large the sentiments of class teachers in the present study were that planning, paperwork and dealing with parents all become easier over time and with experience. This reflected the impact that experience has on teacher resilience. Many reported on sustaining resilience with experience, even in situations where they know they would have found difficulties previously. An experienced teacher who had returned to teaching in the mainstream after a career break explained they had a different approach to planning now. The value of organisation and giving yourself time at the start of the year to establish routines was also highlighted. Mainstream teachers at interview phase were more likely to discuss the reasons they felt challenged with relation to new platforms and changes in communication. It was worth noting that two of these teachers had never completed a full school year teaching in person.

5.5.4 SETs

Professional experience and PL opportunities support teacher resilience for all participants. This was commented on particularly by those in role as SET who had engaged in PL in the area of SEN. One SET who had previously worked in a special class in her school - Jacinta (SS4) celebrated the challenges she navigated and overcame in terms of her own resilience when asked to take on the special class role a number of years ago. It was a new venture for the school and limited PL was available. She commented on the language and terms used for appeals and paperwork which was new to her at the time. On reflection, she felt she left the class having grown so much and was embracing SET now confident from her experience and familiar with the terminology used. Bláithín (SS3) spoke about the role specific PL available now through education centres via webinars. Significant progress has been made with regard

to access to PL which was seen as a problem by Stevens and O' Moore (2009) and would have been predominantly in-person pre-Covid with the exception of online summer courses for EPV days. The range of courses available through the ESCI afforded teachers the opportunity to choose what PL to engage in. King and Stevenson (2017) discussed the prospects that teacher professional learning would have in expressing that "teachers need autonomy in relation to their own professional learning" (p. 658). Teaching is recognised as a complex set of personal and social processes and practices where taking time to think about personal professional learning may support the growth of teachers' professional identity (Fernandes *et al.*, 2021). Teachers at the questionnaire phase indicated they would like to engage in additional PL in specific areas of SET, such as setting up an Autism class, integrating into mainstream, collaboration for SET. Generally PL in wellbeing and SEN were sought after, with questionnaire respondents also indicating they would like additional PL in the PLC also.

5.5.5 Context specific

Contextual influences impact on the personal and professional lives of teachers (Gu and Li, 2013). Concurrent with the findings from Lemon and McDonough (2023), the present study found that participants demonstrated and navigated new skills particularly in the area of technology, becoming familiar with apps and programmes that were new to many, the use of technology and skills explored varied from school to school. Participants at the interview stage were asked if they engaged in reflective practice either formally or informally with seven across roles and cases, suggesting that daily reflective practice was embedded in their routine. Two case study schools had special classes (St Mary's NS and St Anne's GNS) while another principal mentioned their school would be opening a special class (Newtown School) but no date had been given and structurally they would need extra accommodations and space for this. Organisational structure led to some issues for St Mary's NS which was spread over multiple buildings.

Developing a strong sense of staff collegiality is recognised in socioeconomically deprived areas in building resilience and maintaining commitment

through challenging circumstances (Gu, 2014). In the present study, participants from St Stephen's BNS spoke frequently about classroom management and the supports they offer parents. The other DEIS school acknowledged challenging classes and classroom management but didn't labour on the supportive element.

Relationships between teachers, teachers and principals, teachers and parents and teachers and pupils were discussed in the literature relating to teacher resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012; Day and Gu, 2014; INTO, 2022). The positive collaborative benefits of engaging in the Droichead process were elaborated upon by teachers and principals. Mentoring was listed and suggested to sustain resilience in schools by multiple interviewees, mostly in role as teacher. Many schools adopted a mentoring approach to support new teachers, not necessarily NQTs in their schools. Subsequently, more than half the principals interviewed mentioned the benefits of coaching and engaging in leadership programmes from the CPSMA, CSL and the PDST (now a part of Oide). Mentoring was also mentioned by national questionnaire respondents, S13 explained, "my school has a formal and informal approach to mentoring. It's well-structured and actively advocated by the principal".

These are viewed as supportive contextual factors which positively influence teacher resilience with data from the questionnaires and interviews in the present study to support this claim. Workload, support from management and school culture were identified as the most important contextual factors (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019). The present study found the above plus communication to be highly significant contextual factors. Extending the realm of the Droichead process to the wider school context may support the development of context specific resilience and develop relationships and collaborative practices further.

5.5.6 Communication and school culture

Communication on all levels, between staff, parents, pupils varied from school to school. The need for clear communication and sharing messages simultaneously were highlighted to enhance current practice in schools. This was prevalent in terms of communication from the DE during Covid-19 about schools reopening. This finding is linked to the most recent INTO survey (INTO, 2022) where respondents supported the provision of guidance around school policies for communications with parents. The

report suggested where standard information was being shared by the DE for schools to send to parents it could have been communicated centrally by the DE using contact details from the Primary Online Database (POD).

Regarding school culture, there were significant differences reported across school contexts and cases as to how participants viewed and experienced the culture of their school. Some teachers who were relatively new to their setting were not fully sure of the way the school organised events and relied on the support of more experienced colleagues. This was due to the fact that they had not completed a full school year in the building due to Covid-19. School culture was linked with school size, relationships and organisational structure. A supportive school culture was viewed as enabling teacher resilience. Interview participants identified the role of school culture and the importance of clear lines of communication in supporting teachers to sustain or develop their resilience. Ensuring a positive culture was commented on by teachers and leaders. Principals felt it was important to make the effort to know the name of the parent you were going to call or meet – Rachel (PS3), to encourage one another, inquire about a sick child, parent of a staff member – Vincent (PS6). Similarly, teachers appreciated when leaders made an effort and remembered milestones in their personal lives.

In addition to the role and context specific findings, the most frequent resilience constructs presented by Mansfield *et al.* (2016b) as the systemic view of resilience also apply to the findings of the present study. The personal factors, contextual factors, strategies and outcomes viewed collectively pose a question in terms of who is responsible for resilience and provide a deeper view of the complexity of the construct of teacher resilience. The present study would include communication as a personal resource, organisational structure under contextual resources, career wide resiliency and developing personal resiliency as outcomes and support network, collaboration, experience and lived experience as factors under strategies. This dynamic interplay of personal and contextual factors is also recognised by Lemon and McDonough (2023). When interview respondents were asked if they have engaged in role or context specific courses they stated that they were one and the same. Beltman (2021) concludes that a systemic view has the “potential to reflect the real-world complexity of education

systems and ensure that the capacities, processes and outcomes of each part of the system are harnessed to develop resilience” (p. 22).

This segment considered how lived experience impacted on resilience for teachers and leaders. The role specific and context specific aspects of resilience were explained. Role specific job satisfaction was examined in terms of previous studies and the sustainability of the role of the principal was discussed. Contextual factors which influenced resilience in the present study aligned with Ainsworth and Oldfield, (2019), who identified workload, support from management and school culture as the most significant contributors. The present study made the case for the inclusion of communication on the list as it was referred to at questionnaire and interview level by participants and the importance of communication was highlighted during Covid-19. The key points from this chapter will now be addressed before the chapter is summarised.

5.6 Discussion summary

In addressing how systemic changes impacted the career wide resiliency of participants, what supported or hindered resilience and the impact of the participants’ lived experience were considered. The findings relating to the present study were discussed in terms of teacher resilience interwoven with literature to support the discussion. The main findings were that systemic changes did have an impact on the resilience of teachers and leaders, but not all systemic changes impacted equally. Teachers were clear on what areas they required further PL opportunities. There was little statistical difference between responses of participants in the national questionnaire regardless of role, experience or location, displaying a uniformity of agreement which was not expected. There was an alignment of findings between questionnaires and interviews regarding teacher resilience, with the interviews from case study schools further expanding on what fostered or inhibited resilience for teachers and principals.

5.7 Conclusion

This multi-site case study aimed to explore the impact of systemic changes on the career wide resiliency of participants in the Irish primary context from the

perspectives of different role holders (namely, principal, mainstream class teacher and SET). Through a two phased process, the opinions of teachers and leaders in the Leinster region initially, and then further afield were included. The factors that inhibit and enhance resiliency were discussed as well as supports to sustain career wide resiliency. Teachers and leaders were asked to question their own reflective practice, and to consider the role of experience and leadership on teacher resilience. The findings from this research study depict a challenging time for teachers and leaders in the final term of the 2020/2021 school year. Three distinctive characteristics of teacher resilience: context specific (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012); role specific where teachers' self-efficacy (Kitching, Morgan and O' Leary, 2009) and job satisfaction, influence resilient qualities and thirdly, everyday resilience (Day and Gu, 2014) are explored in terms of teachers' lived experience of their role. The final chapter which follows, provides a conclusion to this research study. It summarises the literature, methodological approach chosen and research findings of the study, highlights the significance of the study, acknowledges the limitations and presents proposals for future research in this area alongside policy and practice implications for primary education.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will summarise the findings from the study, considering once again the research questions, new information yielded from the quantitative and qualitative data and its significance, the limitations of the study and suggestions and considerations for future research are offered. This study was born from the researcher's interest in the concept of sustaining teacher resilience throughout one's teaching career. Using a mixed-methods case study approach across six primary schools in the Leinster region, this research sought to investigate teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes from 2016-2021.

6.2 Research Questions

The main research question (RQ) was: What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?

The subsidiary research questions were:

1. What supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals?
2. What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?
3. How does lived experience impact on resilience for teachers and principals?

6.3 Summary of Research Approach

This research comprised a mixed-methods multi-site case study including six primary schools in the Leinster region and was followed up by a national questionnaire in June 2021. The research established current perspectives from participants with varying levels of experience and focused on school principals and teachers (mainstream and SET). The research concentrated on how participant teachers and principals perceived and sustained their resilience at different career phases in the face of constant challenges, policy implementation and work demands. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two, combined the *Four Dimensional framework of Teacher Resilience*, Mansfield *et al.* (2012) - Figure 2.2 (p. 29; 51) with the Boon (2021) *Lived-in Resilience Framework* - Figure 2.1 (p. 25; 51). A combination of the two frameworks establishes how experiences influence or hinder the capacity to be resilient through

various career stages. A pragmatic worldview was adopted. Pragmatism for the mixed methods researcher, opens the door to multiple methods, worldviews and assumptions as well as utilising various data collection methods and analysis (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 11).

The study focused on the lived experience of participants teaching or leading over the previous five school years from 2016-2021. Overall, there were 137 respondents across questionnaires, with a detailed breakdown of respondents shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 respectively. In total 16 principals, 61 mainstream class teachers and 60 SETs answered the questionnaire. The original questionnaire contained thirty-one questions, with a mixture of open ended and closed or multiple-choice responses. The national questionnaire was circulated in June 2021 and consisted of thirty-five questions, and contained additional questions relating to school type, size, and ethos for example. This information was analysed using IBM SPSS (Version 28.0.1.1). At the interview stage, 16 participants from six case study schools took part, this included six principals, five mainstream class teachers and five SETs. Interview data analysis was supported using NVivo software (Version 20.4.1) as per the Braun and Clarke reflexive approach to thematic analysis (2006; 2022).

As mentioned previously, this study drew on previous research into teacher resilience by Mansfield *et al.* (2012) in terms of asking such questions as; “How would you describe a resilient teacher?” and “What skills, attributes or characteristics would a resilient teacher possess or be able to demonstrate?” (p. 359). The INTO study (2015) influenced questions on how teaching has changed in the past five years and enhancing job satisfaction. The evolving concept of teacher resilience as a dynamic quality (Gu, 2014), multifaceted (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012), a construct that can be nurtured over time (Mansfield *et al.*, 2016a; Beltman *et al.*, 2018:), through professional and personal challenges is recognised by Day and Gu (2014). They determine teachers have to be committed and resilient in order to sustain their sense of effectiveness in emotionally and intellectually challenging and evolving work contexts. The constant “intellectual and emotional challenges” give rise to the term “everyday resilience” (p. 141). In embracing the notion of lifelong resilience Day and Gu acknowledge that across different career phases, different levels of competence and commitment are required and teachers’ capacity to be resilient can fluctuate. The three distinctive characteristics of teacher resilience are presented as context specific (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012), role specific (Kitching, Morgan and O’ Leary, 2009) and everyday resilience (Day and Gu,

2014). These are explored through the substantial body of research studies examining teacher resilience and in the present study.

6.4 Summary of the Key Findings in relation to the Research Questions

Systemic changes impacted the resilience of principals, mainstream class teachers and SETs throughout different career phases, regardless of role or school type, but some were deemed more challenging than others. This was measured through responses at questionnaire and interview phases of the study. Key findings to the main research question and subsidiary questions will be addressed beginning with the main research question.

6.4.1 What are teachers' perceptions of systemic change and their own resilience, with particular reference to role, context and career stage?

Teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs) and principals professional roles were impacted by the pillars of systemic change (Chapter One, Table 1.1, p. 7). This organised the systemic changes into legislative, curricular, DE policy documents and TC policy directive. Several policy documents were seen to warrant immediate impact and others gave time to organise and implement. Feeling supported was acknowledged as a positive and contributing factor to increased teacher resilience, this presented in data from teachers with all levels of experience, from NQTs to teachers and principals of 30 years plus. Teachers, leaders, principals need to feel trusted and supported, the role of the chairperson of the BOM in supporting the principal, the BOM in supporting the school and a need for the DE to review its role in supporting teachers and leaders are all raised in the questionnaire and interview data. The mixed reaction to the SET model and the positive impact of Droichead on participants will now be discussed.

6.4.2 The SET model

Within SET, additional time for collaboration is sought and adequate support, more teaching resources and external support from professionals to meet the needs of learners is highlighted. The lack of PL opportunities for specialised settings and at times the lack of understanding in SEN from other teachers, including principals was seen as a frustration to many and impacted on teacher resilience. This was further enhanced by a lack of understanding for the role of teachers (mainstream class teachers and SETs)

and leaders in relation to implementing the SET model and a lack of support from agencies.

6.4.3 Positive impact of Droichead

The vast majority of participants found that Droichead (TC, 2017) did not challenge them and was a supportive factor for developing resilience. This emphasises the collaborative nature of Droichead, where teachers felt valued and supported through their induction phase. Droichead (TC, 2017) was seen as a successful initiative despite initial reluctance especially from principals and the INTO (INTO, 2016). Findings from the present study indicated that engagement in the process had led to increased collaboration among all teachers, not just NQTs, with a positive impact on school culture and relationships also noted. In 2021, the Droichead process became the sole route for induction for primary and post-primary NQTs in Ireland. Just as the present study examined the lived experience of participants in terms of career wide resiliency, the DEEPEN report considered the lived experience of the Droichead teacher induction process. More than half of PST members who participated in the project felt their involvement in Droichead had resulted in increased collaborative and networking opportunities which supports the findings of participants in the present study (Uí Choistealbha *et al.*, 2021).

6.4.4 What supported resilience for teachers and principals

The first subsidiary question asked what supported or fostered resilience for teachers and principals and the following section will now summarise these. As previously outlined in Chapter Five (5.3), the following factors supported teacher resilience; the introduction of the Droichead process (see 5.3.1, p. 135); adapting to the move to online teaching and learning during Covid-19 (see 5.3.2, p. 136); relationships and collegiality within the school setting (see 5.3.3, p. 137) and being part of a support network internally and externally to your context, collaboration between teachers, positive relationships and technology, and leadership support (see 5.3.4, p. 138). The views of participants emphasised the importance of relationships and collegiality within the school setting and leadership support which will now be explained.

6.4.5 Relationships and collegiality within the school setting

As previously discussed, schools of varying size and location can be understood as communities, where different relationships exist. These include but are not limited to teacher – pupil relationships, teacher – teacher relationships, teacher – other staff members, teacher - parents, and external relationships with friends and families outside of school. Findings from the present study indicated principals support their teachers and pupils in terms of resilience. However, this becomes a challenge if principals do not value PL or understand the need for specific PL in areas such as SEN. The value of PL for participants was also acknowledged in supporting their resilience and will be summarised now.

6.4.6 Professional Learning (PL)

Participants indicated that PL opportunities for particular systemic changes were more sought than others in order to support resilience, for example preferences for PL for wellbeing were more than 50% higher than preferences for additional support with Droichead (TC, 2017). Participants suggested PL in the areas of wellbeing, PLC (NCCA, 2019), the SET model (DES, 2017a) and digital supports were necessary to support teacher resilience to navigate systemic changes.

6.4.7 Technology

Technological advancements which were sped up with the move to online learning were seen as positive changes and teachers felt a sense of mastery and achievement once they navigated them successfully. The use of technology during the pandemic, resulted in an increase in communication and interaction between teachers, teachers and parents and teachers and pupils which was seen as a positive in building relationships and an understanding of the work of teachers (St Stephen's BNS).

6.4.8 What inhibited resilience for teachers and principals?

Factors which were found to inhibit teacher resilience are outlined in Chapter Five (5.4) and included: stressful challenges, relationships, school size, a lack of access to PL, isolation during Covid-19, barriers to collaboration and struggling to maintain a work-life balance. The rollout of the PLC (NCCA, 2019) and online teaching and learning will be considered in the sections that follow.

6.4.9 Inhibiting resilience – the rollout of the PLC

An almost equal amount of teachers indicated that the PLC (NCCA, 2019) and policies were challenging, very challenging or extremely challenging. The PLC is viewed as being different as curriculum implementation permits collaboration, this is different to the structured collaboration engaged in as part of the Droichead process. Collaboration in terms of the PLC was impacted by Covid-19 in terms of teachers gathering and working together at different class levels or in class bands.

6.4.10 Online teaching and learning during Covid-19

The move to online teaching during the pandemic was seen as the most challenging systemic change, which isn't surprising given the questionnaires were shared between April and July 2021 and yet participants navigated these challenges and successfully provided online teaching.

6.4.11 Solutions offered to enable resilience to occur

Solutions offered by responding teachers to support teacher resilience included dedicated planning time in school and the reduction of paperwork which was concurrent with the INTO report (2022). Respondents indicated they drew on multiple factors to sustain resilience, hence employing a multidimensional approach and developed new strategies to overcome the challenge of online teaching, which was in line with the findings reported by Lemon and McDonough (2023). Questionnaire data indicated that being flexible/adaptable was rated as a key contributor to teacher resilience. Other areas include having confidence and self-belief, while being positive or optimistic despite challenges was also recognised as a significant aspect. In terms of how teaching has changed in the past five years, questionnaire respondents pinpointed; demanding, hectic and challenging as the most significant challenging aspects, identical to the INTO (2015) study. This showed although the percentages (Table 5.3) were slightly different that teaching has not become easier and regardless of experience, respondents found their roles more demanding, hectic and challenging than five years previously.

6.4.12 The role of lived experience in terms of impact on resilience

The lived experience of questionnaire respondents and interviewees was the third subsidiary research question and findings were presented in terms of role and

context factors. Teacher confidence and job satisfaction play into role specific resilience, while the culture and organisation within a school relate to context specific resilience. These will now be presented.

6.4.13 The impact of school culture on teacher resilience

The concept of culture extended beyond the understanding of culture as the ethos, mission and values of a school to include supportive and positive relationships, the shared vision and values of professionals working in a school, the concept of school culture and school community being strongly aligned and the sharing of contextual knowledge among teachers. This interpretation of school culture by the participants in the present study, resembles the findings of the *DEEPEN* report (Uí Choistealbha *et al.*, 2021) who share their participants viewed culture as a shared value with PST members sharing contextual knowledge with NQTs. Interviewees shared many references to supporting the holistic development of pupils and going above and beyond the call of duty to support pupils and their parents. This led in turn to great job satisfaction when teachers felt children and particularly those with SEN had progressed and had succeeded with a goal or target. Teachers' emotions are at the heart of teaching and educational change affects the relationships that play out within schools. Educational change efforts affect the relationships between pupils, parents and each other (Hargreaves, 2005).

6.4.14 Reflective practice

Teachers and leaders engaged in reflective practice which helped them assess current practice and support their resilience, some did this formally and others more informally. Reflection is seen as an “integral aspect” of self-care needed to build resilience and wellbeing (McKay and Barton, 2018, p. 357).

6.4.15 Job satisfaction and teacher resilience

Interviewees who rated their job satisfaction, suggested the job satisfaction of SETs was lower than their mainstream counterparts, whilst principals had the highest job satisfaction, this was across school types and regardless of levels of experience in the role. It is important to acknowledge that not all interviewees gave a rating and this did not reach the threshold of statistical significance in terms of difference with regards the questionnaire which reached a broader demographic of respondents. Nonetheless the

implications for this have to be to examine the role of the SET in schools, to review the implementation of the revised SET model and provide additional PL opportunities in the area of SEN to all teachers and principals. An emerging finding from questionnaire and interview data suggested there was little difference between job satisfaction and school type.

6.5 Synthesis of Findings

The findings from Chapter Four were presented under six key themes: career wide resiliency; challenges; leadership; collaboration; role specific and context specific. These themes were examined under each RQ underpinning this cross-case study in Chapter Five. The research presents a range of findings which include:

- A comparative study into teacher resilience of primary principals and teachers across roles as mainstream class teachers and SETs examining their experience teaching or leading from 2016-2021.
- An understanding as to how the Mansfield *et al.* (2012) *Four Dimensional Resilience Framework* and the Boon (2021) *Lived-in Resilience Framework* can be applied to the RQs and mapped to the participant responses.
- An analysis of supports for teacher resilience in recognition of the challenges faced by teachers and leaders on the ground during this unprecedented time in Irish education and an acknowledgement for the supports identified to enhance teaching and leading going forward to continue to maintain and sustain teacher resilience.
- Positive teacher attitudes towards the Droichead process and the role it has had in leading to enhanced collaboration and “opening doors” among teachers in schools nationwide.

This study is built on previous work of Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Day and Gu, 2014; McKay and Barton, 2018; Peixoto *et al.*, 2020 as well as drawing on evidence and building on the INTO reports (2015; 2022). The information gathered through this research helps in developing further understanding with regards teacher resilience. From the perspective of the quantitative data, a non-parametric independent sample median test found no significant differences between the responses of participants of the national questionnaire to all of the Likert scale questions according to type of school,

school size, years of experience and current position. This might suggest that demographic information did not impact significantly on participants' resilience. While not a representative sample, there were still a large number of respondents (n=106) for the national questionnaire, who worked in a wide variety of school contexts, across all roles.

While there were more negative and inhibiting factors identified by participants, this also shows the respondents ability to articulate and discuss current challenges. The changing nature of teaching, with increased use of technology and an always on culture was linked with increased communication from parents. While some schools saw this as a negative, a DEIS band 1 school saw this as a positive, a way to build connections and showcase the work being done via social media apps and educational learning platforms.

Career wide resiliency was associated with feeling valued within the system, having opportunities to build internal and external networks of support, sharing professional knowledge among teachers and the accessibility of webinars ran through the ESCI was acknowledged as a huge support for rural participants and respondents with young families and other obligations. Systemic changes did impact the resilience of teachers, but they did not impact equally. Droichead (TC, 2017) was seen to impact favourably on teacher resilience. The revised SET model (DES, 2017a) generally did not challenge resilience, and yet in relation to SEN a number of participants indicated that this was a preference for PL. This suggests that further PL in SEN is necessary to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom. While Covid-19 and remote learning were seen as most challenging, participants demonstrated resilience in navigating the move to online learning and maintaining a sense of continuity for their pupils. This was not without challenges, but as a whole teachers and principals demonstrated great resilience during this time and on reflection in the study teachers seemed proud of their efforts. Further PL for the PLC (NCCA, 2019) is sought by participants also. Collaborative endeavours to implement the PLC were impacted by Covid-19 and the organisational structure in schools.

6.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations identified relate to recruitment, response rate and questions asked. Although the multi-site case study involved six schools, the researcher contacted two hundred and ten schools by email, with follow up phone calls made to over one

hundred and eighty schools in an attempt to recruit case study schools. As mentioned in Chapter Three, five was the target initially. Once the first four schools were recruited the researcher was eager to have another DEIS band 1 school and large school where possible as at that stage it was unclear how the findings would be presented and in terms of case comparison the researcher was hoping to have schools which could be compared favourably. Due to the time of the year (term three of a particularly challenging school year), staff absences etc this was a low response rate (2.9%) and it took considerably longer to recruit schools than I had initially expected.

The researcher did not ask questionnaire respondents to give a rating for their job satisfaction out of 10, it was also not mandatory for interviewees to explicitly give a number for this answer so this means the information, while reflective of some of the participants in the study does not reflect all participants. While the case study was small, it does offer rich insights to the lives of the respondents. The national questionnaire did reach a broader demographic in a short period. It would have been interesting to interview any willing participants but not feasible for one researcher. On a re-examination of the questionnaire it may have been preferable to ask independent questions regarding the culture and leadership in schools instead of a combined question. In this open-ended question some respondents commented on either the culture or leadership of their school.

6.7 Recommendations for Practice, Policy and Future Research

Several research findings from this study have implications for practice, policy and subsequent future research in the field of teacher resilience and these will now be addressed. This study has important implications going forward for policy, practice and research in terms of supporting teachers and leaders through the researcher's proposed framework, decided upon as an outcome of the findings of the research. Given the huge and deserved focus on wellbeing promotion and resilience in schools for pupils and teachers, the findings of the study will be of interest to all those working in primary school contexts in order to support the embedding of a School Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process by 2023 (DES, 2018b).

6.7.1 Recommendations for Practice

An emerging theme among interview respondents was the culture of welcoming and catering for NQTs in school, which through the Droichead process (TC, 2017) is

acknowledged as being supportive and encouraging. The teachers from case study two (St John's NS) raised an interesting question in that what systems or supports are there for more experienced teachers at present to address their resilience. Interview respondents generally felt that this support was either present in your school in the form of support or a support network and dependent on the leader of the school who was seen as a facilitator and enabler in the resilience building process. PL for teachers and leaders on the importance of teacher resilience and the factors that support and inhibit teacher resilience could be in the form of webinars or presentations or department approved summer courses. Engagement in professional learning communities could also be a suggestion for building awareness of teacher resilience. PL is a collaborative effort and can be greatly enhanced by learning with as well as from others (Swaffield, 2018) and a professional learning community would provide a suitable co-operative learning platform. The Droichead process is a form of collaborative learning which includes observation of practice, not common practice in schools outside of Droichead. This shows that teachers and principals in this study valued it, found it supportive for resilience and engaged in the process whether they were part of the PST or not. Uí Choistealbha *et al.*, (2021) acknowledge the role of the wider school community or professional learning community in the framework for induction and the collaborative potential for a professional learning community in the induction of NQTs. The present study views the evolution of the Droichead process as a model which could be used for mentoring, introducing new initiatives in a structured, systematic way to avoid overwhelming teachers, expanding on the professional learning community as a means to foster teacher resilience. Providing teachers with sustained support in the areas of PL identified through the present research project; SEN and wellbeing and any further additional identified areas will build competency and confidence in these areas which should in turn impact positively on teacher resilience. Subject specific sustained support is available from Oide in the areas of Literacy, Numeracy etc. The NCSE offer support to teachers in SEN but a more whole school focus for sustained support may be needed to create inclusive schools and empower teachers to support the diverse range of learners in every classroom.

6.7.2 Recommendations for Policy

It is apparent that participants feel PL in the area of wellbeing should be provided, both in terms of teacher wellbeing and in supporting pupils' to develop their

own wellbeing. Suggestions were made to incorporate a wellbeing aspect to the summer courses offered to teachers for EPV days. A rollout of whole school PL similar to the PLC or PMC may support teachers and principals with their wellbeing, to be able to suitably support pupils' wellbeing.

Teachers with experience and additional PL and qualifications in SEN suggest availability to specific PL courses and seek to bring about a greater understanding of SEN generally for teachers, in particular those in mainstream roles. Data gathered in the study suggests that those with additional PL in SEN felt confident to undertake and support colleagues collaboratively with children with SEN. Interviewees in role as SET were all very experienced teachers with most having additional qualifications in SEN and leadership roles within their school, either formal leadership positions such as deputy principal or assistant principal (AP) or members of the PST in their school. The call for PL for their mainstream counterparts is in line with Circular 13/2017 (DES, 2017a) which places a responsibility on class teachers to provide suitable teaching and learning opportunities to enable each learner in their class to achieve their potential, including pupils with SEN. While the revised SET model emphasises the importance of collaboration, in reality, meaningful collaboration was not the norm in participating schools during the 2020/21 school year.

6.7.3 Recommendations for Future Research

It would be interesting to replicate the present study in 2026 as a longitudinal study where participants' resilience, job satisfaction and experience is monitored. With an increased movement in teachers changing schools and with some senior interviewees expected to reach retirement age it may not be possible to re-interview the same teachers and leaders and their roles may have changed, for example, mainstream class teachers may have moved into role as SET or been promoted to principal, teachers may have left teaching altogether for secondment opportunities, for promoted posts in a different school or to change profession entirely. A number of participants mentioned that they desired a change of career into other avenues of education outside of teaching, lecturing, PL in music therapy, moving into a state body, pursuing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology. It would be interesting to share a link to the survey on social media platforms typically associated with the educational domain such as Twitter and LinkedIn and include a question for participants who may have been involved in 2021 and indeed for any other respondents to see if their role has changed.

Further studies could take into account teacher shortages, the introduction of the PMC (NCCA, 2023), the rollout of the school inclusion model, languages connect strategy, the impact of Covid-19 for teaching and learning, catering for pupils from Ukraine/EAL, review of SET allocations (2022), Circular 54/2022 exemptions from the study of Irish (DE, 2022d) and the review of Aistear (NCCA). Future research could also establish the resilience of teachers who have returned from teaching abroad and ask them to compare teaching in Ireland and in other regions in terms of supports available to enhance teacher resilience as a concept.

While education based social media platforms such as Class Dojo and Seesaw were mainly seen as positive contributors to an increase in communication between home and school which facilitate open lines of communication it would be interesting to see across school types how respondents view the accessible nature of the apps, the barriers they have broken in terms of translation and facilitating contact at any time, from any place and how this might test teachers' agency or resilience. Individual schools maintain social media policies and many schools including the researcher's own school employ quiet hours on these apps.

6.8 Dissemination opportunities

Initial thoughts on opportunities to disseminate my research would be through webinars and discussions with teachers and principals. These may come in the first instance through the use of Croke Park hours. Many schools, my own included are often looking for experts to come in and lead engaging PL sessions with staff. Having established a good relationship with many of the directors of the education centres through my previous webinar experience as a teacher educator, facilitating on the topic of dyslexia and a literacy series, I have made connections and built a reputation for sharing knowledge and resources with teachers. The commitment of teachers to attend in high numbers across a number of sessions is testament to the interest and dedication of teachers to support the pupils they work with.

I would like to visit schools as part of Croke Park hours to facilitate a discussion around teacher resilience and engage with teachers and leaders as professionals to cultivate and sustain their own resiliency or offer zoom consultations where distance may be an issue given that I am also teaching full time. Due to my school's proximity to DCU, there may be an opportunity to present to student teachers at undergraduate and post graduate level on the topic of teacher resilience and specifically career wide

resiliency to empower them on their teaching journey and to disseminate to a wider audience.

With support and guidance from my supervisors I would be interested in writing journal articles and be open to presenting at relevant conferences such as ILSA, SCoTENS conference, Féilte or the INTO Education conference on the topic of wellbeing and teacher resilience.

6.9 Conclusion

The outcome of this research shows the skills and strategies of participants overlap the four dimensions of teacher resilience: emotional; motivational; profession related and social (Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Lemon and McDonough 2023). This researcher found the lived experience of participants impacts their career wide resiliency and the systemic changes can also affect all four dimensions depending on role, context and resilience. The many challenges which test resilience have been identified and debated, the impact of Covid-19 resonated with all involved in providing for teaching and learning and with those who continue to support the adverse impact on student progression. The systemic changes were identified and acknowledged in terms of how they affected respondents, with calls for additional training for wellbeing, support for policy implementation to combat the pressures of policy (Day and Gu, 2014) and ongoing PL to embed the PLC. The capacity to be resilient was acknowledged by research participants as influenced by the school culture, colleagues and the quality of leadership, with building and sustaining career wide resiliency viewed as the ultimate goal. The dynamic interplay of personal and contextual factors is recognised (Lemon and McDonough, 2023), the role of teacher resilience in maintaining and restoring wellbeing and in turn aligning wellbeing as an outcome of the resilience process are acknowledged (Hascher, Beltman and Mansfield, 2021). Ultimately, this research viewed how systemic changes impacted on career wide resiliency in the form of policy, curricula changes, and unprecedented events. The aspects articulated by Day and Gu (2014) to foster resilience of social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure were experienced by participants and viewed alongside communication, feeling supported and a positive school culture in terms of their lived experience of creating and sustaining career wide resiliency.

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Appendix: A - Formal letter of approval from DCU Research Ethics Committee

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Julie Ann Fleming
School of Inclusive and Special Education

Dr. Órla Ní Bhroin
School of Inclusive and Special Education

Dr. Aoife Brennan
School of Inclusive and Special Education

1st March 2021

REC Reference: DCUREC/2021/033

Proposal Title: Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.

Applicant(s): Julie Ann Fleming, Dr. Órla Ní Bhroin, and Dr. Aoife Brennan

Dear Colleagues,

Further to expedited review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Geraldine Scanlon'.

Dr Geraldine Scanlon
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee




Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

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E research@dcu.ie
www.dcu.ie

Appendix: B - Plain Language Statement: For Participants

	DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY
	Plain Language Statement: For Participants

Name of researcher: Julie Ann Fleming

Contact details: julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie

The research title is: *Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.*

The researcher/ principal investigator is a 3rd year EdD student in DCU Institute of Education.

Ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the DCU Research Ethics Committee.

Dear Participant,

As part of my studies on the Professional Doctorate of Education (EdD) in DCU Institute of Education, I am conducting a multi-site case study in five primary schools examining teacher resilience and thoughts on resilience from the perspectives of principals, mainstream class teachers and special education teachers. The study comprises a questionnaire initially, followed up with semi-structured interviews after a few weeks. The online questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and will be anonymous. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information regarding the participants' views on resilience. Included at the end of this questionnaire will be a live link to my email address should you wish to express an interest in participating at the interview stage. The semi-structured interviews will be facilitated through the researcher's DCU Zoom platform and take no longer than one hour. These individual interviews will provide more detailed information on building and sustaining teacher resilience.

As the questionnaires and interviews will yield some personal data I am obligated to explain data protection procedures and GDPR compliance in relation to personal data. DCU IoE will be the Data Controller, and in order to maintain confidentiality only the researcher will maintain access to the raw data generated from the project, with her supervisors having access to the anonymized version. While every effort will be made to protect participants' identities, participants may not be anonymous to other people within the setting or to people familiar with the setting in which they work. However, data collected will only be used for the purposes as outlined and for which consent has been obtained.

Information gathered at the initial questionnaire phase will be coded manually and statistical information will be analysed using the Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS). After the completion of the interviews using the DCU Zoom platform, the interviews will be transcribed and checked with you before being anonymised and coded using letters and numbers.

The schools and participants involved will not be identified and no real names will be used in the thesis or in any presentations or publications arising from it. Information will be held until the successful defence and submission of the researcher's thesis which is expected to be by Autumn 2022, after which time the researcher will delete any digital data from her DCU Google Drive and check with an IT specialist to make sure this has been completed.

DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward (data.protection@dcu.ie Ph: 7005118 / 7008257. Should you have reason to, you are entitled to lodge a complaint with the [Irish Data Protection Commission](#). You have the right to access your own personal data and this can be done by contacting the DCU Data Protection Unit.

The potential risks are limited to you, given your role as primary school teachers and principals, although, I acknowledge that the subject nature could result in participants becoming upset at a recollection of a past negative experience. Should this happen I will follow protocols outlined in my ethical approval, namely reminding you of your right to withdraw from participating in this project without any consequences. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Interview participants may withdraw consent at any time, and I will remove all data from my study. For online questionnaires, once participants have submitted their form, they can no longer withdraw as their specific response form cannot be tracked as responses are anonymous.

Expected benefits for you as participants include being more aware of your own capacity to demonstrate resilience and to provide colleagues with support to facilitate their own resilience development.

Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. A summary of the findings will be made available to participants on request. If you are happy to participate, please complete the consent form and return to me via my DCU email: julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie.

Yours sincerely,


Julie Ann Fleming

Julie Ann Fleming

If you have concerns about this study and 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, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

Appendix: C - Informed Consent Form: For Principals/Board of Management

	DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY
	Informed Consent Form: For Principals/Board of Management

Research Study Title

Name of researcher: Julie Ann Fleming

Contact details: julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie

The research title is: *Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.*

The researcher/ principal investigator is a 3rd year EdD student in DCU Institute of Education.

Ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the DCU Research Ethics Committee.

Purpose of the research

The aim of this research study is to ascertain the views of principals and teachers around teacher resilience in light of systemic changes that have impacted their working contexts in the past five school years. The study hopes to examine career wide resiliency in teaching in order to develop a framework to support teachers to demonstrate and build their capacity to be resilient.

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

This mixed methods study will combine a questionnaire in phase one with a semi-structured interview in phase two. The researcher will reflect on the findings from the questionnaires before conducting the interviews via the DCU Zoom platform with a triad of teachers from each of the five case study schools, namely the principal, mainstream class teacher and special education teacher.

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 understand the information provided in relation to data protection

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*

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am aware that if participants from my school agree to partake in this study that they will have the right to withdraw their consent up to the time of submission of the questionnaire and at any stage in relation to the interview. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

Arrangements to protect confidentiality of data, including when raw data will be destroyed, noting that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations has been explained to me.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to my school taking part in this research project.


Principal/BOM:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

Appendix: D - Informed Consent Form: For Interview Participants

	DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY
	Informed Consent Form: For Interview Participants

Research Study Title

Name of researcher: Julie Ann Fleming

Contact details: julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie

The research title is: *Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.*

The researcher/ principal investigator is a 3rd year EdD student in DCU Institute of Education.

Ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the DCU Research Ethics Committee.

Purpose of the research

The aim of this research study is to ascertain the views of principals and teachers around teacher resilience in light of systemic changes that have impacted their working contexts in the past five school years. The study hopes to examine career wide resiliency in teaching in order to develop a framework to support teachers to demonstrate and build their capacity to be resilient.

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

This mixed methods study will combine a questionnaire in phase one with a semi-structured interview in phase two. The researcher will reflect on the findings from the questionnaires before conducting the interviews via the DCU Zoom platform with a triad of teachers from each of the five case study schools, namely the principal, mainstream class teacher and special education teacher.

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 understand the information provided in relation to data protection

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 my interview will be audiotaped

Yes/No

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to partake in this study that I have the right to withdraw my consent up to the time of submission of the questionnaire and at any stage in relation to the interview. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

Arrangements to protect confidentiality of data, including when raw data will be destroyed, noting that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations has been explained to me.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

Appendix: E - Case Study Questionnaire

Teacher Resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.

Anonymous Online Questionnaire

My name is Julie Ann Fleming and I am conducting this research as part of my Doctorate of Education (EdD) in DCU Institute of Education.

Teacher resilience concerns an individual's capacity to "maintain positive attributes in the face of a range of challenges, pressures and demands" which are associated with their work (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018). Teachers are faced with constant "intellectual and emotional challenges" which gives rise to the term "everyday resilience" Day and Gu (2014). Resilient principals consider the learning needs of pupils and the professional growth of teachers (Day and Gu, 2014).

*** Indicates required question**

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY - Plain Language Statement for Participants

Research Study Title:

Name of Researcher: Julie Ann Fleming

Contact Details: julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie

Research Title: Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.

The researcher/principal investigator is a 3rd year EdD student in DCU Institute of Education.

Dear Participant,

As part of my studies on the Professional Doctorate of Education (EdD) in DCU Institute of Education, I am conducting a multi-site case study in five primary schools examining teacher resilience and thoughts on resilience from the perspectives of principals, mainstream class teachers and special education teachers. The study comprises a questionnaire initially, followed up with semi-structured interviews with three participants from each school type. The online questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and will be anonymous. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect information regarding the participants' views on resilience. Included at the end of this questionnaire will be a live link to my email address should you wish to express an interest in participating at the interview stage. The semi-structured interviews will be facilitated through the researcher's DCU Zoom platform and take no longer than one hour. These individual interviews will provide more detailed information on building and sustaining teacher resilience.

As the questionnaires and interviews will yield some personal data I am obligated to explain data protection procedures and GDPR compliance in relation to personal data. DCU IoE will be the Data Controller, and in order to maintain confidentiality only the researcher will maintain access to the raw data generated from the project, with her supervisors having access to the anonymised version. While every effort will be made to protect participants' identities, participants may not be anonymous to other people within the setting or to people familiar with the setting in which they work. However, data collected will only be used for the purposes as outlined and for which consent has been obtained.

Information gathered at the initial questionnaire phase will be coded manually and statistical information will be analysed using the Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS). After the completion of the interviews using the DCU Zoom platform, the interviews will be transcribed and checked with you before being anonymised and coded using letters and numbers.

The schools and participants involved will not be identified and no real names will be used in the thesis or in any presentations or publications arising from it. Information will be held until the successful defence and submission of the researcher's thesis which is expected to be by Autumn 2022, after which time the researcher will delete any digital data from her DCU Google Drive and check with an IT specialist to make sure this has been completed.

DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward (data.protection@dcu.ie)

Ph: 7005118 / 7008257. Should you have reason to, you are entitled to lodge a complaint with the Irish Data Protection Commission. You have the right to access your own personal data and this can be done by contacting the DCU Data Protection Unit.

The potential risks are limited to you, given your role as primary school teachers and principals, although, I acknowledge that the subject nature could result in participants becoming upset at a recollection of a past negative experience. Should this happen I will follow protocols outlined in my ethical approval, namely reminding you of your right to withdraw from participating in this project without any consequences. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Interview participants may withdraw consent at any time, and I will remove all data from my study. For online questionnaires, once participants have submitted their form, they can no longer withdraw as their specific response form cannot be tracked as responses are anonymous.

Expected benefits for you as participants include being more aware of your own capacity to demonstrate resilience and to provide colleagues with support to facilitate their own resilience development.

Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. A summary of the findings will be made available to participants on request. If you are happy to participate, please complete the consent form below. You will not be able to access the questionnaire until you have agreed to all items and indicated your consent.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Ann Fleming

If you have concerns about this study and 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, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY - Anonymous Online Consent Form

Research Study Title:

Name of Researcher: Julie Ann Fleming

Contact Details: julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie

Research Title: Teacher resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.

The researcher/principal investigator is a 3rd year EdD student in DCU Institute of Education.

Purpose of the research:

The aim of this research study is to ascertain the views of principals and teachers around teacher resilience in light of systemic changes that have impacted their working contexts in the past five

school years. The study hopes to examine career wide resiliency in teaching in order to develop a framework to support teachers to demonstrate and build their capacity to be resilient.

**Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement:
Participant - please complete the following (by clicking Yes/No for each question)**

1. I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

2. I understand the information provided*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

3. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

4. I understand the information provided in relation to data protection*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

5. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

6. I understand I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

7. I have read and understand the arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

8. I have read and understand confirmations relating to any other relevant information as indicated in the PLS*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

9. I consent to participate in this research study*

Mark only one oval.

Yes/No

Skip to question 10

Teacher Profile

10. What best describes your gender?*

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self describe

11. If you opted to self-describe above and would like to elaborate please do:

12. How many years are you teaching?*

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 20 years
- 21 - 30 years
- 31 years plus

13. Indicate your teaching qualifications and any postgraduate qualifications obtained in the area of education:*

14. How long are you working in your current school?*

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 20 years
- 21 - 30 years
- 31 years plus

15. I am currently working as:*

Mark only one oval.

- Administrative principal
- Teaching principal (mainstream)
- Teaching principal (SET)
- Mainstream classroom teacher
- Special Education Teacher (SET)

16. Do you have intentions to upskill, apply for promotion, change schools or leave teaching? Please provide details:*

Resilience

17. Choose three characteristics which can influence a teacher's capacity for resilience in terms of which are most important to you.*

Tick all that apply.

- Work context
- Well-being
- Values
- Life changes
- Relationships
- Commitment
- Unprecedented events
- Academic optimism
- Sense of self-identity
- Self efficacy
- Job fulfilment
- Beliefs

18. Do you feel there is a member of staff you could approach for support or advice on a personal or professional matter in your school?*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

19. Is this person *

Mark only one oval.

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Teacher
- Other

20. How does the school culture and leadership of your school impact on your professional life? *

21. There have been many changes and challenges in primary schools from 2016-2021. Rate how these systemic changes have impacted on your capability to teach/lead in the context of your particular role: *

Tick all that apply.

	Does not chall...	Challenges sli...	Challenging	Very challengi...	Extremely chal...
Droichead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New SET model	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primary Langu...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coronavirus/re...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies (e.g. d...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. Are there any other/particular factors that have made your role more challenging in the past 5 years? If so please explain.*

23. Are there any other/particular factors that have made your role less challenging in the past 5 years? If so please explain.*

24. How has teaching changed in the last 5 years? Thinking about your role, how much has your work changed with respect to each of the following:*

Tick all that apply.

	Much more	Somewhat more	About the same	Somewhat less	A lot less
Stressful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoyable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rewarding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Challenging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hectic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worthwhile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. Please read the following statements and answer as best you can.

1. I am able to adapt when changes occur.*

Tick all that apply.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26.

2. I make my best effort no matter what.*

Tick all that apply.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

27.

3. I prefer to take the lead in problem-solving.*

Tick all that apply.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

28.

4. Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly.*

Tick all that apply.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree
- 29.

5. I like challenges.*

Tick all that apply.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. What skills, attributes or characteristics do you think a resilient teacher would possess?*

Teaching in the future:

31. How would you rate your job satisfaction at present in 2021?

Mark only one oval per row.

Tick the best fit

- High
- Low
- Higher than 5 years ago
- Lower than 5 years ago
- The same

32. Can you explain why you chose the answer in the above question?*

33. What supports do you feel are needed for teachers/leaders going forward? (consider your present role when answering this or dual roles e.g. middle management, principal and teacher, teacher leader)*

34. Rate the following factors in terms of how they challenge your professional role on a daily basis.*

Tick all that apply.

	Does not chall...	Challenges sli...	Challenging	Very challengi...	Extremely chal...
Implementing ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaboration f...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primary Langu...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Learnin...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Droichead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching/leadi...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paperwork req...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

35. Can you identify which three areas you would like to prioritise for continued professional development (CPD) or support in going forward? *

Tick all that apply.

- School Self-Evaluation
- Teaching/leading during Covid
- Planning (paperwork)
- Digital supports for teaching
- SET model
- Primary Language Curriculum
- Droichead
- Wellbeing
- Child Protection

36. Please identify any other areas of CPD which may be beneficial to you and why you think you need support in this area.*

37. How do you prefer to access CPD? (formal or informal, webinars, college accredited courses, summer courses for EPV days etc)*

- Online
- Face-to-face

38. What do you currently enjoy most about teaching/leading in your school?*

39. What changes or initiatives would you recommend to sustain resilience in teaching?*

40. To what extent would each of the following help to make work as a teacher/leader more satisfying and less stressful? Tick one box for each. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	To a great exte...	To some extent	Hard to say	To a small ext...	Not at all
Less paperwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fewer new initi...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide extra s...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More opportun...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More time for ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

If you would be interested in taking part at the interview phase of this project, please click on the link to the researcher's email

julie.fleming25@mail.dcu.ie

Appendix: F - Recruitment notice for National Questionnaire



Julie Ann Fleming
@Julie_Ann_8



As a follow up to my multi-site case study on Teacher Resilience for my EdD, I am hoping for 100+ responses to this 10 min questionnaire (principals, SET & mainstream teachers) If you are primary based & in a position to complete I would be most grateful.



Teacher Resilience in the face of systemic changes 2016-2021.
docs.google.com

20:53 · 17/06/2021 from Earth

View analytics

17 Reposts **11** Likes

Appendix: G - Additional questions in the National Questionnaire

15. Please describe your school type: *

Tick all that apply.

- DEIS 1
- DEIS 2
- Non DEIS

16. Please indicate your school ethos: *

Tick all that apply.

- Catholic
- Church of Ireland
- Community National School
- Educate Together
- Gaelscoil
- Other

17. If you selected "other" as your answer above please indicate the ethos of your school.

18. Please indicate your school size: *

Tick all that apply.

- Less than 150 pupils
- 151 - 300 pupils
- 301 - 450
- More than 450 pupils

Appendix: H - SPSS Screenshots

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Timestamp	Date	40	0		None	None	11	Right	Nominal	Input
2	PlainLangu...	Numeric	3	0	I have read th...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
3	Understand	Numeric	3	0	I understand t...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
4	Askquestio...	Numeric	3	0	I have had an...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
5	Dataprote...	Numeric	3	0	I understand t...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
6	Satisfactor...	Numeric	3	0	I have receive...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
7	Withdraw	Numeric	3	0	I understand l...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
8	Confidenti...	Numeric	3	0	I have read a...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
9	Relevantinf...	Numeric	3	0	I have read a...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
10	Consent	Numeric	3	0	I consent to p...	{0, No}...	None	3	Right	Nominal	Input
11	Gender	Numeric	6	0	Gender	{1, Male}...	None	6	Right	Nominal	Input
12	Elaborate	String	38	0	Self-describe	None	None	37	Left	Nominal	Input
13	Yearsteach...	Numeric	18	0	Years teaching	{1, Less th...	None	17	Right	Ordinal	Input
14	Qualificatio...	String	400	0	Teaching qual	None	None	50	Left	Nominal	Input
15	Yearsincur...	Numeric	20	0	Years in curre...	{1, Less th...	None	8	Right	Ordinal	Input
16	Schooltype	Numeric	8	0	School type	{1, DEIS 1}...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
17	Schoolethos	Numeric	25	0	School ethos	{1, Catholi...	None	9	Right	Nominal	Input
18	Other	String	40	0	Other	None	None	11	Left	Nominal	Input
19	Schoolsize	Numeric	20	0	School size	{1, Less th...	None	8	Right	Ordinal	Input
20	Currentlyw...	Numeric	31	0	Current position	{1, Admini...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
21	Upskill	String	230	0	Upskill	None	None	50	Left	Nominal	Input
22	Workcontext	Numeric	40	0	Workcontext	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
23	Wellbeing	Numeric	8	0	Wellbeing	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
24	Values	Numeric	8	0	Values	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
25	Lifechanges	Numeric	8	0	Life changes	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
26	Relationshi...	Numeric	8	0	Relationships	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
27	Commitment	Numeric	8	0	Commitment	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
28	Unprecede...	Numeric	8	0	Unprecedented...	{0, Did not...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input

IBM SPSS Stati

Variable view - National Questionnaire SPSS

	Workcon text	Wellbein g	Values	Lifechan ges	Relation ships	Commit ment	Unprece dented vents	Academi c optimis m	Senseof effidentit y	Selfeffic acy	Jobfulfil ment	Beliefs	Approach	Role	Ct	
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	Culture and leadership Impacts on i	
2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	Negatively. Lack of empathy from rr	
3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	Very much	
4	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	It impacts it on multiple ways - both	
5	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	Generally positive	
6	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	It doesnt	
7	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	Massively
8	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	Greatly-in a DEIS 1 school particula	
9	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	Having worked in many different sc	
10	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	We have a positive school environm	
11	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	A positive and approachable staff n	
12	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	There is an amazing balance of pro	
13	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	Impacts greatly. Sets the foundation	
14	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	A lot	
15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	4	It makes it easier to go to work each	
16	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	Directly. As a SET, working with chil	
17	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	If management communicate well a	
18	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	Expected to read and reply to email	
19	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	It impacts as it relates to how I can	
20	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	Can be positive and negative depen	
21	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	Open communication and support f	
22	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	Not a whole lot	
23	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	Positively.	
24	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	I try to separate the two yet at time:	
25	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	Having people you can approach fo	
26	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4	A good deal...	

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready Unicode:ON Classic

Data view - National Questionnaire SPSS

Appendix: I - Sample of Inferential Non-Parametric Statistics

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1	The medians of Droichead are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.736	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The medians of New SET model are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.650	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The medians of PLC are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.854	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The medians of Coronavirus/remote learning are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.126	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The medians of Policies are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.492	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The medians of Stressful are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.493	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The medians of Demanding are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.796	Retain the null hypothesis.
8	The medians of Satisfying are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.414	Retain the null hypothesis.
9	The medians of Trying are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.546	Retain the null hypothesis.
10	The medians of Enjoyable are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.206	Retain the null hypothesis.
11	The medians of Rewarding are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.316	Retain the null hypothesis.
12	The medians of Challenging are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.604	Retain the null hypothesis.
13	The medians of Hectic are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.087	Retain the null hypothesis.
14	The medians of Worthwhile are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.333	Retain the null hypothesis.
15	The medians of Adapt are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.979	Retain the null hypothesis.
16	The medians of Effort are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.751	Retain the null hypothesis.
17	The medians of Lead are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.346	Retain the null hypothesis.
18	The medians of Pressure are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.068	Retain the null hypothesis.
19	The medians of Challenges are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.647	Retain the null hypothesis.
20	The medians of Implementing SET model are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.513	Retain the null hypothesis.
21	The medians of Collaboration for SEN pupils are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.258	Retain the null hypothesis.
22	The medians of Primary Language Curriculum are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.549	Retain the null hypothesis.

23	The medians of Digital Learning Plan are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.052	Retain the null hypothesis.
24	The medians of Droichead are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.204	Retain the null hypothesis.
25	The medians of Implementing policies are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.398	Retain the null hypothesis.
26	The medians of Teaching/leading during Covid are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.126	Retain the null hypothesis.
27	The medians of Paperwork requirements are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.195	Retain the null hypothesis.
28	The medians of Less paperwork are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.343	Retain the null hypothesis.
29	The medians of Fewer new initiatives are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.377	Retain the null hypothesis.
30	The medians of Provide extra support for existing initiatives are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.196	Retain the null hypothesis.
31	The medians of More opportunity for CPD in school are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.801	Retain the null hypothesis.
32	The medians of More time for collaboration in school are the same across categories of Current position.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.901	Retain the null hypothesis.

a. The significance level is .050.

b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

Appendix: J - Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate at the interview stage of this research study. I'm really interested in finding out the opinions of teachers and principals in relation to teacher resilience in light of systemic changes that have impacted your teaching and leading in the past five school years. Much of the focus in the area of teacher resilience is on NQTs and ITE and my study is exploring career wide resiliency in teaching, what supports and encourages this. The questions I will ask will establish how teacher resilience is experienced in the context of your experience in the past five years teaching or leading:

I will begin with a working definition on teacher resilience:

Teacher resilience concerns an individual's capacity to "maintain positive attributes in face of a range of challenges, pressures and demands" which are associated with their work (Daniilidou and Platsidou, 2018). Teachers are faced with constant "intellectual and emotional challenges" which gives rise to the term "everyday resilience" Day and Gu, (2014). Resilient principals consider the learning needs of pupils and the professional growth of teachers (Day and Gu, 2014).

1. What is the most demanding aspect of your work as a teacher?
2. How do you deal with that/this?
3. Are there pressure points for you during the school year and would you like to talk about these?
4. The role of leadership in teacher resilience?
5. Is experience relevant to a teacher's resilience?
6. What makes a resilient teacher?
7. What do you think might threaten a teacher's resilience?
8. How do you perceive your resilience? (this could be a rating or a comment)
9. Can you identify what influences or hinders your capacity to be resilient?
10. Can you list some resilience building strategies?
11. What do you think fosters resilience in teaching in your school?
12. Day & Gu (2014), note 3 aspects that foster resilience; social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure. How do these impact on your lived experience of teacher resilience?

Potential follow up questions to Q12

Which of these 3 aspects (social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure) might be the most meaningful or significant for you?

Can you think of any other feature/aspect which should be considered for this list?

13. Does school size inhibit or enhance resilience or the potential to foster and instil resilience?
14. In the past 5 years, what has been the greatest challenge that you faced? Why do you think this? How did you manage it?
15. (Depending on response) Apart from Covid, what was the greatest challenge that you faced over the past five years?
16. (Depending on response) Would you say you have experienced increased demands, pressure or an increase of stress in the last 5 years as a teacher or leader? What causes or contributes to this?
17. Can you think of a time when you experienced job satisfaction? What contributed to this again in the past 5 years? Was it role specific?
18. Do you engage in self-reflection of your practices as a teacher? How do you do this?
19. Have you engaged in any CPD, formal or informal that has supported your teaching/leading in the past five years?
If Yes to 19
How do you prefer to access this? Given the choice between face-to-face and online CPD which would you choose and why? Has Covid changed this?
(Depending on response) How do you choose the courses you have engaged with, are they role or context specific?
If No to 19
Why have you not engaged or actively sought CPD in the past five years?
20. What role does social media, educational platforms such as Dojo or Seesaw or technology as a concept play in teacher resilience?
21. Do you think the public perception of teachers as is being conveyed in the press, has potential to impact on teacher resilience? How so/in what ways?
22. What sustains or develops teacher resilience in your opinion?

Appendix: K - Codebook for NVivo

Codebook - Phase 1 – Familiarisation and Writing Familiarisation Notes

Codebook - Phase 2 - Phase 2 Systematic Data Coding (Open Coding)

Codebook - Phase 3 - Generating Initial Themes from Coded and Collated Data
(Developing categories)

Codebook - Phase 4 - Developing and Reviewing Themes (coding on)

Codebook - Phase 5 - Refining, Defining and Naming Themes (Developing a Thematic
Framework)

Example of flow from codes to categories to themes

Example of Conceptual Mapping

Example of the role Analytical Memo

Codebook - Phase 1 – Familiarisation and Writing Familiarisation Notes

School 2 Principal

Thank you for agreeing to participate at the interview stage of this research study. I'm really interested in finding out the opinions of teachers and principals in relation to teacher resilience in light of systemic changes that have impacted your teaching and leading in the past five school years. Much of the focus in the area of teacher resilience is on NQTs and initial teacher education and my study is exploring career wide resiliency in teaching, what supports and encourages this. The questions I will ask will establish how teacher resilience is experienced in the context of your experience in the past five years teaching or leading:

I will begin with a working definition on teacher resilience:
Teacher resilience concerns an individual's capacity to "maintain positive attributes in face of a range of challenges, pressures and demands" which are associated with their work (Danniildou and Platsidou, 2018). Teachers are faced with constant "intellectual and emotional challenges" which gives rise to the term "everyday resilience" Day and Gu, (2014). Resilient principals consider the learning needs of pupils and the professional growth of teachers (Day and Gu, 2014).

What is the most demanding aspect of your work as a teacher?
As a teacher?
Or a leader? Or you could say from a dual perspective?
They are two clearly defined, two different roles...
Yes of course...
They come with different strengths and different demands. I would say the prep, not preparation but the paperwork in general, across the board is a huge issue for a teaching principal.

How do you deal with this pressure?
Well I decide, I prioritise. I decide what needs to be done, what can be left and what does it need my attention, what can be given to other people.

Are there pressure points for you during the school year and would you like to talk about these?
Well I would say, initially, years ago it was basically September and June, now it is September and June but you often have periods during the year that are equally as busy. I would say Christmas is a busy time as well. It depends what the Department decides to bring into a school or what initiative is

Annotations

Item	Content
1	Paperwork appears to be a challenge/pressure point for participants (both principals and teachers alike)
2	Prioritisation and delegation

Phase 1 – Familiarisation and Writing Familiarisation Notes involved reading and re-reading transcripts and annotating to integrate contextual factors such as coding assumptions, field notes and observations and researcher's thoughts and ideas during the encoding process

Codebook - Phase 2 - Systematic Data Coding (Open Coding)

Generating Initial Coding involved deconstructing the data from its original chronology into an initial set of non-hierarchical codes

Phase 2 - Systematic Data Coding	Code Definitions (Rules for Inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Behaviour	Behaviour patterns for pupils or teachers	8	16
Challenges	Challenges experienced by the teachers and principals interviewed in relation to their work	16	121
Collaboration	Team work, working together, relying on colleagues for support, team teaching	15	54
Communication	Interactions exchanging information with staff, parents, pupils or other professionals or organisations	16	71
Confidence	How confidence impacts on resilience	16	49
Covid-19	Impact of Covid-19, measures taken because of Covid-19, changes due to Covid-19 etc	14	50
CPD	Continuous professional development to support teachers and leaders in their role this can be formal or informal leading to a certificate, degree, qualification etc or a once off course	16	58
Culture	Beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, relationships, unwritten rules or expectations in a school	16	28
Experience	Role of experience in teacher resilience	16	63
Job satisfaction	What brings you joy in your role	16	26
Leadership	Role of leadership in teacher resilience	16	84
Network	Support network or professional network of people teachers and principals can discuss situations with either within their school or outside of their school	14	35
Organisational structure	One of the aspects listed by Day and Gu (2014) that fosters resilience	16	41
Paperwork	Required documents such as cuntaisi, termly plans, forms and documents	11	30
Parents	Primary care givers of the pupils. Interactions can be in person, at meetings and in recent years through school based social media engagement	14	38

	platforms such as Aladdin, Class Dojo and Seesaw		
Pressure points	Times of year teachers or principals find themselves under the most pressure	15	18
Pupils	The children in the school	11	33
Relationships	Staff dynamics	16	65
Time	Time spent with teachers, contact with pupils, planning time, time given to CPD	12	30

Codebook - Phase 3 - Generating Initial Themes from Coded and Collated Data (Developing categories)

Searching for Themes – involved merging, renaming, distilling and clustering related coded into broader categories of codes to reconstruct the data into a framework that makes sense to further the analysis.

Phase 3 - Generating Initial Themes from Coded and Collated Data	Code Definitions (Rules for Inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Approaching leaders for support	References by participants to seeking support from their principals	4	5
Changes in leadership	References made to changes in leadership	5	6
Collegiality	Cooperative relationship between colleagues	9	18
Confidence	How confidence impacts on resilience	16	51
Covid-19	Impact of Covid-19, measures taken because of Covid-19, changes due to Covid-19 etc	14	50
CPD	Continuous professional development to support teachers and leaders in their role this can be formal or informal leading to a certificate, degree, qualification etc or a once off course	16	59
Culture	Beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, relationships, unwritten rules or expectations in a school	16	28
Decision making challenges	Challenges based on decisions	5	9
Department of Education	References made to the DE	4	7
Distributing leadership	Sharing the responsibility	4	4
Droichead	The induction programme facilitated in schools by the PST - usually takes place in the first year for an NQT - they must have a minimum of 60 days in the one setting to participate. Dual aspect, school setting and online cluster meetings and induction activities	6	9
Experience	Explicit reference to experience and how it informs role/thinking	14	26

External challenges	Challenges outside of school	9	15
Gaps in the system	Gaps identified by participants in the current educational system	4	4
Job satisfaction	What brings you joy in your role	16	27
Leadership challenge	A challenge directly related to a leadership role	11	24
Length of time in role	How long they are in their current position	7	11
Modelling leadership	Demonstrating by example	6	14
Negative situations	Situations where participants mentioned where they were dissatisfied with the way the problem/incident was handled	2	6
Network	Support network or professional network of people teachers and principals can discuss situations with either within their school or outside of their school	14	36
NQT	References to NQTs - Newly Qualified Teachers	9	17
Organisational structure	One of the aspects listed by Day and Gu (2014) that fosters resilience	16	42
Personal resilience	Teachers either have it or they don't	15	37
Planning	Teachers planning together, school plans, plans for team teaching etc.	5	8
Positive leadership	Quotes or statements by participants regardless of role	8	16
Pressures	Identified pressures	16	89
Problem solving	Staff coming together to problem solve	7	9
Pupil's behaviour	References to pupil's behaviour	4	6
Realisation it can't all be done	From principals	4	7
Reflection	Reflecting on role, day etc	16	33
Relationships	Staff dynamics	16	65
Role of leadership	References to the role of a principal	6	9
School Size	Small or large school as a challenge	8	10
SEN	Understanding and awareness of SEN provision and best practice	5	8
Skills	Skills participants mentioned	10	16
Systemic changes	Not limited to but including the PLC, the new SET model	9	13

Teaching practice	Formal, observed and graded periods of time a student teacher spends in a classroom as part of their training	2	4
Teaching principal	References to being a teaching principal	2	5

Codebook - Phase 4 - Developing and Reviewing Themes (coding on)

Reviewing Themes involved breaking down the now reorganised categories into sub-categories to better understand the meanings embedded therein.

Phase 4 - Developing and Reviewing Themes	Code Definitions (Rules for Inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
Career wide resiliency	Role of experience in teacher resilience across teaching career	16	63
CPD	Continuous professional development to support teachers and leaders in their role this can be formal or informal leading to a certificate, degree, qualification etc or a once off course	16	59
Droichead	The induction programme facilitated in schools by the PST - usually takes place in the first year for an NQT - they must have a minimum of 60 days in the one setting to participate. Dual aspect, school setting and online cluster meetings and induction activities	6	9
Experience	Explicit reference to experience and how it informs role/thinking	14	26
Length of time in role	How long they are in their current position	7	11
Network	Support network or professional network of people teachers and principals can discuss situations with either within their school or outside of their school	14	36
NQT	References to NQTs - Newly Qualified Teachers	9	17
Personal resilience	Teachers either have it or they don't	15	37
Reflection	Reflecting on role, day etc	16	33
Skills	Skills participants mentioned	10	16
Teaching practice	Formal, observed and graded periods of time a student teacher spends in a classroom as part of their training	2	4
Challenges	Challenges experienced by the teachers and principals interviewed in relation to their work	16	93

Covid-19	Impact of Covid-19, measures taken because of Covid-19, changes due to Covid-19 etc	14	50
Decision making challenges	Challenges based on decisions	5	9
Department of Education	References made to the DE	4	7
External challenges	Challenges outside of school	9	15
Gaps in the system	Gaps identified by participants in the current educational system	4	4
Leadership challenge	A challenge directly related to a leadership role	11	24
Negative situations	Situations where participants mentioned where they were dissatisfied with the way the problem/incident was handled	2	6
Pressures	Identified pressures	16	89
Pupil's behaviour	References to pupil's behaviour	4	6
Relationships	Staff dynamics	16	65
School Size	Small or large school as a challenge	8	10
SEN	Understanding and awareness of SEN provision and best practice	5	8
Systemic changes	Not limited to but including the PLC, the new SET model	9	13
Collaboration	Teamwork, working together, relying on colleagues for support, team teaching	14	33
Collegiality	Cooperative relationship between colleagues	9	18
Planning	Teachers planning together, school plans, plans for team teaching etc.	5	8
Problem solving	Staff coming together to problem solve	7	9
Context specific	Relating to the school/community directly	16	70
Culture	Beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, relationships, unwritten rules or expectations in a school	16	28
Organisational structure	One of the aspects listed by Day and Gu (2014) that fosters resilience	16	42
Leadership	Role of leadership in teacher resilience	16	57

Approaching leaders for support	References by participants to seeking support from their principals	4	5
Changes in leadership	References made to changes in leadership	5	6
Distributing leadership	Sharing the responsibility	4	4
Modelling leadership	Demonstrating by example	6	14
Positive leadership	Quotes or statements by participants regardless of role	8	16
Realisation it can't all be done	From principals	4	7
Role of leadership	References to the role of a principal	6	9
Teaching principal	References to being a teaching principal	2	5
Role specific	Role or personal factors	16	79
Confidence	How confidence impacts on resilience	16	51
Job satisfaction	What brings you joy in your role	16	27

Codebook - Phase 5 - Refining, Defining and Naming Themes (Developing a Thematic Framework)

Defining and Naming Themes involved conceptually mapping and collapsing categories into a broader thematic framework.

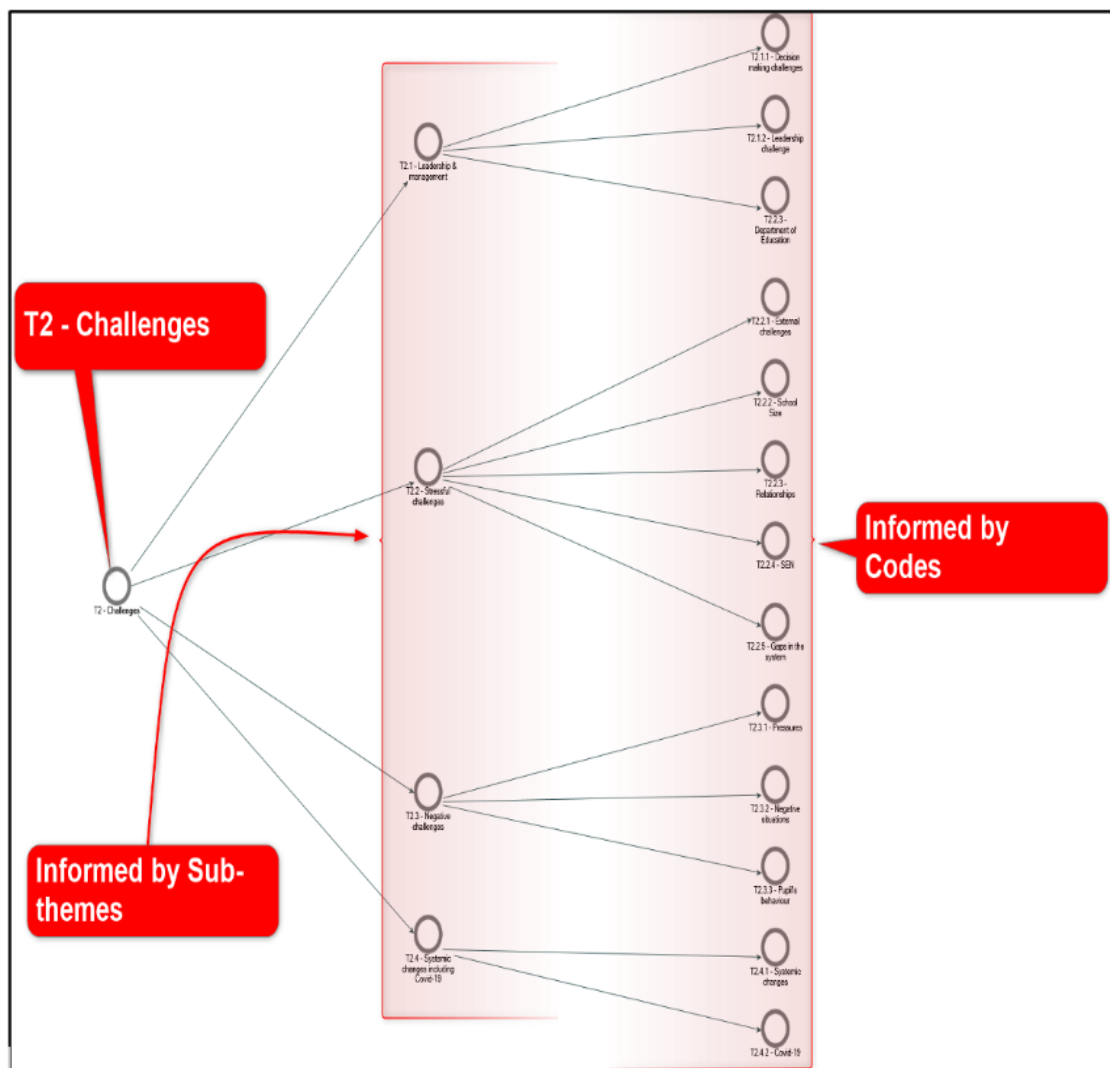
Phase 5 - Refining, Defining and Naming Themes	Code Definitions (Rules for Inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coded
T1 - Career wide resiliency	Role of experience in teacher resilience across teaching career	16	63
T1.1 - Initial teaching experience	Incorporating teaching practice or placement, NQT and Droichead	12	30
T1.2 - Developing personal resilience	Innate or otherwise, establishing if experience is relevant to a teacher's resilience, what fosters resiliency, requisite skills and reflection and the role this offers participants in terms of developing their own resilience	16	88
T1.3 – CPD	Continuous professional development to support teachers and leaders in their role this can be formal or informal leading to a certificate, degree, qualification etc or a once off course	16	59
T1.4 - Support Network	Support network or professional network of people teachers and principals can discuss situations with either within their school or outside of their school	14	36
T1.5 - Professional Experience	Experience, length of time in role, experience in other roles which impact on experience teaching and leading	14	37
T2 – Challenges	Challenges experienced by the teachers and principals interviewed in relation to their work	16	93
T2.1 - Leadership & management	Decision making challenges, leadership challenge and the Department of Education and the role they play	12	40
T2.2 - Stressful challenges	External challenges, school size, relationships, SEN and gaps in the system	16	108
T2.3 - Negative challenges	Pressure, negative situations, pupil's behaviour	16	100

T2.4 - Systemic changes including Covid-19	Systemic changes and Covid-19	14	63
T3 – Leadership	Role of leadership in teacher resilience	16	57
T3.1 - Modelling leadership	Demonstrating by example	6	14
T3.2 - Positive leadership	Quotes or statements by participants regardless of role	8	16
T3.3 - Distributing leadership	Sharing the responsibility	4	4
T3.4 - Approaching leaders for support	References by participants to seeking support from their principals	4	5
T3.5 - Role of leadership	References to the role of a principal	6	9
T3.6 - Changes in leadership	References made to changes in leadership	5	6
T3.7 - Realisation it can't all be done	References from principals	4	7
T3.8 - Teaching principal	References to being a teaching principal	2	5
T4 – Collaboration	Team work, working together, relying on colleagues for support, team teaching	14	33
T4.1 – Collegiality	Cooperative relationship between colleagues	9	18
T4.2 – Planning	Teachers planning together, school plans, plans for team teaching etc.	5	8
T4.3 - Problem solving	Staff coming together to problem solve	7	9
T5 - Role specific	Role or personal factors	16	79
T5.1 – Confidence	How confidence impacts on resilience	16	51

T5.2 - Job satisfaction	What brings you joy in your role	16	27
T6 - Context specific	Relating to the school/community directly	16	70
T6.1 – Culture	Beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, relationships, unwritten rules or expectations in a school	16	28
T6.2 - Organisational structure	One of the aspects listed by Day and Gu (2014) that fosters resilience	16	42

Example of flow from codes to categories to themes

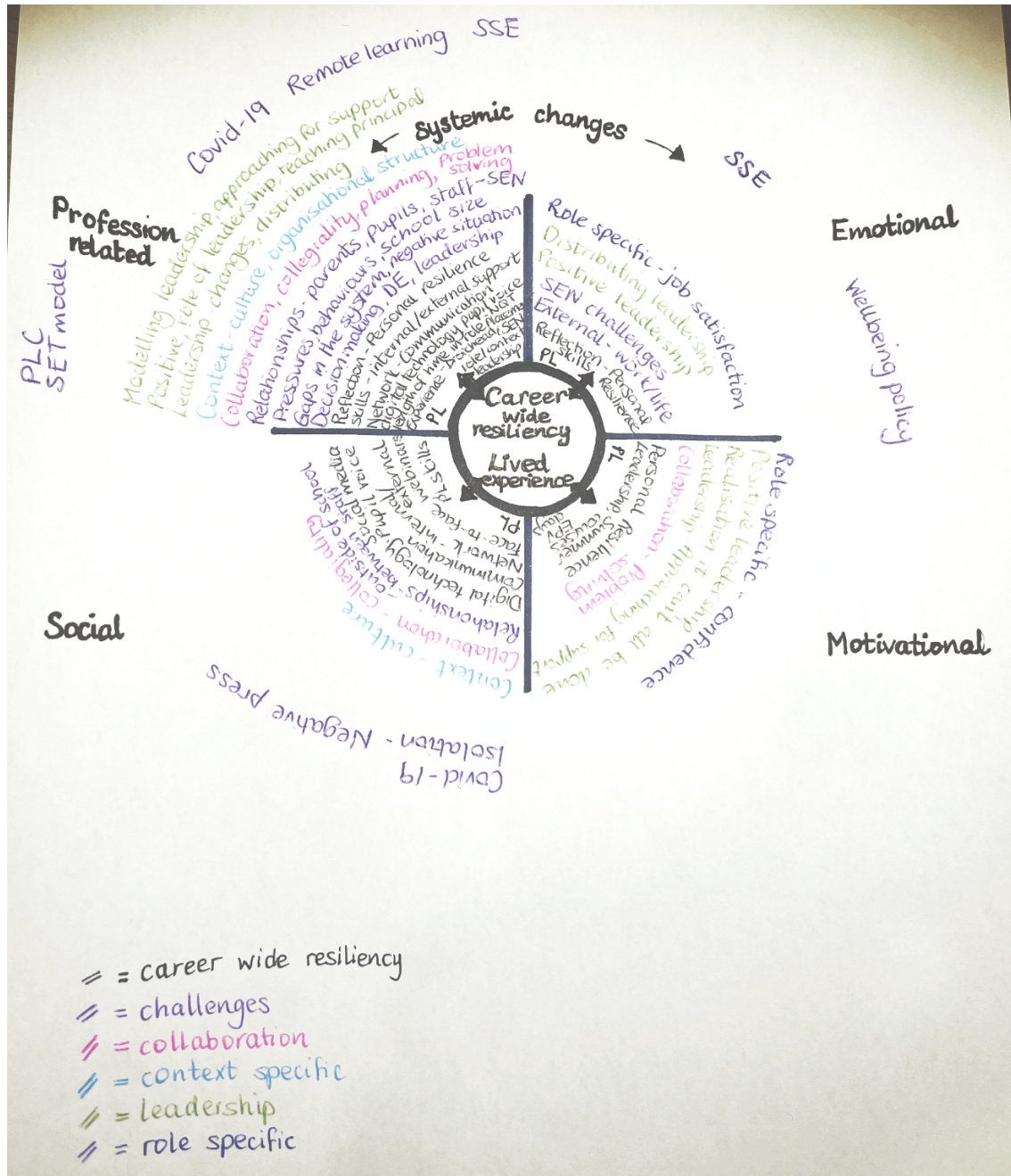
Example of the flow from codes to categories to themes for T2 – Challenges



Example of Conceptual Mapping

Example of hand-drawn conceptual map to demonstrate the process of abstraction.

Conceptual maps were used to make sense of themes identified in data and to consider relationships across and between themes in a visual and less structured manner



Phase 6 – Creating the Report - example of the role analytical memos

Creating the report involved the creation of analytical memos that were used to conduct a systematic review of the thematic framework developed in phase 5 to analyse, report and ask questions of data. Memos were used to reduce the data from a series of themes to a series of documents explaining outcomes of analysis of theme content. Later, memos themselves were reduced through editing out overlapping and less important content to cohere findings into a concise findings chapter.

The screenshot shows a software interface for Phase 5 - Refining, defining and naming themes (developing...). It features a table with columns for Name, Files, and References. A red box highlights the theme 'T14 - Support Network' and its sub-themes. A red arrow points from this box to the detailed memo content for 'T14.1 - Communication'.

Name	Files	References
T1.1 - Initial teaching experience	12	30
T1.1.1 - Teaching practice	2	4
T1.1.2 - NQT	9	17
T1.1.3 - Dreichhead	6	9
T1.2 - Developing personal resilience	16	88
T1.2.1 - Personal resilience	15	37
T1.2.2 - Reflection	16	34
T1.2.3 - Requisite Skills	10	16
T1.3 - CPD	16	59
T1.3.1 - Role specific CPD	13	18
T1.3.2 - Context specific CPD	1	1
T1.3.3 - Face-to-face Prefere	11	14
T1.3.4 - Online Preference	8	10
T1.3.5 - Online webinars	6	8
T1.3.6 - Leadership CPD	7	13
T1.3.7 - SEN CPD	8	11
T1.3.8 - Summer courses - PD	4	4
T14 - Support Network	14	36
T14.1 - Communication	16	74
T14.2 - Internal support	14	25
T14.3 - External support	13	31
T15 - Professional Experience	14	37
T15.1 - Experience	14	26
T15.2 - Length of time in rol	7	11
T2 - Challenges	16	93
T3 - Leadership	16	57
T4 - Collaboration	14	33
T5 - Role specific	16	79

Phase 6 – Creating the report involved the creation of analytical memos that were used to conduct a systematic review of the thematic framework developed in phase 5 to analyse, report and ask questions of data. Memos were used to reduce the data from a series of themes to a series of documents explaining outcomes of analysis of theme content. Later, memos themselves were reduced through editing out overlapping and less important content to cohere findings into a concise findings chapter.

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Appendix: L - Teacher Retirement Statistics 2020 (DE, 2021c, p. 11)

Primary Teachers Retired from 1 January to 31 December 2020

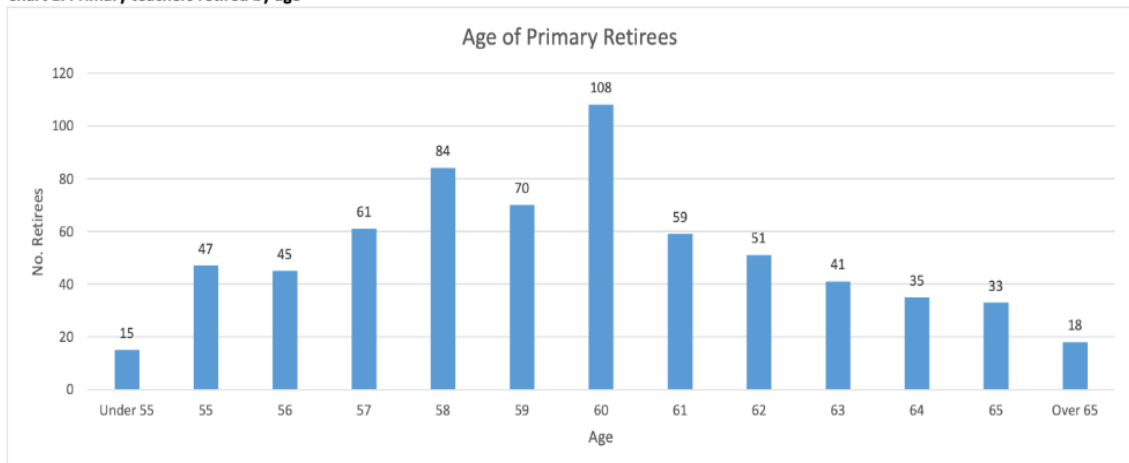
Table E: Primary teachers retired by age

Age	Under 55	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	Over 65	Total
Retirees	15	47	45	61	84	70	108	59	51	41	35	33	18	667
% of total	2.25%	7.05%	6.75%	9.15%	12.59%	10.49%	16.19%	8.85%	7.65%	6.15%	5.25%	4.95%	2.70%	

The most common ages of retirement for Primary Teachers in 2020 was age 60 (108 retirees)

Of the 667 Primary teachers who retired in 2020, 322 (48.28%) retired before age 60

Chart E: Primary teachers retired by age



Appendix: M - Suggested supports needed for teachers/leaders going forward

Suggested area	Number of respondents who suggested area
Wellbeing	10
Time to plan	10
Time for collaboration	9
Streamlined TPL	8
Increase in middle management posts	8
Onsite multidisciplinary team	8
Admin days for middle management post holders and DP	7
Mentoring	5
Upskilling for SET	5
Less paperwork	5

Appendix: N - Suggested solutions for changes/initiatives to sustain resilience

Suggestion	Case study questionnaire total	National questionnaire total	Overall total
Wellbeing	5	20	25
Less paperwork	4	18	22
Time for collaboration	3	15	18
TPL/CPD	3	13	16
Team building	5	8	13
Stop adding new initiatives	3	7	10
More supports	1	6	7
Time for planning	0	6	6
Reduced class sizes	0	4	4
Teacher mental health supports	3	1	4

Appendix: O – **Newtown School** responses summarised

Case study one	Louise (PS1)	Sinéad (MS1)	Mary (SS1)
Most demanding aspect of your work	Communication	Paperwork	Parents
How do you deal with that/this	<p>Important there is lots of opportunity for people to communicate</p> <p>Children - different committees; active committee, green schools committee, student council, amber flag committee, creative schools committee.</p> <p>Staff – staff meeting most weeks – try to help each other with our planning, with Covid, junior end of school together and senior end</p> <p>Parents – school website, school blog, newsletters</p>	<p>Set aside time to see what I’ve done from the previous fortnight, really reflect on it, make sure you are meeting the needs of the children, set the new plans as well.</p> <p>Time – working with learning support teachers and all planning has to be done outside of school time</p>	<p>Very supportive principal and staff in general are quite supportive of each other.</p>
Pressure points in your role	September May/June	Christmas	September

<p>Role of leadership</p>	<p>Very important, important to lead by example</p> <p>Important space is created for teachers to decompress, share how things are going in our classrooms, be very open in talking with one another about any difficulties that we are having in our classes at any time and offering support</p>	<p>In the past few years we've seen changes in leadership here, at the moment I'm much more resilient myself because it's such a positive place to be.</p> <p>I've noticed a huge change in myself where I want to be doing more, offering to put myself forward to do more things because the leadership is so positive and so supportive.</p> <p>You're really included in all the choices in the school and it is nice to just feel appreciated as well.</p>	<p>Very supportive principal, vice principal, all the staff themselves.</p> <p>Positive leadership</p> <p>Our principal works with us and I always get the impression that she would never ask you to do anything she's not willing to do herself which to me is great</p>
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<p>Experience</p>	<p>Having moved to being a teaching principal I think that there is an awful lot that I still have to learn like I don't know can you ever know all that you're supposed to know for this.</p> <p>I do feel like with the experience and with time things are getting easier for myself in my role and like that I suppose it's getting comfortable with the people that I have around me and getting comfortable with the role that I have within the school community so it is very important.</p>	<p>I think experience does help, it's not essential. You get some people coming straight out of college and they're just resilient individuals anyway and nothing phases them.</p> <p>Experience has definitely helped me to really bounce back and pick myself up if something has gone wrong but it's not the most essential thing, it really depends on the person themselves and the setting you are in. I could have had all the experience in the world and if I didn't feel supported, I wouldn't be bouncing back.</p>	<p>Yes definitely. I was actually having a conversation with one of our NQTs – when you've been around as long as I have, not that it doesn't get to you, it does but I suppose like your initial reaction is always going to be the same, but I think you kind of bounce back quicker.</p>
<p>What makes a resilient teacher</p>	<p>Confident in their own abilities and confident in what they're doing and confident that they have people that they can go and speak to.</p>	<p>Someone who is willing to try, try, try again.</p> <p>Being a team player in general helps and focusing on the positives.</p>	<p>Having the ability to take the bigger picture, fall back on your experience and trying to have a good work-life balance</p>
<p>What might threaten a teacher's resilience</p>	<p>I think school culture, that if you know there are staff members who might be more established in a place or you know the teacher who always teaches junior infants or whatever, I think that might really test the resilience of others within the school community.</p>	<p>Pressure from parents.</p> <p>Anything that's happening at home.</p> <p>We do all have our moments where we just need to just have a mini melt-down.</p>	<p>Social media</p> <p>Parents having WhatsApp groups</p> <p>Demands placed on teachers, the more stress you're under, the harder it is to be resilient.</p>

<p>Rate your own resilience</p>	<p>8/10</p>	<p>I've definitely improved.</p> <p>Some days I can bounce back straight away and other days it takes a little while, in general I would think I am quite resilient.</p>	<p>5 or 6/10</p>
<p>What influences or hinders your capacity to be resilient</p>	<p>Confidence</p> <p>Studying part time, there's a lot of time pressure with that, that can impact on how I'm doing in terms of my work and how satisfied I feel with what I'm doing and how I feel I'm able to cope maybe with whatever throws itself up.</p> <p>It's a very unpredictable job and you can never know all the ins and outs and you never know what's going to face you on any given day going into school so I feel for me it's very important to be rested.</p>	<p>Management</p> <p>Support of other staff members</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Parents</p> <p>Things at home</p> <p>The pandemic – it's really separated us all out, we don't have as much support and we can't have as much support as we usually would be able to.</p>	<p>Lack of sleep</p> <p>Finishing the GDILS</p>

<p>List some resilient building strategies</p>	<p>Working with other staff, having the opportunities to problem solve and the chance to work on school policies and initiatives together</p> <p>CPD – principal support days or conferences, give a bit of space to think outside of where all the action is happening in school</p>	<p>Looking at the positive aspect in my day, what went well.</p> <p>Focus on that one little positive, even if it was just seeing someone through a window.</p>	<p>Getting time to do things that are important eg exercise</p>
<p>What fosters resilience in teaching in your school</p>	<p>Camaraderie</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>CPD</p>	<p>Management</p> <p>Nearly every day I would be asked by one of either, principal or deputy how things are going, if I need support. I'm one of two multigrade teachers. I want to be able to do it and I find myself being able to do it because they show that they have confidence in you.</p>	<p>Management</p> <p>Nice atmosphere in the school.</p> <p>I think that fosters resilience because you feel even if you're having a really bad day you know that there's people in the school who are going to look out for you and help you.</p>

<p>Day & Gu (2014) note 3 aspects that foster resilience; social relationships, collegiality and organisational structure. The impact of these on your lived experience</p>	<p>Social relations – very important, big impact on my growth as a teacher and teaching principal. Important to have networks outside of the school itself.</p> <p>Collegiality – within the school.</p> <p>Organisational structure – Covid has had an impact in terms of mixing, important to continue to have Croke Park hours, to continue to have those opportunities to learn together and to communicate together as a team.</p>	<p>Working as a team, being organised.</p> <p>Knowing what to do, when you have to do it, helps to put structure on everything.</p> <p>Have to be flexible.</p>	<p>Being organised, having a plan, even if you deviate from it, it doesn't matter, at least you have something to fall back on.</p>
<p>Which of these might be the most meaningful or significant for you, in your role?</p>	<p>Collegiality</p>	<p>Social relationships</p>	<p>Social relationships</p>
<p>Any other factor?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Time Less paperwork</p>
<p>School size</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Bigger school more challenging – communication, less chance of building relationships because there's so many relationships to constantly build and to keep afloat.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Small school easier because there are less people around to have to look out for as well, but at the same time there's the thought in a smaller setting that everyone knows already and sometimes people can just slip under the radar, so it's a funny one, I feel like there are opportunities for resilience in both.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Example given of working in a bigger school with 36 classes and not knowing who to approach if a problem arose.</p>

Greatest challenge in the past 5 years	Taking up the role (teaching principal). Introducing iPads – a lot of opposition and people didn’t really understand what was happening.	Expectations of parents Pandemic Media	Teaching during lockdown Uncertainty about your job security
Have you experienced increased demands, pressure or an increase of stress in the past 5 years?	Change in role Covid Remote teaching Supporting those with additional needs	Less stress and pressure	Covid Job security Parents
Job satisfaction in the past 5 years	Getting to work with the children, I really enjoy the whole idea of not being in the office all day locked away. I love doing student council in the school because it gives the children a voice, you get to work with children from different classes and you can see their enthusiasm because they know that whatever they say is being listened to, they feel such pride in talking with me say above any of the other staff which is really cute.	The moment one child gets the thing that they haven’t been getting for a few days really just boosts me up and then hearing other staff members who work with the kids in the class saying things about their progress and how they are making progress is always nice as well.	When a child finally understands a concept in SET – example given of a child understanding the concept of division, teacher tried everything, finally used a pegboard and child said “Oh my god, I get it”. Seeing the joy on her face, something she found so difficult suddenly became clear.
Self-reflection	During admin day on a Friday – I give myself a few minutes in the office in the morning just to sum up how the week went before I do my plans for the following week.	In my plans I put in a little reflection box but I never fill it in, every day I reflect anyway, more informal.	Yes, writing it down because of GDILS – something we do all the time but we don’t maybe write it down.

CPD engagement	Yes, EdD I feel that is supporting me in terms of policy development. Misneach for newly appointed principals	Yes, every year I do summer courses Leadership course in October.	Yes, GDILS
Preference of online or face-to-face	Face-to-face – to actually take it all in	Face-to-face – after Covid I don't want to see screens anymore, I can interact more and discuss things rather than having to just reflect on my own thoughts.	Online handier with a family
Are the courses role or context specific	Role specific	Role specific	Role related
Role of social media and educational platforms such as Class Dojo or Seesaw or technology as a concept in teacher resilience	Play a huge role, incorporating technology so much more into teaching and I think it was a huge achievement and people take great pride in having conquered the whole digital technologies realm.	Good elements, support, Seesaw for remote learning. Social media – they weren't very kind to teachers, no matter where you looked if it wasn't teacher related discussions, suddenly there was teacher bashing.	Useful for online teaching Extra pressure, another demand.

<p>Public perception of teachers as conveyed in the press – impact on teacher resilience</p>	<p>Negative perception of late</p> <p>Schools viewed as babysitting grounds and teachers as babysitters</p> <p>Brings down the level of professionalism and responsibility – concerning for people to be reading that in the media</p> <p>Important for teachers to be able to stand on our own feet and justify position in society and the work done</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>There were so many days where if I didn't turn off my phone at that moment I would have been in tears. Some of the stuff was just horrible.</p>	<p>100%</p> <p>Huge lack of understanding.</p> <p>Constant teacher bashing.</p>
<p>What sustains or develops resilience in your opinion</p>	<p>Good level of organisation</p> <p>Predictability</p> <p>Support networks</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>No unattainable expectation</p> <p>Culture of trust</p>	<p>Lots of teachers develop it themselves because we don't get a huge amount of support from anywhere else other than our schools.</p> <p>I don't think there has been a huge amount actually to support staff resilience or teacher resilience.</p>	<p>Having downtime.</p>