

**When Student Teachers Fail:
Perspectives of those in the 'learning to
teach' partnership in the Republic of Ireland.**

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Abstract

In recent years there has been unprecedented international attention on the issue of teacher quality. This has resulted in a focus by policy makers on initial teacher education, with many systems opting to articulate standards to define the competences that newly qualified teachers should possess. Central to all programmes of initial teacher education is school placement, a key period of significant learning for student teachers and a time when their competence is assessed. A small proportion of student teachers experience failure or struggle during these placements, however little research into their experiences is evident. This qualitative study explores the perceptions and experiences of members of 'triadic learning to teach partnerships,' who have had experience of the phenomenon. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to capture data from student teachers, cooperating teachers, placement tutors and directors of school placement on their perspectives regarding the causes of student teacher failure, the impacts of its occurrence and the effectiveness of any support mechanisms provided. The findings revealed the complexity and uniqueness of each occurrence, and the significant impacts on all involved, most particularly the student teachers. Six typologies of student teachers who struggle or experience failure and five pillars for the provision of support emerged as new contributions to aid teacher educators to understand and adequately support these student teachers. Conclusions are also drawn regarding the need for a standards-led approach to the formulation of assessment judgements on student teachers' competence and the need in the Irish context for cooperating teachers to be enabled to play a greater and more central role.

Key words: Learning to teach; initial teacher education; failing student teachers; school placement; cooperating teacher; standards

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Abbreviations

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

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CAQDAS	Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software
CT	Co-operating teacher
CPD	Continuing professional development
DES	Department of Education and Skills (in the Republic of Ireland)
DSP	Director of School Placement
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HEI-PT	Higher Education Institute - Placement Tutor
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LEA	Local Educational Advisor
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RQ	Research question
SE	School Experience
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SP	School Placement
ST	Student Teacher
TP	Teaching Practice
TC	Teaching Council (Ireland)
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Chapter 1 Introduction

When student teachers (STs) embark on the journey that is involved in learning to become a teacher, they do so with great hope, excitement and optimism. For many individuals becoming a teacher has been a dream that they have held for a very long time. Invariably, these STs have had to work hard academically to be admitted to initial teacher education (ITE) and have had to make significant personal and financial sacrifices. ITE involves academic study and the practical application of that learning in the classroom context. Most STs realise their ambitions and successfully complete all aspects of the programme. A small proportion of STs encounter difficulty on the journey to graduation. Of these, some falter on the academic component, while others experience difficulty during their practical placements in schools. Some of these STs fail individual classroom observations, while others fail blocks of school placement (SP) which they have to successfully repeat before graduation. Some find it such a struggle that they choose to withdraw or drop out, while others continue to fail and are effectively removed from the programme. In all cases, their experiences have a significant impact on the people involved. This thesis explores the issue of student primary teachers who struggle or experience failure during the school placement component of their ITE. It examines the contexts, some of the reasons that failure occurs and importantly it explores some of the ways in which such STs can be supported.

This first chapter sets the scene for this particular study on the phenomenon of STs who fail or struggle during SP. The chapter begins by problematising the concepts of struggling and failing and a working definition for the STs that this study examines is outlined. A rationale for the importance of the study is then presented and the aims and the research questions that guided the study are presented. The next section contextualises the study and outlines ITE in the Republic of Ireland. The chapter concludes with the underlying philosophical approach that informed the study and includes a reflexive account of my positionality within the study.

Problematising Failure

The title of this thesis, *When Student Teachers Fail: Perspectives of those in the 'learning to teach' partnership in the Republic of Ireland*, highlights the fact that it examines the context of

STs experience of failure. Allied to the concept of failure, is that of experiencing difficulty or struggling. The words struggling and failing are used throughout this thesis and these are words that have negative connotations. I accept that these might be perceived to be highly loaded and problematic terms. In using this language, I am not making judgements about the individual people, or trying to label this group of people, but rather to acknowledge that struggling and indeed failing are part of the human experience. STs come to be defined in these ways because of the perceptions and judgements of a person or people charged with assessing SP with reference to specific criteria.

In the literature surveyed, there is no clear definition of what a struggling or failing ST is. *Learning to Teach* (DES, 2006) is the only study in the Irish context that examines the quality of the performance of STs on SP. While it does not define struggling or failing STs, it does give us working descriptions for such students. Taking these descriptions, one might understand a struggling ST as one who 'is experiencing general difficulty in their teaching' and a failing ST as 'one whose practice has been considered unsatisfactory.' Criteria for defining competence, like any other set of criteria are arbitrary in many respects. The pass rate for SP in general in the Republic of Ireland and in the three colleges from which STs were sampled in the course of this study is 40% and STs receive a determination of satisfactory or unsatisfactory competence at the end of each assessed visit. For the purposes of definition and sampling, I chose to define a failing ST as ones who received an overall fail grade (i.e. less than 40%) for at least one block of SP. With regard to struggling, I chose to define such STs as those who had received an unsatisfactory competence rating for at least one assessed visit and either chose to withdraw from the block of SP or received an overall final grade for that block of SP that was between 40 and 45%.

Ethical Considerations

From the inception of this study, I was acutely aware that an examination of the experiences of people who have struggled or failed would present ethical challenges. Those who have had such experiences are potentially vulnerable people. At every step, throughout the design, execution, analysis and write-up of this study, the ethical implications of all decisions were considered. The study has been guided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical

Guidelines (2012) and the University of Nottingham's ethics process. Particular attention was paid to the principles of informed consent, anonymity and minimisation of the risk of harm. A detailed discussion on the ethical considerations taken is contained in Chapter 3.

Rationale

Within the overall discourse on teacher quality, the topic of STs who struggle or fail is of importance. For the past decade or more, there has been an unprecedented focus at an international level on the quality of teaching that children experience (Cochran Smith, 2009 & 2012). The analysis of education systems, for example of Finland and Singapore, whose students have performed best in international student performance tests such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), has shown the link between the quality of the teaching and the outcomes for learners. Researchers and policy makers are all in agreement that the quality of teaching, above all other factors in schools, is the most determining factor for the quality of children's learning outcomes. In 2005, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a landmark report entitled *Teachers Matters: Attracting, Retaining and Developing Teachers* (2005). It highlights the importance of a robust system of ITE to recruit and prepare high calibre candidates. The importance of practical school-based experiences is also highlighted within the report and across international policy and research. One of the common international responses in an attempt to ensure teacher quality has been the development of teaching standards or competencies to regulate and evaluate suitability of those entering the profession (Darling-Hammond and Liberman, 2012; Connell, 2006).

There is widespread acceptance in the literature, that the process of learning to teach is complex (e.g. Korthagen et al, 2001, Smith & Lev Ari, 2005, Waldron et al, 2012). A feature of all programmes of ITE is school-based learning or placement. Conway et al (2009, p. 197) emphasise the central role of the in-school component of teacher education in an international comparative study of ITE. The term used to convey the time spent in schools varies from system to system, and from college to college and is referred to in many different ways including; teaching practicum (Rorrison, 2010), teaching practice (Department of Education and Science, 2005), school placement (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2013), field experience (Lee, 2007) and internship

(Siebert et al, 2006). Key roles are played by the class or co-operating teacher (CT) as well as the tutor appointed by the university or college (HEI-PT). Korthagen et al (2001) refer to the relationship between the ST, the CT and the HEI-PT as a 'triadic, learning to teach partnership.' While for most STs, SP is a time of great learning which provides an opportunity to link the theory with the practical realities of the classroom, a small proportion of STs find SP a time of great stress and emotional strain (Rorrison, 2009 and Lee, 2007). Teaching is a human pursuit which requires teachers to invest their own personalities and draw on their personal skills to be effective. For those who struggle or fail, it is not surprising that the impact may be deeply personal. For some, teaching may have been their dream as a career for life and one into which they have invested so much academically, financially and emotionally.

Over the years, many of the incidental conversations I have had with experienced teacher educators and with CTs, have tended to move into discussion on cases encountered by the individual where the ST was struggling or where the ST had failed SP. Every CT and every teacher educator has at least one or two examples of what Knowles and Sudzina (1994, p. 5) refer to as 'war stories from teacher education.' These types of conversations, tend to focus on what such STs couldn't do and on the perceived shortcomings in their practice. These incidental conversations rarely discussed the solutions or how the teacher educator or the experienced host teacher could have supported or helped the ST.

Examinations of the existing literature show that few studies exist which directly explore the experiences of STs who struggle or experience failure on SP. The notable exceptions are studies by Knowles and Sudzina (1994), Rorrison (2009), Lee (2007) and Siebert et al (2006). Each provides an interesting perspective on the subject. Knowles and Sudzina (1994) examine the records of 20 STs who either failed or withdrew from an ITE programme in the United States. Rorrison's study examines the experiences of STs in the Australian context. The personal trauma that the experience has on such STs is highlighted. Lee's study focuses on the experience of one placement tutor, who is terminating the placement of one ST. The impact that STs who fail SP has on three co-operating teachers in the United States is explored in Siebert et al's paper. All studies acknowledge the complexity of the phenomenon and the emotional toll that the

experience has, particularly on the STs. The issue has not really been examined to any great extent in the Irish context. *Learning to Teach* (DES 2005) suggests that the topic is worthy of investigation. It is a quantitative, positivist study drawing on classroom observations of final year STs, on final SP across five initial teacher education programmes. It found that 5% of those STs were deemed to be performing at 'unsatisfactory levels', while a further 7% were deemed to be experiencing 'significant difficulties.' The study leaves many questions unanswered, as its scope was to comment quantitatively on the STs' levels of performance. It does not provide any qualitative information regarding the reasons for the difficulties, the impacts of those difficulties or how such STs were being supported. The study paints a worrying picture for teacher quality in Ireland, as some 12% of the STs observed, who were nearing graduation were not performing at effective levels.

Given this paucity of research, there is a significant and urgent need to learn more about this painful and difficult phenomenon within the human experience. Education policy makers need to be able to understand why such STs are experiencing difficulties, how the difficulties emerge, the impact that they have and how such STs should or can be supported. These issues are pertinent to those involved in initial teacher education and in the broader sense to those who contribute to the body of knowledge on teacher quality. To make fully informed decisions about ITE and teacher quality, it is necessary for the education community to fully understand the experiences of all who attempt to become teachers including STs who struggle, experience failure or do not complete initial teacher education.

Research Aims and Questions

This thesis examines the issue of student teachers who fail or struggle during the school placement component of their initial teacher education. It seeks to:

- Gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teachers.
- Explore the impact of the struggles and / or failure, on student teachers themselves, on co-operating teachers and on HEI placement tutors.
- Identify the forms of support available to struggling and failing student teachers and examine their perceived benefits and limitations.

The research encompassed a qualitative phenomenological study drawing on 18 semi-structured interviews, with members of triadic learning to teach partnerships in the Republic of Ireland. A triadic learning to teach partnership is understood as the partnership between a student teacher, a co-operating teacher and a HEI-placement tutor, where the student teacher is learning to teach on a programme of ITE. It sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school placement and how effective were these forms of support perceived to be?
4. What additional supports were identified by members of triadic learning to teach partnerships as potentially being useful in this context?

Research Context

The study was conducted and collated in the Republic of Ireland between August 2014 and March 2016, with data collection occurring between September 2014 and April 2015. Throughout this thesis, I have adopted the language, titles and structures relating to ITE that have been set out in the policy documents of the Teaching Council of Ireland (2011 and 2013). Table 1.1, below, sets out some of the specific terms, accompanied by the definition from the glossary sections of those policy documents. The abbreviations for these terms are generally used throughout the thesis.

Table 1.1 Definition of ITE terminology in use in the Republic of Ireland

Co-operating teacher (CT)	A co-operating teacher is a teacher in the placement school who supports and guides the ST and who acts as a point of contact between the HEI and the school.
Director of School Placement (DSP)	The staff member in a HEI who takes an overall leadership role for the organisation, management and assessment of school placement.
Higher Education Institute (HEI)	HEI or Higher Education Institution denotes those public and private colleges, universities and other third level bodies providing one or more accredited programmes of initial teacher education.

HEI Placement Tutor (HEI-PT)	A HEI Placement tutor is a person engaged by a HEI to support and mentor student teachers and evaluate their practice while on placement. Traditionally, the term 'supervisor' was widely used, but the Council considers that the term tutor more accurately reflects the nature of the role.
School Placement (SP)	School placement is designed to give the student teacher an opportunity to learn about teaching and learning, to gain practice in teaching, to apply educational theory in a variety of teaching and learning situations and school contexts and to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported. It replaces the term "teaching practice" and more accurately reflects the nature of the experience as encompassing a range of teaching and non-teaching activities.
Student teacher (ST)	A student teacher is a student who is engaged in a programme of initial teacher education.

The study was constructed as an interpretive phenomenological study, with participants recruited from across three colleges that provide ITE for primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland. All participants were guaranteed anonymity at individual and institutional level. Semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection. Interviews were conducted with five former primary STs who had failed or struggled during SP, five co-operating teachers and five HEI placement tutors who had worked with such STs as well as with the director of school placement (DSP) in each of the three HEIs. Individual participants independently elected to be part of the study and were not connected or in a learning to teach relationships / partnerships with each other.

At the outset of the study, I anticipated that it might be difficult to recruit individuals to the study, and in particular I anticipated that STs might be reluctant to participate. To maximise the potential of achieving a full sample, I chose to recruit participants across three HEIs. The study was not constructed as a comparative study and no efforts were made to compare or contrast findings between HEIs. The three HEIs from which the participants have been drawn, are three diverse providers of ITE. All of the STs had come through a postgraduate programme of study. Access to former STs on postgraduates programmes, presented as the easiest route to access.

Initial Teacher Education in the Republic of Ireland

Traditionally, ITE for primary teachers in Ireland was provided in colleges of education. These colleges reflected the denominational structure of Irish education, although funded and initially controlled by central government, they were managed by the sponsoring church body. Over time they became linked to education departments in the universities. While the universities became the awarding body, colleges maintained autonomy. Of the five colleges of education, four reflect a Roman Catholic ethos and the fifth is managed by the Church of Ireland (Coolahan, 1981, Smith, 2012). In the 1970s a Bachelor of Education became the main route into primary teaching. In the 1990s a post-graduate route into the profession was established, however it initially provided fewer than 10% of teachers (Coolahan, 2003).

In the early part of the 21st century, the chronic shortage of qualified teachers resulted in many schools employing unqualified teachers. After significant trade union pressure, capacity on post-graduate programmes was increased and another provider of ITE emerged. There was considerable public criticism of the Department of Education and Science's decision to permit a private, for-profit college to offer a blended learning, post graduate entry route, to primary teaching in 2003. Smith (2012) has tracked the increase in the numbers of teachers entering the profession over the past decade and highlighted that by 2012, over 40% of new entrants were qualified through post-graduate programmes. Until recently those qualifying through the post-graduate route were awarded either a higher diploma or a graduate diploma in primary education. The recent policy shifts, led by the Teaching Council, have seen the post-graduate entry route lengthen to two years and reframed as a professional master's qualification. Currently, there is considerable debate on the issue of teacher supply. Although there is evidence of a growth in the school going population, there is concern (eg Smith, 2012; the Teaching Council, 2014) that too many candidates are being admitted to, and subsequently graduating from ITE programmes.

SP in the Republic of Ireland, as in other systems is seen as a time of key learning. Traditionally referred to as teaching practice (TP), SP is usually a portion of the programme which involves considerable assessment and generally carries more credit than other modules. Individual HEIs have differing assessment practices for SP, but assessment is generally carried out by the

placement tutor (HEI-PT). The placement tutor is either a member of the academic staff or a contracted part-time tutor. Many of the contracted part-time tutors are retired teachers, retired principals, retired inspectors or serving teachers on career break or who are job-sharing. The traditional role of the co-operating teacher has been that of host teacher, however a number of studies in the Irish context (e.g. Ní Ainglais, 2007, 2012), have advocated for a more defined role for the CT. The HEI-PT generally assesses STs' performance based on the observed lessons during visits and on the lessons presented in the STs' portfolios. In some HEIs, several tutors see the ST over a block of SP and each HEI has its own assessment criteria and marking system. It is customary for each assessed visit to be deemed either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, where satisfactory is 40% and above and unsatisfactory is where practice is deemed below a pass standard.

ITE in the republic of Ireland is currently in a time of very significant change. Responsibility for regulation of initial teacher education has shifted in recent years to the Teaching Council, since the enactment of the Teaching Council Act (Government of Ireland, 2001). In 2011, the council published, *Criterion and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Providers*, (Accessible at: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Initial-Teacher-Education-Criteria-and-Guidelines-for-Programme-Providers.pdf>) which reflect many of the international trends that are prevalent in the teacher quality debate, including a focus on literacy and numeracy and for the first time in the Irish context the articulation of a competence framework and specific standards that beginning teachers should possess. These standards are framed as learning outcomes for those graduating from programmes of ITE. The document mandates providers to lengthen programmes to accommodate the implementation of substantial curriculum changes. Significantly, SP periods have been extended and must attract greater credit weighting, and a more significant role is proposed for the CT. *Guidelines on School Placement* was published as an addendum in 2013, with the overarching aim of:

'ensuring greater consistency in the school placement experience of all student teachers, given the centrality of that experience to the formation of teachers of the future.'

(Teaching Council, 2013, p. 3)

During 2014 and 2015, all providers of ITE were required to present reconceptualised programmes for professional accreditation by the council. The Teaching Council have also

recently published standards for experienced teachers (2016) that include expectations for teachers' professional learning. The second significant policy change is on foot of a report to the Higher Education Authority by an international review panel, chaired by Professor Pasi Sahlberg, entitled *Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (2012). The report's recommendations included, the rationalisation of publically funded providers of ITE and the amalgamation of HEIs into six large institutes of ITE for both primary and post-primary teachers within the universities. At the time of writing, there is still debate on the configuration to these larger institutes. One college has already moved to a university setting and the incorporation of three other colleges into universities is planned for September 2016.

Philosophical Approach and Positionality

Research is predicated on an underlying position that the reality of the social world is created by the participants who engage within it (McIntosh, 2008). Allied to this is the epistemological position that this reality or knowledge of the social world can only be constructed through individuals' perceptions or beliefs, which may be influenced in a variety of ways according to their experience, circumstances, time or context. This alignment between epistemological and ontological underpinnings is further reflected in the qualitative research methodology of the study. The study draws on interviews with individual members of the learning to teach partnership who had a unique and individual insight into the phenomenon of STs who struggled or had failed. However, just as each participant's experiences and understanding of the phenomenon is influenced by their personal values and beliefs, this research is influenced by my own experience and values (Bryman, 2008) or positionality in relation to the study.

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

(Anfara and Mertz, 2006, 4)

It is important at this point for me to disclose my position, as all academic work is shaped by the writer's own particular stance (Creswell, 2008: 179). Creswell (2008) also suggests that all researchers should present a professional biography as a means of adopting a reflexive approach, so that any potential biases, values and assumptions are made more transparent.

I currently work as a schools' inspector within the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills, in an evaluative and advisory capacity with primary schools in the South Dublin and South-Eastern region of the country. Critics of my role, argue that the work of inspectorates contribute to an increased managerialist culture in the education system. Part of my work involves the evaluation of the classroom practice of newly qualified teachers, completing their probationary period. This requires me to give an overall assessment judgement on their professional competency, based on national criteria. These criteria are effectively national standards that have been created by the Teaching Council for beginning teachers. This aspect of my role gives me an opportunity to work with teachers who have just completed ITE. Most of the newly qualified teachers that I have worked with have reached the required standard to be rated as satisfactory or above. However, I have had to extend the probationary period and deem the work of a small number of newly qualified teachers as not being of the required professional standard.

I have worked in a variety of jobs in my career to date, all of which have been in the field of education. I qualified as a teacher with a Bachelor of Education in 1998. SP, or teaching practice (TP) as it was then known, was a key component of the programme. My own experience of ITE was positive overall and I performed well in particular on TP, with the final result amongst my higher grades. Upon graduation, I taught in an urban all boys' disadvantaged school. As a school, it was a challenging work environment and as a young inexperienced teacher, I was supported by my principal and a number of senior colleagues. During that time, I completed a graduate diploma in Music Education and a Masters' degree. After 9 years teaching in that school, I was seconded to the Primary Curriculum Support Programme where I worked as a regional curriculum and organisation advisor, delivering training and bespoke support to teachers and school staffs. My work as a teacher and a facilitator of teacher CPD has shaped my values and educational beliefs.

In 2009, I was appointed as Deputy Programme Director / Director of School Placement on a post-graduate ITE programme for primary teachers. My role as Director of School Placement is what prompted my interest in the topic of this doctoral study and motivated me to explore the issue further. I was responsible for the organisation, management and oversight of the

assessment of SP for the 400+ students enrolled on the programme at any one time. This required me to evaluate the performance of a random sample of STs and to be the 'assessor of last resort', in cases which required further deliberation or a second perspective. As part of the latter, I frequently encountered STs who were struggling or who were failing on SP. I was part of the assessment team that had to make a decision to issue a fail grade or terminate the placement of an ST. I was also responsible for overseeing the design and development of models of support for such STs. I experienced first-hand, the professional challenges faced by DSPs and HEI-PTs, and I worked with CTs who were hosting such STs. I was often the person in the programme leadership who had to communicate to an ST that they were failing a block of SP. In all cases, the experience was having a profound effect on the individual ST concerned and I questioned the extent that the HEI was supporting each ST's individual needs.

I also need to declare a lived personal experience. About ten years ago, a person known to me decided to enrol on a postgraduate ITE primary programme, following a successful career in another field. While the person succeeded at the academic components of the programme, the particular individual struggled on SP and failed one block on first attempt. While ultimately my acquaintance did pass on a repeat opportunity, I saw first-hand both the profound emotional impact that the experience had on their life as well as what I perceived to be a lack of support from the HEI at which they were studying. Ultimately, they made a decision not to work as a teacher and entered another field.

My professional journey has afforded me a wide range of experiences that have allowed me to develop my interest in education generally and particularly in the areas of teacher quality and teacher education. I have undoubtedly been influenced by my professional experiences and my own career journey to date. My values and beliefs have been shaped by my experiences and they have had a bearing throughout this research process. Bryman (2012) argues that our beliefs affect all aspects of research, including the area of study chosen, the formulation of research questions, the methodology, data analysis and the conclusions that are drawn. I am also aware that analysis may be open to interpretation and I strove to make the analysis process as open and transparent as possible. In line with University of Nottingham's suggested best practice, all

data analysis documentation has been kept in case the bias needs to be investigated by another party. Throughout the study, I tried to ensure that I was reflexive and that I maintained criticality regarding my own work. I constantly reflected and questioned the conclusions that I drew and decisions that I was making, and considered what was influencing them. These issues have been raised at this point, as it is important to present these matters to the reader from the outset so that the reader has some sense of who I am in relation to the work (Bryman, 2012). Other more complex issues regarding my positionality will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Thesis Structure

This first chapter has set the scene for the overall study on STs who struggle or fail during the SP component of ITE. The chapter began by problematizing the term failure and outlined what is understood in this study as a struggling or failing ST. This was followed by an exploration of the rationale for the study both in terms of importance and need, which is cited within the overall debate on teacher quality. The research aims and research questions were then outlined and were followed by a note on the context for the research. The final section of the chapter outlines the philosophical underpinning of the study and includes a reflexive account of my professional role and my positionality in relation to the study.

Chapter two of this thesis provides a critical analysis of the existing literature, which I examined in seeking to explore the phenomenon. This literature has been instrumental in the creation of the research aims and questions and has shaped and structured the study. Chapter three outlines the research methodology and data analysis procedures employed in the course of the study. Chapter four reports on the findings of the study and attempts to provide answers to the research questions using the data captured during the study and discusses the findings in relation to the literature. The key findings are synthesised and robustly explored in chapter five. Four key concepts emerge: the assessment of SP and the need for a standards-led approach; six typologies of STs who struggle or experience failure; potential responses to support STs who experience the phenomenon; as well as the need for the re-conceptualisation of the role played by the CT in the Irish context. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the study by outlining the contributions of the research to the body of knowledge and to policy formation in Ireland and further afield.

Arising from my conclusions and observations, inevitably suggestions for the applications of the findings and for further research emerge and these are outlined towards the end of chapter six.

Chapter 2: Exploring the Literature

Introduction

This chapter presents the literature that has influenced and shaped the study. As outlined in chapter 1, there is a significant absence of research on the issue of struggling and failing student teachers (STs). Given this paucity, the scope of the literature review was widened to include bodies of literature that build an understanding of the broader areas as well as of the specific phenomenon. A particular examination is made of the limited number of studies that have already explored the topic of STs who struggle or fail during this chapter.

The first of four sections presents an exploration of the broader question of teacher quality. It attempts to cite the phenomenon of struggling and failing STs in that larger political landscape and explores how the teacher quality debate has influenced initial teacher education (ITE). This first section examines the use of standards for teaching and teacher competences to assure teacher quality, their impact on teacher professionalism and also examines how teacher underperformance is managed. Section two explores some of the 'learning to teach' literature and analyses some of the relevant debates and concepts within the area of ITE. Within this, the literature in relation to school placement is examined. Section three specifically looks at the limited number of studies that already exist and that give an insight into STs who struggle or experience failure. The fourth and final section analyses the emergence of the research questions and explores how the literature surveyed has informed and influenced by this literature survey.

Teacher Quality

In recent years and in many countries around the world, there has been an unprecedented focus on the question of teacher quality (Cochran- Smith, 2012). There is a vast amount of research, commentary and discourse that focuses on the quality of teaching. According to Lieberman, (in Day and Gu, 2014, p. xi) 'there is no greater phrase that is as popular and as prevalent as the idea that *teacher quality* is the key to good schools.' The Organisation of Economic Cooperation

and Development (OECD) report (2005), aptly named *Teachers Matter*, summarised its findings of a meta-analysis of research on the factors that determine successful student learning by saying that although the largest variation in student outcomes is attributable to social background and students' abilities, the most important factor 'potentially open to policy influence' is the quality of the teachers that learners encounter (OECD, 2005, p. 26). The significance of the quality of the teaching experienced by students and its correlation to their learning and achievement has been echoed by other researchers and commentators (e.g. Day and Gu, 2014; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Day and Gu (2014, p. xvii), make the distinction between *teacher quality* and *teaching quality* and make the argument that while the person or teacher may have qualities that enable good teaching, it is the quality of the action of teaching as opposed to just the 'person of teacher' that makes the difference.

Much of the discourse on teacher quality has emerged through the focus on student achievement (Cochran Smith, 2012). Recent decades have brought a raft of international comparison studies, such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA), which examines the achievement levels of 15 years olds in literacy, mathematics and science. Governments and policy makers have focused on the evidence from these studies to examine student achievement and teacher quality at country level. Countries such as Finland and Singapore that consistently do well in these studies have attracted much attention and comparison (e.g. Conway et al, 2009; Darling-Hammond and Lieberman, 2012). In the Republic of Ireland, considerable political and policy discussion took place following the sudden drop in the country's ranking in the PISA assessments in 2009 which resulted in a heightened focus on teacher quality, school self-evaluation and a drive for improvements (Smith, 2012). While the importance of teacher quality is undisputed, there has been some hefty criticism of the link that is made between student attainment in standardised tests and teacher quality. Commentators such as Ball (2003 and 2008) and Stevenson and Wood (2013) argue that too much focus is placed on such high stakes testing resulting in a marketization of teaching and a managerialist approach to teacher professionalism, that ultimately diminishes teacher quality.

As one might expect, the focus on teacher quality has resulted in high expectations of how teachers perform and questions regarding how teachers are recruited, prepared and supported throughout their careers are among some of the key concerns (Cochran Smith and Fries, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012; SCoTENS, 2007). Darling-Hammond and Liberman (2012), devote a whole volume to the changing policies and practices in teacher education around the world. Individual contributors present the varying models of ITE in seven different countries. In their summary chapter, Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012, 157) highlight a direct correlation between how countries, such as Finland and Singapore, rank on PISA scores and the quality of candidates that are recruited to teaching and the level of qualification that they achieve. Finland in particular has been the focus of much attention over the past few years since its 'miraculous' improvement in learner outcome (Sahlberg, 2010). Sahlberg, attributes the success of the Finish system to its 'excellent teachers', realised by a strategic teacher education policy, high levels of funding for teacher education, a profession held in high public regard, and high levels of academic achievement amongst teaching candidates.

There is no one definition of what an effective teacher is, and the research into teacher quality and teacher effectiveness is vast. Studies by Lingard et al. (2002) and Ayres et al. (2000) identify a range of skills and qualities that affect the effectiveness of teachers including: communication skills; sound subject knowledge; problem-solving skills; organisational skills; classroom management skills; variety in teaching methods and research skills. Hattie's (2003) work draws on extensive research, and isolates five key features of how highly effective teachers operate. He claims that 'expert teachers' are those who: identify essential representations of their subject, based on how they organise and use their content knowledge; create optimal classroom environments and guide learning with meaningful classroom interactions; monitor students' learning and give regular feedback; have a passion for teaching and learning and promote effective outcomes through the manner in which they treat students; and engage students with challenging tasks and goals to enable "deep" learning. Hattie (2003) argues that these attributes are not an auditable list but overlap each other to create a profile of an expert teacher. "There is no one necessary facet, nor the equal presence of all, but the overlapping of many facets into the

whole” (p. 10). Publications such as those by Wragg, (2005), Kyriacou (2007) and Pollard (2008) devote whole volumes to detailing what teachers need to do to be both effective and successful. Much of the literature examines the link between teacher identity and effective teaching. Day (2004, 54) suggests that ‘a sense of personal and professional, intellectual, social and emotional identity is at the core of being an effective teacher.’ Some studies centre on the personalities and personal attributes of teachers and their importance for teachers’ effectiveness. Personality factors such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness have been linked to teacher effectiveness (Anglim and Grant, 2014; Sautelle et al, 2015). Sautelle et al (2015) argue that personality, self-regulation, cognitive ability and resilience are essential characteristics of effective teachers. The notion of teacher resilience has emerged in recent years as a key trait of the effective teacher and has been used as a lens to examine and study many professions, occupations and experiences. Day and Gu, see teachers’ ability to be resilient as:

...not primarily associated with the capacity to ‘bounce back’ or recover from highly traumatic experiences and events but, rather, the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday world in which teachers teach.

(Gu and Day, 2013: p. 26)

Through their research, they have established that resilience in teachers is context and role specific and acknowledge that resilience may be affected by personal lives and other contextual factors (2014, p. 11). Day and Gu (2013 & 2014) stress the importance of how teachers view themselves and highlight how relationships with others in the school or learning community are important for teacher resilience, but also acknowledge the lack of research regarding so called ‘relational resilience’ (Day and Gu 2014, p. 9). Le Cornu (2008) has highlighted the particular importance of resilience for beginning teachers, with Tait (2005, 12) concluding that ‘resilience is probably one of the most important strengths for novice teachers.’ Day and Gu, do not explicitly discuss resilience for STs, however acknowledge that resilience should be ‘actively nurtured through initial training’ as well as throughout teachers’ careers (2014, p. 21).

According to both Connell (2009) and Moore (2004), the notion of what makes good teachers varies over time and both between and within cultures. Moore’s study, *The Good Teacher* finds three diverse and competing categories of the good teacher in England in the twenty-first century. Firstly, a competent craftsperson model, which Moore argues is preferred by policy makers and

government, secondly the reflective practitioner model, which is aspired to by the universities, and thirdly the charismatic model of teacher, as is represented in popular culture. Connell (2009) tracks the evolution of the good teacher in Australia and claims that the emergence of the competence-based approach to ensuring quality in teachers and to ITE places 'good teachers on dangerous ground.'

Standards and Competence Debate

One attempt by policy makers to ensure teacher quality has been to define what an effective teacher does or exemplifies, through the development of standards for teachers or teacher competences. In an effort to raise teacher quality, there has been an international trend towards ensuring that those who graduate from ITE are competent. The idea of defining standards for what teachers do is not new, with discussion from McDonald in the US as far back as 1956 of the emergence of a 'professional standards movement.' Connell (2009), argues that the focus on teacher quality has resulted in a shift in the discourse from the good teacher to the competent teacher. Conway et al (2009, p. xxxv), suggest that standards are articulated as competences, defined as "statements of the attributes, skills and knowledge that teachers as professionals should possess and exemplify." They note that in some jurisdictions they are called competencies (e.g. New Zealand) while other have opted for teacher standards. Cochran-Smith (2012) claims that there are shifting notions of accountability and that there has been a movement in focus from input to outputs. This shifting notion of accountability is exemplified in Solbrekke & Sugrue's (2014) work, which examines how new policy structures in Ireland and Norway are impacting on the leadership in HEIs providing ITE.

In the Republic of Ireland, there was much public discourse regarding the need for teaching standards (Kelleghan 2002, SCoTENS 2007, and Conway et al, 2009) while others warned against the quantification of teacher competence (SCoTENS 2007, O'Doherty 2009). In June 2011, the Teaching Council of Ireland published *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers*. This document essentially outlines standards that those entering the profession must possess. Instead of referring to them as standard or competences, the council has called them learning outcomes. These learning outcomes, of which there are 52, are

accompanied by specific requirements for providers in terms of course structure, content and processes, and must be adhered to by all providers. Effectively, teaching standards are now a reality in the Irish teacher education system and are impacting on ITE programmes, including school placement.

Proponents of standards, such as the OECD, policy makers and media commentators, argue the need for their existence to ensure accountability at entry to and within the profession. Cochran-Smith (2012) suggests that they have become common place in education systems across the world. Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012) (156), argue that a standards based approach has the potential to strengthen student teachers' learning experiences and claim that their use will result in 'a more common set of knowledge, skills and commitments across the profession.' They advocate for the clear articulation of standards, clarity about how they are to be used and suggest that they provide transparency. Burke (2007), called for the introduction of standards in the Irish context, to aid the assessment of STs, so that there would be a shared and common understanding of what beginning teachers need to be able to do. The use of the competence approach has not received universal approval within the literature. Connell (2009) and Ball (2003) argue that they are marketised and neoliberal. Ball (2003) cites the teacher competency debate within a discussion around the origins, processes and effects of performativity. He defines performativity (p. 216) as

a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change, based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic).

He argues that performativity within education has resulted in a fascination with statistical improvement, the eroding of professional autonomy and creativity as well as the isolation of teachers. Connell (2009, 218), suggests that one of the dangers of standards is that they become a list of 'auditable factors that become the whole rationale for a teacher education programme,' eroding the need for the conceptualisation of education as an intellectual discipline. Day (2004, 5), suggests that if standards are used as something to judge teachers against, rather than as benchmarks, they may ignore the complexity and moral purpose that is involved in teaching and that it may be downgraded to the possession of a 'cluster of baseline technical skills' and may be equally as narrow as to judge 'pupil progress only against their results in tests that focus upon a

relatively narrow range of achievements' (p. 6). He emphasises the importance of passion and moral purpose as well as knowledge of and for teaching.

Other commentators are critical of the standards approach, because they claim the emotional work of teaching may be ignored or overlooked. The importance of the emotional work of teaching is widely acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Day, 2004; Hargreaves, 1998; Hebson et al, 2007 and Hong, 2010). Hargreaves (1998) suggests that 'Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines, they are emotional, passionate beings...' He posits that 'Teaching cannot be reduced to technical competence or clinical standards. It involves significant emotional understanding and emotional labour as well' (p. 849). Connell (2009) suggest that while it is possible to include this aspects of teachers' work within standards, this aspect of a teachers' work is very difficult to assess.

Teacher Professionalism

The use of a competency approach to teacher quality and indeed the overall movement to raise educational standards has brought about considerable discussion about the nature of teacher professionalism. Some commentators (e.g. Sachs, 2003; Stevenson and Wood, 2013 and Parker, 2015) have asserted the view that the focus on competences and raising standards have resulted in a reduction in teachers' professional standing and diminished teacher autonomy. Parker (2015) claims that the current model of teacher professionalism is postmodernist and she and Connell (2009) argue that autonomy has been replaced by managerialism. Stevenson and Wood (2013) are critical of the evolving managerialism in England, while Sachs (2003) calls on teachers to reject the standards agenda. She identifies teachers who comply with and are accountable to externally imposed performance indicators as entrepreneurial in orientation but encourages teachers to re-orient towards activism. She sees activism as mobilizing and enabling teachers to make decisions in the best interests of student learning. She suggests that teachers who identify with entrepreneurialism fall into what is desired by the performativity agenda, and suggests that what is needed is professionals who reject 'dull routine' and 'homogeneity of practice' (Sachs, 2003, 15).

Hebson et al (2007) argue that the competence approach to ensuring teacher quality has resulted in the commodification of teachers' emotions and that teaching now involves emotional labour. They argue that in the context of the educational reforms agenda and increased performativity, that 'the emotional work that teachers are expected to perform is becoming increasingly prescribed' (p. 675) and that the management of teacher emotions is mirroring that of the service sector. Emotional labour is a concept first coined by sociologist Hochschild (1983) based on research on the work of flight attendants, arguing that their jobs required the portrayal of an emotional façade while at the same time suppressing their own feelings. The portrayal of the emotion essentially becomes part of the job and as such the emotion is managed by the employer. The concept has been applied to other service industry workers and in recent years to public sector professionals (Bolton, 2004).

While Connell (2009, 222) suggests that the varying needs of our schools require variety in professional types, she acknowledges (p. 226) that standards and teacher competencies are here to stay and that they are transforming our understanding of what a 'good teacher' is and does. The existence of this type of professionalism is the backdrop for initial teacher education. In many countries STs are being assessed against the prescribed standards for their particular jurisdiction. There is also a possibility, that where the performative culture pervades, STs' practice or progress may be narrowly or even unfairly interpreted. The performative culture may be devaluing strengths or, as suggested by Connell (2009), ignoring traits and characteristics that are difficult to assess or do not sit neatly within the competence structure. However, one of the distinct advantages of the assessment of STs against prescribed standards is the potential it brings for openness and transparency, something that is highlighted as a need by STs in studies by Boxall et al, (1999); Chiresche and Chiresche (2003).

Underperformance in the Profession

With or without the existence of defined standards, there have always been teachers whose performance has been considered or perceived to be unsatisfactory or whose abilities and capabilities have been called into question. To effectively understand the question of teacher quality, there is also a need to explore the corollary. Various negative terms have been used to

describe teachers whose practice is perceived not to be satisfactory, including 'incompetent' (Bridges, 1990 and 1992), 'underperforming' (Fiddler and Atton, 1999) or simply 'failing' (Wragg et al, 2000). The work of Edwin M. Bridges (1990 and 1992) is seminal in the field. In the introduction (p. 19) to his second book, based on his studies in California, Bridges made claims that as many as 15% (2.7 million) of American teachers in state-funded schools 'are performing at incompetent levels', a figure also suggested by Kent (2005). He makes a link between the levels of incompetence among American teachers and the courses from which they have graduated. He claims that some candidates graduate without reaching 'the required standard of competence' and alleges that there is a failure to fail underperforming candidates in ITE. This assertion is echoed in Doerger and Dallmer, 2008 and Kent, 2005. Kent's paper details the practice of one ITE course in Alabama that is addressing concerns of so-called unsuitable candidates by involving schools and school districts in the initial selection and evaluation of candidates on placement as a quality assurance measure. The university in turn is involved in the quality assurance of teachers in the state school system and in supporting teachers whose competence is called into question.

Wragg et al's, *Failing Teachers?* (2000) explores the effects of underperforming teachers in England. It reports on a large scale study, carried out over a two-year period examining the contexts of teachers who had been labelled as failing, considered to be underperforming or whose practice had been called into question. From the outset, Wragg et al, acknowledge the complexity of attempting research on the whole area of underperformance. They acknowledge the personal difficulties that are presented within the individual cases and make the point that teachers who have been accused of professional incompetence are a very vulnerable group of individuals (p. 36). Their study explored the phenomenon from a variety of perspectives including head teachers, LEAs, parents, colleagues and the failing teachers themselves. One of the limitations of this study is that it does not make reference to STs. The majority of the 684 cases discussed with head teachers had more than 10 years teaching experience (p. 56), however, 16% of the teachers had less than 3 years teaching experience. Of these, there were equal proportions of teachers whose practice improved as those whose did not. One of the interesting findings of the study is that when formal competence procedures are taken against a teacher, such procedures rarely bring about

improvement in performance, but rather result in teachers electing to leave the profession Overall, while an informative study, its value is limited due to the fact that it is now 17 years old.

Hebson et al (2007), explore the cases of 26 teachers in England whose capabilities had been called into question, either through the invoking of incompetence procedures or the threat of them. Their main focus is on the existence of emotional labour for teachers in this position. However, their findings also suggest that determining teacher competence can be subjective and may be open to personal biases. Some of the respondents described how their approach to teaching, their core mission and their understanding of good teaching differed philosophically from the principal, LEA advisor or inspector. Several respondents claimed that the care aspect of teaching was completely undervalued by those assessing their capabilities. There was evidence too that difficulties may be context specific. One of the respondents whose competence was questioned, but who did not enter formal competence proceedings, left the school and reported success as a teacher in a different context (p. 687). The high stakes nature and emotional pressure of the experience impacted significantly on some respondents. Others discussed teaching in front of those who were evaluating their competence and their feelings of adopting a particular persona or 'managed emotion' in order to prove their competence.

Fidler and Atton (1999), approach the topic from the perspective of principals and school governors and apply a corporate, human resource model to the management of such personnel. Much of the early part of the research is given to discussing the prevention of underperformance, while the second half of the book examines the specific causes and explores some of the ways school managers can address underperformance. One study in the Irish context, by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (2005), poses some concerns regarding the competence of a proportion of beginning teachers. It reports on a survey of a large cohort of newly qualified teachers on their perceived competence levels as well as the findings of the Inspectorate on evaluations of such teachers. A large proportion of newly qualified teachers reported significant gaps in their perceived competence and the study highlighted that a small proportion of newly qualified teachers (3%) failed to successfully complete probation. A further 3% were not included within the reported statistics because their probationary period had been

extended. The study is limited by its quantitative design, and the reader does not get a real sense of the difficulties faced by these teachers or the reasons for their failure. No further research on the issue of teacher competence was evident from searches in Ireland. Section 24 of the 1998 Education Act was enacted in 2009 and provides for procedures for school managers to question teachers' competence and invoke proceedings to address concerns. No statistics on the deployment of the procedures is currently available, although a report is planned by the Department of Education and Skills in 2017.

Learning to Teach

As has already been discussed, ITE is a vital factor in the assuring teacher quality at a policy and systemic level. The purpose of ITE is to provide teachers to educational systems who have the knowledge and skills to be effective in classrooms. By virtue of this fact, there will always be a cohort of STs who do not make it through ITE, and who do not have the capability to be effective in classrooms, regardless of what kind of a competency framework is used. Indeed, it is incumbent on ITE to prevent the entry of underperforming teachers to the wider system. Vast swathes of literature have been devoted to ITE and to the process of learning to teach. Researchers examine a wide range of topics and concepts of concern to the beginning teacher and indeed the teacher educator. This section focuses on some of the key areas relevant to understanding the phenomenon of STs who struggle or fail and how best they might be supported. In an effort to explore their context and experiences, specific examinations are made of the dominant models and curriculum concerns of ITE; the centrality of SP; as well as the roles played by the school, the co-operating teacher and the placement tutors. Spotlights are also placed on the assessment of SP, reflective practice, the selection of candidates for ITE and student teacher identity.

There is general acceptance in the literature that learning to teach is a highly complex process. Shulman (2004) describes the art of teaching as 'the most demanding, subtle, nuanced and frightening activity that our species ever invented... (p. 504).' Lysaght (2012, p. 155) identifies three key challenges that those who are learning to teach must overcome. The first, 'to divest themselves of any preconceptions they hold about teaching', many of which are developed during

what Lortie (1975) termed their apprenticeship of observation. The second, to begin to think and act like teachers in the classroom by overcoming the problem of enactment and finally, STs need to 'accept and respond creatively' to the complexity of the classroom by 'developing meta-cognitive knowledge and skills of self-regulation.

Curriculum or programme design within teacher education varies very much from country to country and from programme to programme (Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012, 159). In the debate on teacher quality, commentators such as Darling-Hammond (2006) and Sahlberg (2010) highlight the need for systematic curriculum design for programmes of ITE. The issue of where teachers are prepared is a matter of considerable discussion within the literature. Indeed, there is a lack of agreement on what that 'preparation' should be called. Furlong (2012) highlights that in England and Wales, preparation is referred to as teacher training, in the US it is called teacher preparation and in Scotland and Northern Ireland it is entitled initial teacher education. Over the past fifteen years, a range of what Cochran-Smith (2012) terms 'alternate routes to teacher certification' have emerged in many jurisdictions. Many of these have been criticised as being neo-liberal and with the express intentions by governments to save money, remove university influence and privatise teacher education (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2012 and Furlong, 2009). Cochran-Smith (2012), Darling-Hammond and Liberman (2012) and Furlong (2012) have all claimed that such programmes overtly focus on the practical application of teaching, without sufficient focus on theoretical or pedagogical learning. Examples of such programmes include *Teach for America* in the US and *Schools Direct* in England and Wales. Furlong (2012, pp 54 – 71) makes the case for teacher education within the university setting and has been a long term critic of the policy decision in England to give an enhanced role to schools in the preparation of teachers (2000 and 2009).

Cochran-Smith (2012) encourages concern about who is involved in the education of teachers and how they are prepared to work with them. The study of the teacher educator as a discipline continues to emerge within the literature (Loughran, 2006; Kent 2005). Korthagen (2012) suggests there is a need to study the role further and to develop professional development and ongoing supports for teacher educators. Furlong (2012, 60) highlights the low number of doctoral

qualified personnel, working on teacher preparation programmes in England. Sahlberg and Draper in Darling-Hammond and Lieberman's 2012 volume, both point to the existence of specific teacher-training schools in their own systems of Finland and Hong Kong, where teachers who work with STs are experienced and qualified as teacher educators.

Lanier and Little (1986) claim that the theory / practice divide has remained the central problem in formal teacher education since the discipline came into existence. With the development of pedagogical and scientific knowledge in the 20th century, academics strove to provide theoretical knowledge to aspiring teachers, and it was assumed that they would employ it when they got to the classroom (Korthagen, 2012, 117). Korthagen, refers to this approach as 'a theory to practice' model of teacher education. Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998), p,167) put it like this:

...the implicit theory underlying traditional teacher education was based on a training model in which the university provides the theory, methods and skills; the schools provide the setting in which that knowledge is practices; and the beginning teacher provides the individual effort to apply such knowledge.

A variety of studies has shown that the traditional theory to practice model of teacher education has little influence on the actual practice of beginning or novice teachers (e.g. Mayer-Smith and Moon, 1998; Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005; Cole and Knowles, 1993). Various theorists and teacher educators have proposed models in an effort to bridge the divide between theory and practice, notably Schön (1983), Korthagen and Lagerward (1996) and Korthagen (2012).

Shulman (1986, p.8) suggests that STs essentially require a variety of kinds of knowledge when they are learning to be teachers including content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values as well as their philosophical and historical underpinnings. The development of STs' pedagogical skills is frequently identified as a concern in the literature. A variety of models are proposed to address STs' acquisition of such skills including Japanese lesson study (e.g. Cajkler et al, 2013; Cajkler and Wood, 2015), micro-teaching (e.g. Boz and Boz, 2006), video recording and structured dialogue (Youens et al, 2014). Undoubtedly, the greatest learning for STs and the greatest development of pedagogical skills takes places during periods of placement in schools and classrooms.

School placement

An essential feature of all ITE programmes is the learning that takes place in schools, referred to in this study as school placement (SP). The importance of this learning is highlighted by many (e.g. Burke, 1992; Korthagen et al, 2001; Smith & Lev Ari, 2005; SCoTENS, 2007). STs agree on the importance of SP for their learning (de Leon-Carillo, 2007; Dikdere, 2007; McDonough & Matkins, 2010; Ní Aingléis, 2008 and Rorrison, 2010). Studies by both Haymore & Sandholtz (2011) and Ciuffetelli-Parker & Volante (2009) suggest that placements are a time of considerable anxiety and stress for STs. Le Cornu and Ewing (2008) highlight the fact that STs are often left to 'sink or swim' on SP, something also highlighted in Cochran-Smith & Zeichner's meta-analysis (2005) of STs' placement experiences.

Many of the commentators on SP refer to a triadic partnership between the ST, the school, and the HEI (Anderson, 2009; Smith & Lev Ari, 2005; Ní Aingléis, 2009). In the transaction of the partnership, the main player for the school is generally the CT and for the HEI, the HEI-PT. The term triadic partnership seems to have emerged from Korthagen's et al's work (2001). According to Ní Aingléis (2009), each player in the triad is a key contributor to the process and each receives significant learning benefits. For Ní Aingléis (2009), the key benefit for all of the players is the learning that each member of the triad can gain from the experience. The fulcrum of each triad is the ST and the other two members play a key role in supporting the ST's learnings

School Partnership

There is general widespread acceptance in the literature that schools are very significant players in the formation and education of teachers (e.g., Holmes Group, 1986; Smith, 2007; Korthagen et al, 2001; Conway et al, 2009). In many countries, effective partnerships have been developed between the HEIs and placement schools, where both parties take responsibility for supporting STs. Discussion on a partnership approach to SP in ITE is not new. In the US in the 1980s (Sirotnik and Goodlad, 1988) and in England from the 1990s (Booth et al. 1990; Alexander, 1990) considerable debate occurred about giving a more significant role to schools in the education of

teachers. Schools had always been a site for STs' learning, but according to Alexander (1990) their role was more passive. Other are critical of giving the school a significant role (e.g. Furlong et al, 2000) and argue by handing over responsibility to schools, the influence of the HEI or university is diminished. In studies by Anderson, Walker and Ralph (2009), Rorrison (2010), Dikdere (2007), Chiresche and Chiresche (2010), STs identified the school in which they were placed as having a significant role in determining their success. According to Rorrison (2010), the lack of supportive environment for one ST in her study was significant in his decision to withdraw from the placement. In Anderson, Walker and Ralph's (2009) study on STs' perceptions of success in relation to self-efficacy, the roles played by principals, CTs and a supportive environment are highlighted.

In Ireland, the partnership between schools and the HEIs is not formalised, something that has been criticised by Ní Aingléis (2008, 2009 & 2012). Her initial research (2008) reports, that the nature of partnership in Ireland is one-sided, with most of the benefits accrued by the HEI and with schools passively facilitating placements. Schools essentially welcome STs and provide the placement, but their support of the STs is ad-hoc at best. She highlighted the additional benefits for STs' learning when a more formalised partnership model was enacted (2009). The later study (2012) focus on the benefits for the CTs and STs, where formal partnerships between schools and HEIs have been running for some time. In such scenarios, teachers became more involved in the formal support of STs. School partnership is now a stated piece of Teaching Council policy and HEIs are required to develop partnerships with schools.

The Role of the Co-Operating Teacher

The key representative of the school in the triadic partnership is the teacher in whose class the ST is placed, referred to in the literature and in this study as the co-operating teacher (e.g. Anderson, 2009; Anderson, Walker and Ralph, 2009; Rorrison, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2004) and sometimes as mentor teacher (e.g. Siebert et al, 2006). Studies, such as Whitney et al (1999), identify the CT as a significant influence on the ST. Anderson, Walker and Ralph (2009) suggest that the CTs can effect both a positive and negative influence on STs' perception of their own competence. In a positive way through their encouragement, affirmation, provision of tips, and by

helping STs to overcome anxiety. Negatively, several respondents reported that they were not encouraged, or affirmed and were criticised and made to feel inadequate, as well as detailing clashes of personality and the feeling of being a burden. One ST stated (p. 59) “if it wasn’t for the students and their parents I wouldn’t feel successful as a teacher at all.” Anderson (2009), explored the extent to which STs’ perspectives and core philosophies on teaching change during school placement, and how those perspectives and core philosophies become aligned to those of their CTs.

Several smaller scale studies give an insight into the role of CT when the ST experiences difficulties or fails school placement. Siebert et al (2005), examines the experiences of three CTs whose STs fail their respective blocks of school placement. Each of the three CTs questions their own actions and there are descriptions of support which was provided. Interestingly, the fact that the STs failed ‘under their watch’, affected all three teachers conceptualisation of themselves as teachers and teacher educators. Rorrison’s (2010) case studies allow us see the key role played by the CT where an ST is exhibiting difficulties. Both studies suggest that CTs should be carefully selected and trained and that consistent modelling of good practice and the provision of feedback should be integral features of their role. The part played by the CT in terminating a placement or failing a student teacher is not clearly addressed in the studies examined. What is highlighted is the insight given through the work of Lee (2007) of the efforts, frustrations and anxieties of the CT.

Mentoring is a duty often associated with CTs in the literatures (eg Siebert et al, 2005 and Graves, 1997). Graves (2008) explores how mentoring relationships occur when mentoring for pre-service teachers is formally structured and reports on four case studies of candidates with mixed experiences. The Teaching Council (2013, p 6) defines mentoring on SP as follows:

Mentoring encompasses all those means by which the student teacher on placement is supported, advised and encouraged and his/her practice and thinking is affirmed and challenged, as appropriate.

This definition does not give clarity as to who the mentor is or should be. Mentoring and coaching are often used interchangeably, although there is agreement that mentoring is broader concept

than coaching (e.g. Hobson et al, 2012; Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999), although coaching is generally a feature of an effective mentoring relationship (Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999). Graves (2008) identifies clear expectation, clear communication and dedicated time as pre-requisites for successful mentoring relationships. Sudzina and Coolican (1997) try to isolate salient features or dimensions of the mentoring relationship which, if absent, 'contribute to unsatisfactory and unsuccessful mentoring and student teaching experiences.' Their mixed methods study, drew on responses from larger numbers of STs and CTs, but also focused on three case studies. In each of these cases, the mentor had misunderstood their role and acted as 'tormentor'. The researchers strongly argue the case for clear lines of responsibility and in-depth training for mentors.

In other studies, the mentor was somebody other than a CT. Pellett & Pellett (2005), explore the cases of struggling STs and put forward a model for intervention and assistance which includes mentoring by a member of the college faculty. In their model, the mentor / mentee relationship was imposed and the mentor works intensively with the ST to develop the skills that the ST lacks. Schmidt's 2006 study explores the case of a struggling beginning music teacher who develops an organic mentoring relationship with a teacher in another school. She reports many successes of the relationships but also details how the mentee became dependant on the relationship. Hobson et al (2012), report on a study of beginning physics teachers whose mentors are experienced teachers in other schools and advocate various modes and models for mentoring and coaching. McIntyre and Hobson (2015) build on the earlier work and examine how non-judgemental mentoring enhances beginning teachers' learning and sense of identity using a discursive approach.

The Role of the HEI Placement Tutor

The final member of the learning to teach triadic partnership, is the HEI, whose main representative is the HEI-PT. The title assigned to this tutor varies within the literature and is referred to as university tutor (Lee, 2007), university supervisor (Talvitie et al, 2000), university assessor (Rorrison, 2009) and HEI placement tutor (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2011). While the title varies, universally, tutors act as conduits between the university and the school. Rorrison

(2010), Ní Aingléis (2009), and Boxall & Gilbert (1999) all comment on their central role, both in the support and the assessment of STs. Other studies highlight the potential for the HEI-PT to provide distant support in an online environment during SP (Erdem 2008; Rhine & Bryant 2007). White (2009) and Raeburn (2006) examine how the tutor can be a support to the ST when experiencing difficulty. White (2009) explores models of effective feedback to help the STs affect change in their practice, while Raeburn explores how STs' skills of critical self-reflection can be scaffolded by the tutor, through a dialogic approach.

The Assessment of School Placement

A key function performed by the HEI-PT is the assessment of STs' performance on SP and ultimately their competence. Where an ST is struggling or failing this part of the HEI-PT's assessment role is brought into sharp focus. There is much evidence of concern about the assessment of SP in the literature (eg. Boxall et al, 1999; Chiresche and Chiresche, 2003; Talvitie et al, 2000) and there is focus on how summative judgements are made. Conway et al's (2009) study examined how SP is assessed in nine different countries and highlight the use of specific criteria based on or directly linked to competences or teaching standards. A study by Haigh, Eil and Mackisack (2013) examines the decision-making process involved in assessing whether or not a candidate is ready to teach. It used social judgement theory to examine how a faculty in an Australian university uses evidence to make assessment decisions against defined criteria.

In some cases, the CT has a voice in the assessment judgement (e.g. Lee, 2007; Siebert et al, 2006) while in other cases the judgement is made by the HEI-PT or a team of HEI-PTs from the HEI. The latter scenario has been the norm in the Irish context, with Ní Aingléis (2008 and 2009) reporting on the reluctance of CTs to be involved in the assessment process. The high stakes nature of the assessment for STs and the effect that deeming an ST's work unsatisfactory or failing the ST is highlighted in the work of both Siebert et al (2006) and Lee (2006). The power differential between those who carry out the assessment and the ST is explored and critiqued by both Rorrison (2010) and Doerger & Dallmer (2008). Rorrison (2010) suggest that many involved in the assessment of STs see themselves as 'gatekeepers' to the profession. Smith (2007, p. 282) suggests that the assessment of SP has a dual purpose:

On one hand it serves a formative function to provide feedback and guidance to the student teacher, while on the other hand the assessment holds a summative and judgemental purpose...

This view is echoed in many of other articles on the assessment of SP (e.g. Chireshe and Chireshe, 2003; White, 2007; White, 2009). Doeger & Dallmer advocate for a pass / fail system of assessment instead of a traditional grading system, while Rorrison argues the case for summative assessment based on STs demonstration of dispositions and potential, rather than their actual attainment.

Reflective Practice

The literature on learning to teach is abundant with reference to reflective practice (Kaldi & Pyrgiotakis, 2009; Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014; Rhine & Bryant, 2007; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Korthagen, 2010; Korthagen, 2012; OECD, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010). MacRuaric and Harford (2008) suggest that reflective practice is the bedrock of most teacher education programmes and is placed at the centre of student teacher learning. Many STs become overwhelmed by the complex issues they meet in classrooms (MacRuairc, Harford and McCartan, 2009). For the ST who is experiencing difficulty or in danger of failing, the sense of feeling overwhelmed is bound to be immense. Korthage & Kessels (1999) suggest that reflection at a deep level, can aid STs to make sense of their actions and beliefs and allow them to construct alternative courses of action.

CTs and HEI-PTs play a role in supporting STs to reflect on practice during school placement. A number of studies have also highlighted the potential for STs to support each other through reflective practice (Iqbal & Mahmood, 2010; White, 2009) , while other studies have focused on the potential of videoing practice to aid reflection (Youens et al, 2014; Rhine & Bryant, 2007; MacRuairc and Harford, 2007). Much of the thinking on reflective practice has emanated from the work of Dewey (1933) and later shaped by Schön (1983). Dewey (1933) identified reflection as a specialised form of thinking, and the fact that learning does not come with experience, rather with reflection on experience. Schön's seminal work (1983) identified two types of reflection, reflection on action; thinking that takes place after the event, and reflection-in-action; thinking while doing (Finlay 2008). For Schön reflection-in-action is the core of 'professional artistry.' He believed that

as professionals became more adept at practice, their ability to monitor and adapt their actions and practice became intuitive. In contrast, novice practitioners tend to apply rules and procedures mechanically and lack the tacit knowledge of practice (Finlay, 2008). Schön argued that novices need to be able to stand back from practice, and take the time to examine it and think it through.

There are many models to support engagement in reflective practice in the literature. Marzano and Boogren (2012) devote a whole volume to reflective teaching, while Pollard et al, (2008) provide structures to help beginning teachers to reflect on diverse aspects of their work. Finlay (2008) suggests that models are generally cyclical (e.g. Gibbs and Kohl's models) and that common to all, are the three fundamental processes of retrospection, self-evaluation and re-orientation. Korthagen proposes models of reflection (2010 & 2012), for use with his model of teacher education, termed 'realistic teacher education' (Korthagen et al, 2001). Realistic teacher education places focus on examination and reflection on teachers' actions and behaviours. The ALCAT model (Figure 2.1) on its own is a simple cyclical model that might be used as a framework for an ST and a CT or HEI-PT to structure reflection on a particular lesson and move towards changing or improving the practice.

On its own the ALACT model is similar to others. Korthagen (2009 and 2012) suggests that ALCAT be used in conjunction with his 2004 Onion Model (Figure 2.2). This model presents particular potential for work with STs who are experiencing difficulty as it acknowledges the interplay between the environment, the actions and behaviours of teaching as well as the importance of the teachers' personal qualities. While the layers of 'the onion' are interrelated, he suggests that 'professional learning deepens when teachers become aware of their core identity and beliefs' (p. 124), and when the connections and discrepancies between the levels are examined.

Figure 2.1 Korthagen's ALCAT Model (2004, 2008)

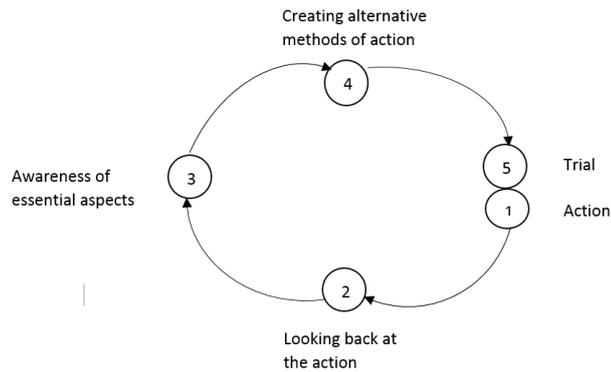
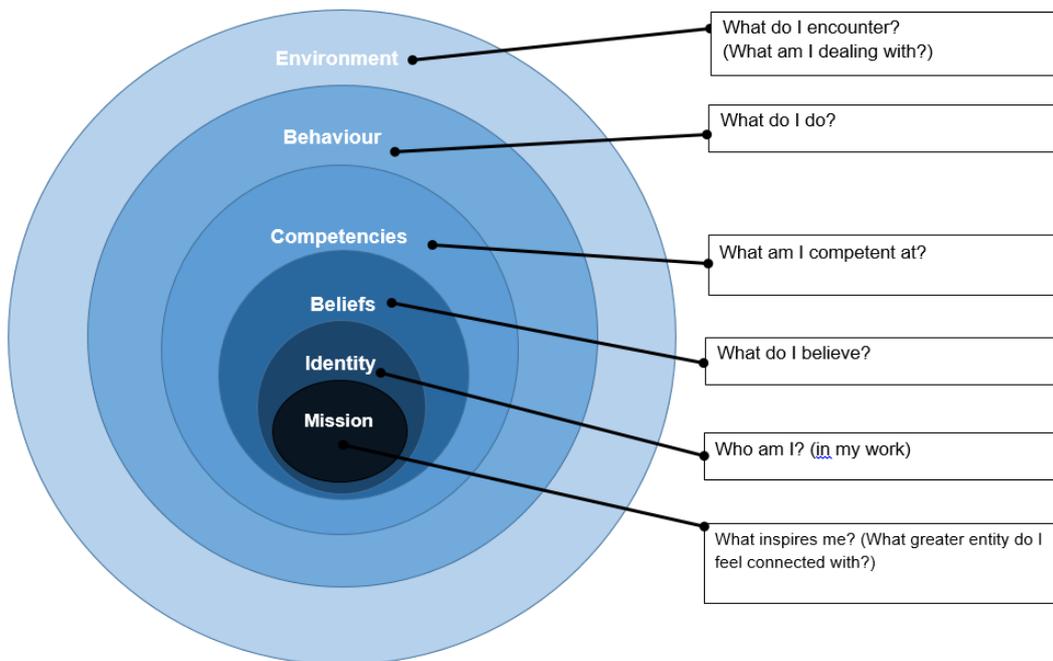


Figure 2.2 Korthagen's Onion Model (2004)



Selecting candidates for teacher education

Another key concern of ITE, and one of relevance to the question of STs who struggle or experience failure, is the selection and admission of candidates to programmes. Darling-Hammond and Liberman (2012) highlight the connection, in some of the world's better regarded systems (e.g. Finland and Hong Kong) between how the profession is viewed in the country and the attraction of candidates to ITE. Some systems have raised the academic standards for entry to ITE to ensure that they are getting the best quality candidates (Darling-Hammond and

Lieberman (2012, 160), while others have developed complex competency frameworks to guide the selection process. Both Hobson et al (2010) and the OECD (2009) provide meta-analyses of the approaches taken in a range of systems to teacher selection. A wide variety of methods are used, with some systems selecting candidates purely on academic performance, others using qualitative methods such as interviewing candidates, letters of recommendation and competency based forms. Others still use personality and psychometric tests as part of the selection process.

Heinz's study (2013), focused on candidates selected for an Irish second-level, post-graduate, teacher education programme. She used their academic performance and their reported experience as unqualified teachers as predictors for success and found a strong correlation between those whose previous academic performance was very good and those who achieved higher grades on the programme, particularly on SP. There are counter arguments as well within the literature that assert the view that high levels of academic ability don't necessarily correlate with high quality teaching and suitability for the profession. Rushton et al (2007) used evidence from Myers-Briggs personality test with records of academic attainment to show that personality type is a more significant factor than previous academic attainment. A recent Australian study by Sautelle et al (2015) drew on social judgement theory to explore qualitative selection of potential STs and isolated cognitive ability, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, resilience and self-regulation as key attributes for success in student teaching. Vast amounts of literature exist about personality types and their correlation to job satisfaction and effectiveness, but are beyond the scope of this review.

Student teacher identity

An important aspect of the process of learning to be a teacher, for all candidates, is the development of a professional identity (Friesen & Besley 2013). Studies have identified that learning to be a teacher is as important as learning *how* to be a teacher (Chong, 2011; Chong, Low and Goh, 2011). Korthagen (2004), argues that the focus on teacher identity has been brought about because of a change in beliefs about the role of the teacher and the increased focus on teacher as person. Korthagen et al (2001) and Korthagen (2004 and 2010), place considerable emphasis on the development of the person in teacher education. The

aforementioned 'Onion' model of self-reflection, places personal mission, beliefs and identity at the centre. Both Smith (2007) and Korthagen (2004) encourage teacher educators to consider psychological constructs such as epistemological beliefs, self-awareness and identity as lenses to understand pedagogy and classroom management.

In efforts to understand the identity of pre-service teachers, there has been a focus on the beliefs and motivation in the early phases of teacher education (Sugrue, 1997; Furlong, 2012; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Le Cornu, 2013). Furlong's study (2012) in the Irish context examined how candidates own school experiences as learners shape their motivation to become a teacher and their beliefs about what is involved in being a teacher. Other studies have focused more on the evolving nature of teacher identity during initial teacher education (Lamote & Engels, 2010; Nettle, 1998). Lamote & Engel's study (2010) captured data from STs in each year of a three-year bachelor of education programme in relation to STs' commitment to teaching, their professional orientation, their task orientation and their self-efficacy. They noted marked differences between those who had positively engaged in school placement versus those who had not. Other identity studies examine people's decisions to exit the profession (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Identity is not seen as something that is static or fixed but rather evolving and changing. (Sheridan, 2013; Anderson, 2007; Lamote & Engels. 2010; Anderson, 2009).

A significant focus within the teacher identity literature is the issue of self-efficacy (eg Pendergast et al., 2011; Bakar et al., 2012; Erdem, 2008; McDonnough & Matkins, 2010; Lamote & Engels, 2010). Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete specific tasks or achieve particular goals. In terms of teaching, self-efficacy may be viewed as how one relates to or how one views one's own ability to be an effective teacher or indeed successfully complete or pass a block of SP. McDonnough & Matikin (2010) examine the levels of self-efficacy in second-level science STs and report increased levels of self-efficacy, as a result of a successful SP. The positive impacts on self-efficacy are mentioned in studies where mentors or CTs played a supportive roles in STs' development (Anderson, 2007; Rajuan et al., 2008), however there is evidence too of diminished self-efficacy, where the intervention of the CT has been negative (Schmidt & Knowles 1995).

There is general acceptance in the literature on teachers' lives, that events in teachers' personal lives are inextricably linked to how teachers perform their professional roles (e.g. Day and Gu, 2014; Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996 and Acker, 1999). Indeed, there are new and evolving bodies of work on the whole area of teacher well-being. While no literature could be found on the impact of such circumstances on STs lives, it is safe to assume that STs, like established teachers experience financial worries, relationship difficulties, bereavements, illness, depression and other life events that impact on their roles as STs. Both Rorrison (2010) and Knowles & Sudzina (1994) suggest that such events were factors in the lives of STs who experienced difficulties in their respective studies.

Student Teacher Failure

As has been previously mentioned, few studies were found that directly explore the issue of STs who struggle or fail SP. However, those that are available, give interesting insights into aspects of the phenomenon, but all, too have significant limitations. There is evidence that the topic has long been one of interest to the research community. Wilkins-Rickman and Hollowell (1981) reported on a survey of HEI-PTs and CTs in Arizona and their perceptions of the causes for the proportion of teachers in their university that each year either withdrew or received a fail grade on final SP. While their methodology and discussion might not be acceptable by modern research standards, they isolate five factors (listed below) that contribute to student teacher failure.

- Problems with classroom management and discipline
- Inability to relate well with students
- Poor teaching methods
- Lack of commitment to the profession
- Personal characteristics

Knowles and Sudzina (1994, p. 5), term student teacher failure the 'skeleton in the teacher education closet.' Their study, while dated at this point, uses a case study methodology to examine the experiences of 25 pre-service teachers who 'failed their teaching practicum' (6) across two teacher education programmes. Case data was assembled from college records, such as initial acceptance files, assessment results, personal files and the assessment notes of tutors for STs who attended the two colleges in the 1980s. Each case was analysed and issues such as gender, age, previous experience, marital status, academic performance and whether the

grade was appealed were explored. Each case was also examined to ascertain the deficiencies noted in the records available. The circumstances contributing to failure were catalogued using the categories outlined in the Table 2.1, which is overleaf. The reasons for failure fall into three categories; personal, professional and contextual. In most cases, they claimed that the reasons for failure extended across two or indeed all three categories.

Table 2.1 Reasons for failure. Knowles and Sudzina (1994)

Personal	Professional	Contextual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal interaction skills with professors and others • Social habits and acceptance by peers • Standardized testing • Academic grade point average • Work habits / academic responsibility • Previous role model of teaching • Familiarity with expectations of teachers • Degree of comfort working in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery of content area knowledge • Interpretation of content knowledge • Enthusiasm for content knowledge • Clear lesson plans and objectives • Organization and curriculum planning skills • Uses variety of curriculum methods • Classroom management and discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marital / relational pressures • Financial needs • Occupational interference • Health Problems • Interactions with university supervisor • Interaction with cooperating teacher • Interaction with students • Incongruent subject matter / grade level placement • Practicum attendance and professional conduct • Adjustment to school setting / culture

Six cases are expanded upon to create vignettes of student failure, which provide interesting narratives that outline the context and the approaches taken to preventing and supporting the students across the two college. The study makes many far reaching recommendations regarding recruitment of STs, programme structure, the structure of school placement, the assessment of school placement, the roles of CTs and HEI-PTs, effective supervision, opportunities for 'remediation' as well as the provision of exit routes for candidates. While the study makes for interesting reading, there are a number of factors that limit its validity, not least of which is the means by which the data was collected, which by modern ethical standards would be questionable at best. No indication is given of the informed consent of the STs or indeed the HEI-PTs. It is also limited by virtue of the fact that topic is explored exclusively from the perspective of the HEI, through the information that it holds about the failure events. The potential data from

such sources is limited and does not allow for an interpretive interrogation of the events or the circumstances. It does not acknowledge the multiple ontologies within the experience of the student teacher who experiences failure.

Schmidt and Knowles went on to publish further on the topic in 1995. This time, they explored in a qualitative format the experiences of just four female STs who related their own stories of 'perceived failure' on SP. This study gives particularly good insights into personal and emotional experiences of the women and on how their perceptions of how their relationships with the other members of triadic partnership affected them. Of the four, only one actually ended up failing SP. In a similar vein is Rorrison's (2010) qualitative study, which examines the experiences of ten Australian STs who experience significant difficulties on SP. Her analysis particularly focuses on the personal contexts of the STs and she explores how diverse personal experiences can destabilise a placement. The research also focuses on how the STs' perceptions of how assessment judgements are made and how contextual information might be synthesised. A revised set of principles for assessing STs' practices is proposed that focuses on the demonstration of dispositions, progression and potential, rather than specific achievement or the display of particular actions or behaviours.

Caesar's Closure (Lee, 2007) is a small scale qualitative study that uses a self-reflective process to examine the process of terminating the placement of one ST and communicating to the candidate that he has failed SP on a final attempt. It focused on the impact that the experience has on the HEI-PT. It sets out the context of the ST in a case study approach and explores the complex interplay involved for the HEI-PT between accountability and the effect that the decision will have on the ST. While it does give us a solid qualitative insight, the study is limited in that it involves the experience of just one HEI-PT and the phenomenon is explored solely from the perspective of the tutor. Siebert et al, (2006) explore the topic from the perspective of the CT. The researcher worked with three CTs who mentored STs who failed their final SP. Each CT reflected on the experience of their assigned teacher and described how the placement had developed. They explored the difficulties that the teacher had, the efforts which had been made

to support the ST and the impact that the experience had on their conceptualisation of their professional selves.

In the Irish context, the Department of Education and Science's study, *Learning to Teach* (2006), which was mentioned in chapter one, is particularly relevant. It draws on the observations by the department's Inspectorate of a sample of STs on final placement. The analysis of the overall rating of the work of the STs highlights the fact that STs' attainments vary greatly during school placement:

In this evaluation a majority of the STs (62%) were found to be excellent, very good or good in their general work in the classroom. More than a quarter (27%) were rated fair, showing strengths but also some significant weaknesses. A few (7%) were considered to be experiencing general difficulty in their teaching, and about one student in twenty (5%) was considered to be unsatisfactory.

(Department of Education and Science, 2006, p. 33)

This study is purely qualitative and does not set out to examine the causes of the varying level of attainment amongst STs. However, it does confirm that 12% of the STs evaluated were exhibiting signs that they were either struggling or failing their school placement.

Student Failure in other professions

From a brief review of the literatures, it would appear that the topic of failure is an understudied phenomenon in other professions. Considerable volumes are also available from fields of nursing and social work regarding practical placements. Studies in both professions point to the fact that there is a 'failure to fail' candidates on placement (Taylor & Finch, 2012 and Larocque & Luhanga, 2013). The research into nursing placement in particular features many of the same research topics as teacher education including the role of the placement tutor, the assessment of practical learning, nursing competencies and mentoring. A number of small scale studies explore failure in nursing. Curzio and Terry (2013), use a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore the perspectives and decision-making processes of 19 nursing placement tutors who failed student nurses on placement using the lens of moral courage to understand the actions of the tutors. No examples of research reflecting the voice of student nurses who struggled or failed were discovered in the literature.

The Emergence of Research Questions

The international focus on teacher quality, and the allied attention paid to ITE, provides a challenge to the research community to study, bring understanding and develop new knowledge on all aspects of teaching and teacher education. The desire to ensure that all teaching and all teachers are of the highest possible quality, is utopian, given the human process that teaching involves. However, in order to fully understand the process involved in learning to be a teacher, we must examine the experiences of all who embark on the journey, including those who struggle or fail along the way. An examination of the experiences of STs who struggle or experience failure will shed light on their contexts, frustrations, efforts, relationships, emotions and support mechanisms, and will inform the wider issue of teacher quality and teacher effectiveness.

Searches across the literature for studies, that explore the emergence, cause, effects and the management of STs who struggle or fail during school placement has shown that very little research on the topic has been published. The exceptions to this have been discussed in this chapter and each one sheds some light on the phenomenon. The question of why some STs fail was examined through questionnaires by Wilkins-Rickman and Hollowell (1981) and by examining the paper trail retained in colleges in Knowles and Sudzina's study (1994). While Rorrison (2009), Lee (2007) and Siebert et al, all go some way to capturing the qualitative reasons for and emergence of isolated instances of student failure. No one study examines why STs become identified as struggling or failing from the perspectives of all of those involved in the learning to teach partnership. Similarly, the impact that such events have on the various players is explored by Lee (2007) and Siebert et al (2006), however their examinations are confined to the individual constituents. When one turns to the literature for studies on how best to support STs who struggle or experience failure, even fewer studies emerge. The notable exceptions are in the work of Graves (2008) and Schmidt & Knowles, although their respective assertions are not drawn from the voices of those effected by the phenomenon. The bodies of literature on school partnership, the roles of the tutor and co-operating teacher, mentoring and reflective practice all provide a scaffold for how such STs might be supported. However, none of the studies in these areas specifically examine the phenomenon that this study is researching.

Another significant gap in the literature is the absence of any qualitative research on the phenomenon in the Republic of Ireland. *Learning to Teach* (2006) highlighted the fact that 5% of STs in the sample were performing at unsatisfactory levels and a further 7% were experiencing significant difficulties. The scope of the report was purely quantitative and no qualitative analysis was presented. While the report was a cause of concern for Irish teacher education providers, no further research in the Irish context has been conducted to explore the report's findings further.

Research Aims and Questions

This research project has been framed to attempt to address the gaps discussed in the existing research. It is the first known research in the Irish context, to specifically investigate the phenomenon of struggling and failing STs from the perspectives of all of the parties affected and it examines how such STs might be supported. The gaps in the existing literature are reflected in the research aims and questions. The study aimed to:

- Gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teachers.
- Explore the impact of the struggles and / or failure on student teachers themselves, on co-operating teachers and on HEI placement tutors.
- Identify the forms of support available to struggling and failing student teachers and examine their perceived benefits and limitations.

The specific research question that the study attempts to answer are:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school placement and how effective were these forms of support perceived to be?
4. What additional supports were identified by members of triadic learning to teach partnerships as potentially being useful in this context?

The study has been constructed as an interpretive phenomenological examination of the perspectives of those with first hand experience of such STs. The experience of each observer is unique and specific to that event. Conceptually, the study has not been rooted in any one specific body of research or on the constructs of any one particular theory, rather it has been influenced and shaped by all of the literature presented in this chapter.

Conclusion

Broadly, the analysis of the literature in this chapter has considered some of the debates and bodies of literature that inform the context and understanding of STs who struggle or experience failure during SP. The overall debate about the importance of teacher quality and how this is best achieved, sets the backdrop for this study. The picture presented in the literature regarding the experiences of STs who struggle or experience difficulty on SP, is that it is an under-researched area. Those studies that do exist are limited in terms of their scope and in terms of the perspectives from which they examine the topic. In particular, the research into the occurrence of the phenomenon in the Irish context, from a qualitative point of view is non-existent. Consequently, there is a significant need to supplement the existing knowledge, while making it inclusive of all of the perspectives in learning to teach relationship. Chapter three explores how the study was constructed and the methodologies employed during the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research project was conducted as a qualitative phenomenological study and was constructed as a multiple participant research project, using semi-structured interviews to capture data. It seeks to:

- Gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teachers.
- Explore the impact of the struggles and / or failure on student teachers themselves, on co-operating teachers and on HEI placement tutors.
- Identify the forms of support available to struggling and failing student teachers and examine their perceived benefits and limitations.

This chapter outlines the methodological process as well as the decisions taken during the course of the research. It commences with a discussion on the philosophical underpinnings and is followed by an examination of the research approach; phenomenology. The next section addresses the methodological considerations in data collection and includes discussions on the pilot study, sampling, use of semi-structured interviews, ethics and positionality. There follows a section that details the method of data analysis employed. The chapter concludes with an examination of issues of quality with regard to qualitative research including reliability, validity and limitations.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Values, like politics, are ever present and will impact on the research process. Rather than deny their existence, prudent researchers will attempt to understand and make explicit, their personal values while at the same time, seek to understand the values held by people, organisation or cultures being researched or supporting the research.

(Anderson, 1998:33)

As the quotation above outlines, educational research does not take place in a vacuous, value-free environment, rather it is underpinned by fundamental philosophical assumptions that shape how research is approached and carried out and how knowledge is created and understood. As discussed in chapter one, as researcher I need be aware of my conscious and subconscious

values, beliefs and perspectives and their effect on the approach and outcomes. Pring (2000) urges the researcher to disclose the philosophical stance taken to help the critical evaluation of the work and argues that an understanding of both epistemology and ontology are crucial. Epistemology, comes from the Greek word episteme, meaning knowledge or understanding (Morrison, 2007) and is concerned with what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge is acquired. According to both Krauss (2005) and Tuli (2010), epistemology poses the following questions:

What is the relationship between the knower and what is known?
How do we know what we know?
What counts as knowledge?

Within research, epistemology is a contested concept and can be open to objectivity or subjectivity (Morrison, 2002). An objective epistemology is where knowledge and truth is independent of bias, thought, interpretation and an individual's mind. A subjective epistemology makes the claim that knowledge or truth is constructed as a result of an individual's thoughts and interpretations. Ontology, on the other hand is concerned with the nature of reality and the social reality within which action take place. Ontology can be considered as external to an individual or it may be considered as a reality that is made up of events or objects as perceived by individual consciousness (Morrison, 2002). This can result in a range of perceptions about the nature of reality. Bryman (2008, p. 16) suggests that the central question of ontology in social research is whether social entities should be considered objective and have a social reality independent of all others or whether they should be considered social constructions that have been created by the perceptions of those who interact with them. Ontological and epistemological stances influence the philosophical stance or paradigm upon which methodology is based (Gray, 2004).

Within the literature on educational research, there are considerable volumes, discussions and debates dedicated to research paradigms and their influence on the researcher (e.g. Bogdan & Biken, 2003; Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al. 2011; MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006; Pring, 2000 and Silverman, 2000). The epistemological and ontological beliefs and assumptions that a research project or researcher makes or ascribes to, reflects the paradigm that he or she is working within. Morrison (2007) claims that researchers work around and within a 'set of beliefs and assumptions called paradigms' (p. 19) whilst making sense of data and information. A large and indeed an

evolving number of paradigms are referenced in the literature. Here positivism, interpretivism and the critical theory paradigms are discussed.

Positivism, is a theoretical perspective that is closely linked with objectivism (Gray, 2004). It grew out of the epistemological belief that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge. The key point about positivist approaches is the strict adherence to the scientific method (Cohen et al, 2011; Bryman, 2008). According to Morrison (2007, p. 21), those who are studied by positive research are the objects of that research. They are not co-constructors of knowledge and only those events and phenomena that are 'observable through experience' by the positivist researcher can validly be considered knowledge. Knowledge is therefore fixed and awaiting collection by the researcher. A key pursuit of positivism is showing that findings are predictable and replicable in other situations (Morrison, 2007).

Interpretivism is sometimes referred to in the literature as anti-positivism (e.g. Bryman, 2008) and for many commentators, (e.g. Bryman, 2008 and Morrison, 2007), it is placed in binary opposition to positivism. The nature of reality or ontology in interpretivism is not fixed. It is constantly evolving and changing and is experienced differently for all within the reality. According to Pring (2000), those working within the interpretivist paradigm ascribe to a subjective reality, that is a social construction of the mind (p. 47) and there are as many perceptions and social realities as there are people (p. 48). A greater understanding of that social reality or phenomenon can be achieved if the perceptions of all within the social reality are explored and understood. Unlike positivism, Interpretivism does not claim a universal truth or fixed knowledge (Bassey, 1995), rather it embraces the notion of a subjective epistemology (Bryman, 2008) and strives to understand human experience (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 21).

The critical theory paradigm, sometimes referred to as the transformative paradigm (e.g. Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), grew out of criticisms levelled at the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, owing to their inability to question or transform existing situations, while taking account of their political and ideological contexts (Cohen, et al, 2011, p. 31). The purpose of critical theory is not just to understand phenomena and experiences but to transform or

emancipate them. Research in this paradigm is influenced greatly by values and takes place in a social reality that is conscious of key human relationships and resulting socially constructed 'facts' (Morrison, 2007). The questions asked within the critical theory paradigm are theory and value laden and aim to analyse political and power structures and lead to knowledge that is based in values and relates to power.

From my early investigation of this topic and from my engagement with the literature, I was very aware that the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teacher (STs) is experienced from multiple perspectives. For me the core perspectives were those within the learning to teach partnership. Those involved in the partnership inhabit a complex and evolving social reality where school life and college life intersect. The social world is reflective of a subjective ontology. Knowledge about the experiences of STs within that social world is also subjective and is individual to each person that inhabits that specific social reality. The ontological basis for the research questions is both subjective and constructionist and the questions acknowledge the epistemological subjectivity. The actions of all those who experience the social reality of a failing or struggling ST shapes or constructs that social reality. These factors firmly place the study within the interpretative paradigm aiming 'to understand the subjective world of human experience' (Cohen et al, 2011: 22). This study contends that knowledge is held personally and can be created and assimilated in many different ways according to the individual's perceptions, circumstances, location, experience and context.

Research Approach

Once the research questions had been formulated and after I had an opportunity to think through the philosophical underpinnings, I considered a variety of approaches to explore the questions. Cohen et al (2011) and Morrison (2002) suggest that modern interpretivism falls into three main traditions, namely, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic-interactionism, while Creswell (1998) identifies five traditions in qualitative enquiry; biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. I initially considered, conducting multiple surveys on a larger population of STs, HEI-PTs and CTs. According to Bryman (2012), while surveys are not traditionally considered tools of the interpretive researcher, they can provide the answers to

some qualitative questions. A survey could have provided data on the reasons for failure and the support mechanisms available to STs who struggle, however, it would not have provided the qualitative information that I felt was essential to fully understand the experiences of such STs and to fully explore the impact. An ethnographic approach was also considered, drawing on observations of STs who were struggling or experiencing failure and their interactions with the other members of the triadic partnership. While this could have given very rich and deep insights, it presented huge ethical, access and sampling difficulties and was quickly discounted as an option. In the pilot study (discussed later in the chapter) I used a case study methodology to explore the experience of one triadic learning to teach partnership and I considered using a multi-case-study comparative approach for the main study. However, in light of the findings of the pilot and for ethical and sampling reasons, I discounted this approach. I wanted to explore the world of STs from the variety of perspectives and so I needed to capture the various voices and perspectives on the phenomenon. Phenomenology gave me this opportunity. I decided to frame the research as an interpretive, multi-participant study within the phenomenological tradition.

Phenomenology grew out of the writings of the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) in the aftermath of the First World War (Groenwald, 2004). According to Smith et al, 2009, p. 11), at its most basic phenomenology is ‘a philosophical approach to the study of experience.’ It is concerned with the systematic reflection on and study of the structures of consciousness and the phenomena that appear during consciousness, Phenomenology in research has its origins in Schultz’s and Heidegger’s adaptation of Husserl’s philosophical movement (Groenwald, 2004, p. 3; Morrison, 2002, p. 24). Schultz claimed that ‘phenomenologist attempts to see things from the person’s point of view’ (Morrison, 2002, p. 24) while Heidegger and Sartre expanded it to include the human life world and human action (Kvale 1996, p. 53).

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2000), phenomenology investigates the “ways in which ordinary members of society attend to their everyday lives.” A phenomenological study is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved with the issues being researched (Kvale, 1996, Gubrium and Holstein, 2000). There is some criticism in the literature of those working in the area, with some commentators (e.g. Heap and Roth, 1973, in Bryman, 2012)

suggesting that some of those working in the tradition do not exhaust the intellectual influences of interpretivism, while Denscombe (2007, 86) argues that phenomenology may lack scientific rigour and urges caution regarding the generalisability of the findings of phenomenological studies. Both Groenwold (2004) and Bryman (2012) agree that the role of the phenomenological researcher is to gain access to people's thinking and interpret the social world from their point of view. This study is concerned with the lived experiences of those involved in the learning to teach relationship where the ST has struggled or experienced failure. As a phenomenological researcher, I needed to gain access to the experiences and perspectives of the phenomenon and then through systematic analysis interpret meaning and report the themes and findings that emerge.

Methods

The completion of a detailed literature review, as outlined in chapter two, allowed me to explore the terrain and existing literature around the world of STs. The gaps in the literature pointed towards a lack of interpretive research around the phenomenon. The research questions emerged from the literature survey: they acknowledge the multiple perspectives on the social reality within the learning to teach partnership and they recognise the subjective epistemology. They were shaped by my interpretive orientation and desire to explore the phenomenon:

1. Why do some teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school placement and how effective were these forms of support perceived to be?
4. What additional supports were identified by members of triadic learning to teach partnerships as potentially being useful in this context?

The design and implementation of the research instruments were aligned to these research questions. Given the multiple perceptions of the phenomenon implied in the research questions, I set the study up as a multiple participant research project and captured data using semi-structured interviews from a total of eighteen individuals across three Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs) that provide initial teacher education (ITE) for primary teachers in the Republic

of Ireland. Interviews were conducted with the three directors of school placement (DSPs), five STs who had struggled or experienced failure, five co-operating teacher (CTs) and five HEI placement tutors (HEI-PTs) who have worked with such STs. There is general agreement in the literature on phenomenology, that interviews are a useful and suitable data collection tool (eg Smith et al, 2009, Denscombe, 2007 and Kvale, 1996). Smith et al (2009, 56) suggest that interviews are the most suitable way for participants to give a 'rich, detailed, first person account of their experiences.' They are also particularly suitable 'where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed' (King, 1994 in Robson, 2002, p. 271). In research, an interview is essentially a 'conversation between people in which one person has the role of researcher' (Gray, 2004, p. 213).

King and Horocks (2010) classify the various interview types used in qualitative research into three groups namely structured, semi structured and unstructured. The essential differences are based on where the control of the interview lies. Structured interviews are focused interviews that are guided by specific interview questions (Bryman, 2008, p. 113). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that in structured interviews, similar aligned questions are asked of all participants. Semi-structured interviews are designed with similar questions for each participant. However, they are not as rigid and the interviewer is not tied to these questions and can deviate or expand on questions further in response to the interviewee. (Bryman, 2008, p. 113) They allow for deeper probing into particular areas as the interview develops and as the interviewee engages (Bryman, 2004, Cohen et al, 2011). According to Bryman (2004) semi-structured interviews align with the interpretative researcher. They allow the interviewer to respond to the interviewee's perspective and can be directed by the interviewee. Denscombe (2007, 57) suggests that phenomenological researchers' interviews should be less structured to allow for 'plenty of scope for interviewees to move the discussion to areas that they regard as significant.'

The pilot study

Between April and August 2013, I conducted a pilot study using a single case-study methodology that examined the experience of one triadic learning to teach partnership, where the ST had failed a block of school placement (SP). Data was collected from all three members of that particular learning to teach partnership using semi-structured interviews. It allowed me an opportunity to

trial the interview schedules and to evaluate my role in interviews. I became aware from listening to my questioning on recordings that I tended to talk around the questions too much. I was trying too hard to place the questions in context and by this I was communicating cues and suggestions to the interviewee. This had the unintended result of steering the interviewee in particular directions and potentially skewing the data. One of the interviews was very long and on typing the transcript it became apparent that I needed to only probe more deeply when issues raised by the interviewee were of directly relevance to the research questions. The pilot also allowed me to question the efficacy of the initial research questions and as a result they have been amended. I realised that there was duplication in the questions when examining and analysing the data.

The vulnerability and anxiety levels of the ST came to the fore during the pilot study. The candidate who had agreed to participate in the pilot was really struggling with the consequences of the failure and as she recalled and relived the experience she became quite emotional. This was challenging for me as researcher and at the ST's request, we had to stop the interview on a number of occasions. This experience, while challenging, enabled me to really consider the impact of participation on an individual. It also forced me to return to the literature to examine how through my role as interviewer I could be supportive, yet true to the research while at the same time ensure that participants were not at risk of harm. For the pilot, an ST who had experienced failure on a recent block of SP was approached by a staff member in that particular HEI. With that former ST's permission, snowball sampling was then employed to make contact with other members of the triad. This led me to a triadic partnership that had direct and shared experience of the phenomenon. While there were advantages, the focus of the interviews was one of the participants and this posed an ethical dilemma. I held knowledge and had experience of what the other members of the triad had expressed and I effectively became a co-constructor of the knowledge. In hindsight, I felt that that my experience of the first interviews biased how I approached subsequent interviews.

The ST who agreed to be part of the pilot study, had experienced the phenomenon just a few months prior to the interview. Her participation in the study added to her anxiety and I had a number of correspondences from her after the interview expressing her levels of anxiety. I did remind her that she could withdraw from the study, however, she chose not to. The experience

highlighted the potential vulnerability of STs as well as the ethical considerations. Kvale (1996) suggests that interviews should be conducted as close to the phenomenon as possible but does urge caution with regard to the subject matter and the vulnerability of participants. Smith et al (2009), discuss phenomenological research within medical settings and argue that with the passage of time, participants can view their experience with 'a wider lens' and with greater objectivity. The pilot also highlighted that there was a missing voice. In each of the three interviews, the participants mentioned the role of the college and the significant staff members in the college, most notably the DSP. While comparative case study was an option to pursue the study, for the reasons already outlined, I chose not to pursue it, opting instead for a multiple participant research project that drew participants from each of the significant perspectives. The pilot provided significant learning for me as a researcher and caused me to re-evaluate the research approach, the ethical consideration involved in such research as well as the sampling strategy.

Ethics

Ethical concerns have been to the forefront of my mind in the design, sampling, administration and write-up of this study. Ethical issues associated with qualitative research involve more human interaction and are more complicated and susceptible to risks (Robson, 2002). According to Stake (1995, 447) researchers are 'guests in the participants' world and so interactions should be respectful and the 'code of ethics strict.' Creswell (2008, 11) asserts that ethical issues should always be at the forefront of the researcher's agenda to ensure that the rights of participants are respected. Throughout the preparations for the study, I was acutely aware of the ethical issues of researching struggling and failing STs. The emotional impact of struggling or failing have been documented by Rorrison, (2009), Lee (2007), Peelo and Wareham (2002) and Wragg et al (2000). Other studies have pointed to the complexity of the relationship between all members of the learning to teach partnership (Korthagen et al, 2001 and Ní Anglairs, 2009) and the impact on the CT was highlighted by Siebert et al (2007). The research was designed and administered in line with BERA ethical guidelines (2011) and the University of Nottingham's *Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics*. When the research design was finalised, an ethical application

was submitted to the University of Nottingham's ethics' committee. The application and the committee's response can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

Forefront to all of my ethical thinking was the principle of minimising harm to participants. Particular consideration was given to the issues of informed consent, openness and disclosure, anonymity, and the right to withdraw. These issues informed all of my interactions with participants and during the analysis. After verbal consent is received from the participant, it is up to the researcher to ensure that participants' rights are upheld and protected (Bryman, 2012, 134) and that they are giving informed consent. Participant information and consent forms, outlining research aims, participants' rights and the guarantees around anonymity, confidentiality were provided by e-mail to each participant in advance of participation. Before each interview, I took time to take all participants through the form and answer any questions that they might have. All participants signed two copies, one which they kept and one which I have securely retained. In the reporting on the research, great care was taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Participants or institutions have not been identified, pseudonyms have been used at all times and any potential identifiers were omitted or anonymised. During sampling, one of the HEIs required the completion of local ethical approval form and another asked to see the ethical approval from the university.

Commentators such as Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2008) highlight the potential harm to individuals' self-esteem and mental well-being. Great efforts were made to limit the risk of harm to participants. At the point of recruitment, I had a conversation with all of the STs to alert them to the possibility that participation might surface some difficult memories for them. Ahead of interviews, in my correspondence I included the following text in my e-mails to STs:

During the interview, I will ask you to reflect on and revisit your experience on the block of school placement that you failed (or had observation visits that were rated unsatisfactory). I will be asking you about the emotional impact of the experience. You may find this upsetting and it may take an emotional toll on you. It is important that you reflect on this and know that you are free to withdraw from the research at this or any other point.

During interviews, I watched for any potential upset to the participant. Participants could stop the interview at any time if they wished. Where, I noticed a participant was upset, I slowed questioning down and allowed the participant a chance to reflect, and asked if they wanted to stop. At the end

of the interview, I provided all participants with a page that included the contact details of free counselling and support services, including the Care-Call, the dedicated support line for teachers and educational professionals.

Sampling

The participants for this study were recruited across three HEIs that provide ITE in the Republic of Ireland. The identification of individuals willing to participate and access to them were initial challenges which needed to be overcome. While the HEIs were willing to participate, all were concerned about the sensitive nature of the topic. Equal numbers of participants were not achieved in each HEI and no attempt is made to compare or contrast the experiences in HEIs. My first point of contact in each of the HEIs was the DSP. These three participants were each known to me on a professional basis. I approached each individually and all agreed to participate in the research on an individual basis. Table 3.1 sets out the pseudonyms used for each of the three DSPs and their respective HEIs.

Table 3.1 Pseudonyms of HEIs and Directors of School Experience

Directors of School Experience / Head of Department			
	Pseudonym	HEI Link	Time Since Phenomenon
1	Carmel	Oak College	Ongoing
2	Jacinta	Ash College	Ongoing
3	Antoinette	Sycamore College	Ongoing

My aim was to recruit five STs, five CTs and five HEI-PTs using self-selecting purposive sampling. Initially I had hoped to send an e-mail to potential participants from each of the participant groups in each HEI inviting them to volunteer to participate in the research. This was partially possible in two of the colleges as is outlined below. In Oak and Ash Colleges an administrator was able to send e-mails to HEI-PTs and to groups of former STs to inform them of the research. A copy of one of these letters has been anonymised and is available in Appendix 3. In Sycamore College an administrator was unable to e-mail the STs as the HEI's data protection policy did not allow staff members to circulate e-mails to former STs. As a result, sampling for STs through the anticipated channels was not possible in that HEI. It was not possible to sample for CTs in this way through any of the HEIs as outlined below.

I was aware that STs were likely to be the group in the study who were most reluctant to participate. I also wanted to get a representative sample of such STs and to verify that they fulfilled the criteria for participation in the research. As outlined in chapter one, for the purpose of this study, a failing ST is one who recorded a fail grade for at least one block of SP and a struggling ST is one who had at least one visit during a SP assessed as being unsatisfactory and either withdrew from the placement or received a final grade for that block of between 40 and 45%. Given the experiences of the pilot, I was keen that the STs would have some distance from the experience and would therefore have left the HEI or graduated the programmes. In Oak College, an e-mail was sent by an administrator to all students who had graduated from the programme in the preceding two years, this numbered approximately 800 STs. From this, I received e-mail contact from 16 STs. I entered into correspondence on an individual basis with each one to ask them to outline their experience. It turned out that many of them read the word struggling and made contact with a willingness to participate, but had not actually struggled as I understood it or failed. There were 5 STs in total from that college who had either withdrawn because of struggles, failed school experience, had visits that were deemed unsatisfactory or scored below 45% on a block. In subsequent correspondence, two students indicated that they no longer wished to be part of the study. In Ash College, an administrator sent a similar e-mail to one cohort of post-graduate students who had graduated the programme the previous year. From this I received three e-mails. It transpired that one of the STs had not experienced the phenomenon. One ST later indicated that they were no longer interested and the third ST was recruited to the study. The fifth and final student, was recruited through an advertisement that I posted on a teacher membership website www.educationposts.ie using similar text as in the e-mail. This is a website for teachers and educational professionals that has a variety of discussion forums, including one that allows researchers to post details of research projects. I received about ten e-mails on foot of this advertisement. Several people had experienced the phenomenon but it was several years since the experience and a number were from other HEIs. Just one person, fitted the criteria of being from Ash College, had experienced the failure in the previous two years and was willing to participate and was subsequently recruited to the study. Table 3.2 below, summarises the STs who were recruited to the study. They are listed in the order in which I met with them to conduct

their interview. Regrettably, due to the restrictions outlined above, I did not manage to recruit an ST from Sycamore College.

Table 3.2 Pseudonym and information on student teachers

Former STs who experienced the Phenomenon					
	Pseudonym	HEI Link	Criteria for Acceptance	Time Since Phenomenon	Method of Recruitment
1	Frances	Oak College	Received one unsatisfactory visit on SP and withdrew from the block	18 months	Responded to e-mail from admin.
2	Stephen	Oak College	Failed 2 blocks of SP	9 months	Responded to e-mail from admin.
3	Teresa	Oak College	Failed 2 blocks of SP	1 year	Responded to e-mail from admin.
4	Catherine	Ash College	Failed 1 block of SP	2 years	Responded to a post on website for teachers
5	Patrick	Ash College	Scored lower than 45% on blocks of SP and had one unsatisfactory visit	1 Year	Responded to e-mail from admin.

The HEI-PTs were recruited with the support of the DSPs in each of the HEIs. An administrator sent an e-mail to the team of HEI-PTs to invite them to participate in the research. I had an abundance of replies from Oak College, three from Ash College and two from Sycamore. With each person who replied, I invited them to tell me about their experience, to verify that they had experience of the phenomenon that I was researching. From the responses that were suitable, I randomly selected three tutors from Oak College, one tutor from Ash College and one from Sycamore College. Table 3.3 below, summarises the HEI-PTs who were recruited to the study. They are listed in the order in which I met with them to conduct their interview.

Table 3.3 Pseudonyms and information on HEI-Placement Tutors

HEI Placement Tutors who experienced the Phenomenon					
	Pseudonym	HEI Link	Criteria for Acceptance	Time Since Phenomenon	Method of Recruitment
1	Violet	Oak College	Had worked with 3 students who failed SE	Within 6 months	Responded to e-mail from admin.
2	Heather	Oak College	Had worked with 2 students who failed SE	Within 1 Year	Responded to e-mail from admin.
3	Amanda	Sycamore College	Had worked with 2 students who failed SE	Within 6 months	Personal contact
4	Norma	Ash College	Had worked with 2 students who failed SE	Within 1 year	Responded to e-mail from admin.
5	Hazel	Oak College	Had worked with 3 students who failed SE	Within 1 year	Responded to e-mail from admin.

I had hoped to use a similar method of sampling to recruit CTs to the project. Unfortunately, the HEIs do not generally hold the contact details for CTs, as the point of contact with the college is

usually the principal or other teacher. To recruit CTs, I submitted an e-mail to a mailing list for teachers. This list is managed by the Dublin West Education Centre and is used to inform teachers and educational professionals of forthcoming CPD events, conferences and research projects. I verified the experience of each person who responded either by speaking to them directly on the phone or asking them to email regarding their experience. I ensured that their experience was of an ST from one of the HEIs, within the previous two years. I also posted a notice on www.educationposts.ie. I again verified the experience of all respondents and this resulted in a further two participants. At that stage, I had four CTs and was struggling to find a fifth. The final participant was recruited on foot of a conversation with a colleague, who referred a teacher she was aware had experienced the phenomenon. Following a phone conversation, I was able to verify her experience and suitability in terms of the HEI. Table 3.4 below, summarises the CTs who were recruited to the study.

Table 3.4 Pseudonyms and information on Cooperating Teachers

Co-operating Teachers who experienced the Phenomenon					
	Pseudonym	College Link	Criteria for Acceptance	Time Since Phenomenon	Method of Recruitment
1	Fiachra	Oak College	Had hosted an ST teacher who failed SP	2 years	Responded to an e-mail circulated amongst teaching colleagues
2	Fionn	Ash College	Had hosted an ST who failed SP	18 months	Responded to a post on website for teachers
3	Aoife	Oak College	Had hosted an ST who failed SP	6 months	Responded to a post on website for teachers
4	Úna	Ash College	Had hosted an ST who failed SP	18 months	Responded to an e-mail circulated amongst teaching colleagues
5	Áine	Sycamore College	Had hosted an ST who failed SP	1 year	Personal contact

Positionality

In my previous employment, I worked as deputy programme director on a post graduate ITE programme, a role which had direct responsibility for the administration and assessment of school experience. The HEI is one of the HEIs that agreed to participate in the research and circulated e-mails to potential participants. At the time of sampling, I had not worked in the college for two years. I was very careful when sampling to ensure that the STs that were recruited were not STs

that I had worked with directly. I had worked with some of the HEI-PTs, but felt that there was a significant professional distance and time lapse from all of those who volunteered for the project. My current role is as a district primary schools' inspector with the Department of Education and Skills. A potential power differential exists between my current role and teachers who work in schools in my district. The only possible conflicts that I envisaged was that a teacher, be it a former ST or a CT, who works in a school within my district, would volunteer. I had planned to exclude such teachers from the sample, however this situation did not arise.

I also had to consider my positionality to the topic. As outlined in chapter 1, my previous role provided me with considerable experience of the phenomenon and I was responsible for managing the supports for some STs who struggled or failed. There was potential for the knowledge and experience of the cases that I had experience of to influence my perspective. I had to work hard to ensure that I conducted the research with 'minimum reliance on my own beliefs, expectations and predispositions' about the phenomenon (Denscombe, 2007, 81). Denscombe, suggests that phenomenological researchers need to suspend 'common-sense beliefs' and not allow their presuppositions to guide their thinking. I chose to adopt the stance of 'the stranger' as advocated by Schutz (1962). In advance of interviews, I asked all participants to assume that I knew nothing about the phenomenon and I assumed the role of stranger to the topic when interviewing and probing clarifying participants.

Preparing for the Interviews

Four separate interview schedules were generated, one for the STs (Appendix 4), one for the HEI-PTs (Appendix 5), one for the CTs (Appendix 6) and one for the DSPs (Appendix 7). Questions in all schedules were formulated using the themes from the research questions and were planned using Kvale's process for planning interviews (1996). As I framed questions for the schedule, I was guided by Kvale's nine different kinds of questions (1996). I was aware that the interview style was semi-structured and so the schedule was not a rigid structure for the interview but rather a guide. As I designed the questions for each group of participants, I was conscious of the need for questions to be flexible enough to allow them to be adapted to the context of the interviewee. For some questions, I placed alternative questions and word prompts on the

schedule to allow for flexibility that would help to steer the interview and provide probing and prompting as required (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 421).

Ahead of interviews, I made contact with each participant, firstly to ensure that they were still willing to participate and secondly to confirm the time and arrange a venue that suited them. I allowed participants to suggest a place that was suitable and I travelled to a location identified by the participant. In a number of cases the participant invited me to their homes or to the school or HEI in which they worked. A number of HEI-PTs and CTs elected to meet me in a hotel or coffee shop and I arranged a quiet location in such a place. When meeting with STs, I ensured that we met in quiet private location usually in a hotel as I was anticipating the emotional impact that the meeting might have. In these instances, I phoned the venue ahead of time to arrange a suitable space. Ahead of all meetings, I sent the participant the research information form (Appendix 8) and a copy of the participant consent form (Appendix 9) in advance, by e-mail, as is suggested by the BERA Ethical Guidelines (2011). In correspondence with each participant, I sent an overview of how they might prepare for the interviews. I sent them a list of the themes that would be explored, based on the research questions. In the cases of HEI-PTs and DSPs I asked them to reflect in general as well as specifically on two of the more recent cases of the phenomenon that they had encountered. I asked the STs and the CTs, to think about their own particular experiences ahead of the interview. I was conscious from initial contact with all participants that as researcher I was building a rapport with the participant (Kvale, 1996) and I ensured that this correspondence was friendly and encouraging, yet professional.

Conducting the Interviews

There is considerable discussion in the qualitative research literature on the process of conducting interviews (e.g. Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al, 2011; King and Horocks, 2010 and Silverman, 2000). I remained flexible about the content and the sequence of the questions. Consequently, the natural flow of the discussion led to some variation in the order of questions asked; questions were explored in more or less depth depending on the interviewees' engagement with them and unanticipated but significant issues touched upon by the interviewees were pursued further. The issue of building and maintaining a positive interview relationship and dynamic is discussed by many commentators. In their respective reports on research with failing

teachers (Wragg et al, 2000) and with higher education students who had failed (Peelo and Wareham, 2002), the sensitive nature of asking participants to reveal and recount personal emotional experiences is highlighted. I ensured that I was sensitive to the emotional needs of interviewees, particularly the STs and allowed the participant to stop the interview if they needed as suggested by King and Horocks (2010) and Kvale (1996). At the end of the interview, each participant was offered the opportunity to add any additional information, and thanked for their time. I recorded all interviews using a Sony ICD-PX440, digital voice recorder. It has the added advantages of a USB connections for ease of storage and password controlled access to ensure secure storage (King and Horocks, 2010). After the interviews, the files were saved anonymously and onto a password protected USB key, which I placed in a secure, locked location in my home office.

As the interviews were taking place, I noted as much as possible in relation to context, body language, expression and other relevant factors (Silverman, 2000, p. 34; King and Horocks, 2010, p. 33). Shortly after each interview, I included these notes within a reflection that I typed on the interview. This was completed as soon as possible after the interview and allowed me to record my thoughts and perceptions after the interview and to note the themes that I felt were emerging. All interviews were professionally transcribed and I then checked them for accuracy. During these checks, transcripts were anonymised using pseudonyms and relevant contextual comments were inserted. In an effort to ensure maximum confidentiality and security, the transcriber completed a written declaration of confidentiality, and recordings and completed transcripts were exchanged on a password protected USBs. While interviews were away for transcription, I ensured that I stayed close to the data by listening to the recording. As recommended by Silverman (2000) and Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), analysis commenced as soon as possible after the transcript was finalised.

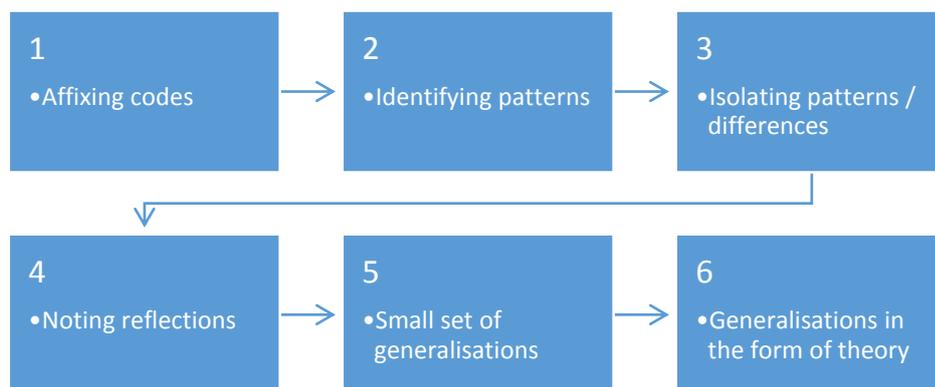
Data Analysis

'The strengths of qualitative data rest very centrally on the competence with which their analysis is carried out' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Data analysis has been described in the literature as a process whose purpose is 'to let the data *speak*' (Richards, 2009, 191). There is

no one agreed formula to analyse data, however, it is necessary for the researcher to develop a rigorous, robust, transparent and systematic approach to data analysis (Silverman, 2000; Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research can create vast amounts of data, (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 537), which on their own are benign and meaning is only brought through the human act of interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). During the design phase, several methods of data analysis were examined including grounded theory, coding and content analysis as well as discourse analysis, using Cohen et al (2011) and Bryman (2008) as introductory sources. I also explored interpretive phenomenological analysis using Smith et al (2009) as a sourcebook. Coding and content analysis were chosen as these methods provided close consonance with my research questions and with working within the interpretive paradigm.

As I read further, I was attracted to the system of inductive data analysis put forward by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) and adopted this system as the method used to analyse one interview from the pilot study. They see six 'analytic moves' common to all data analysis, as outlined in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 Miles. Huberman & Saldana's Six Analytic Moves (2014)



(Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014, p. 10)

As these analytic moves are taking place, data analysis is occurring through three concurrent flows of activity, namely: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, pp. 12 – 13). Data condensation, known as data reduction in the previous edition (Miles and Huberman, 1994), is the process of taking the raw data that is collected in the field and transforming it into more useable chunks. Data display refers to the organisation and manipulation of the management of the data to allow the analyst to contextualise and represent the data. Conclusion drawing and verification is an ongoing process whereby the analyst notes patterns and emerging themes, helping the analyst to decide on meaning and to check this against other data. These three flows of activity are inextricably linked and overlap each other.

Figure 3.2 Data Analysis Flows of Activity

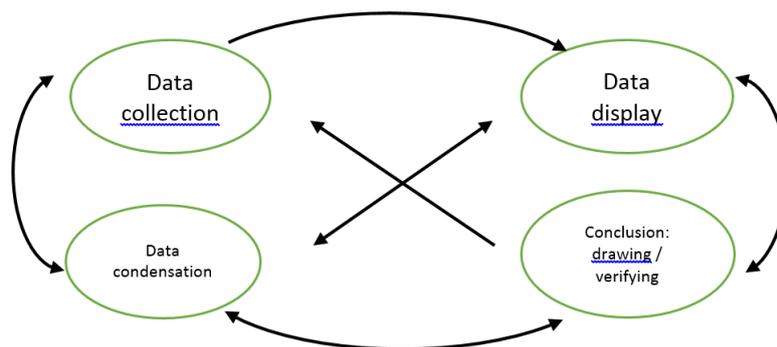


Figure. 3.2, above, based on the model in the 2014 text (p. 14) outlines the work flows, their relationships to each other and their interaction with data collection.

I considered using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). There is much debate in the literature both for and against its use. Bergin (2011, 6) cites advantages including ease of access to material, the ability to handle large amounts of data with consistent coding schemes, and the ability to help in theory building. Disadvantages of CAQDAS were also considered. Bryman (2012, 592) observes that although a computer takes over the physical task of writing marginal codes, CAQDAS do not automatically make copies of transcripts or field notes, can cut out chunks of text relating to a code or paste them together. It is still the analyst that must interpret the data, code, and then retrieve the data (Bryman, 2008, 592). Other commentators,

while acknowledging the benefits of the use of CAQDAS, assert the view that the programme cannot do the analysis, rather the analysis is a human, cognitive process that must be completed by the researcher. (Bryman, 2008; Bhowmick, 2006). As part of my own research ahead of analysis, I acquired a trial version of QSR NVivo 9 and attended some training on the package. While, I could see great potential in it from an organisational point of view, I remained unconvinced that it was a match for my learning style. That coupled with my base in Ireland, made access to further training at the University of Nottingham difficult. I was concerned that I would have to spend too long learning how to use the package and that my focus on learning about the technology would move my attention away from the analysis.

Once transcripts had been created, I commenced analysis by initially organising the data. Given the four perspectives that the study is giving voice to, I chose to organise the data in four groups aligned to the STs, the HEI-PTs, the CTs and the DSPs. I commenced the formal analysis with the data from the STs as they were those who experienced the phenomenon directly. I decided to move next to the CTs, then to the HEI-PTs and finally to the DSPs. I commenced with a first round of coding on all transcripts. This involved reading the transcript through and using different coloured highlighter pens, I selected pieces of text and assigned codes in the right hand margin. Codes are tags, names or labels that the analyst assigns to pieces of the data (Bryman, 2012). I utilised an inductive approach to coding. In inductive coding, codes are not predetermined (Bryman, 2012), they are created by the researcher through the analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that analysis may involve two or three rounds of coding. Each level of coding allows the analysis to move 'upwards in levels of abstraction' (Punch, 2009) and essentially allows the data to move from being very specific and concrete examples of experience, to a more general level, allowing for abstraction. Inductive analysis aligns with a subjective epistemology and an interpretivist understanding of participants' meanings.

The first round of coding took a considerable amount of time. I kept track of codes by creating a list, under headings that aligned to the research questions. I used a colour-coded system to mark the first-round codes. The colours were assigned to the research questions, with two additional categories of codes emerging, namely 'background information' and 'other.' As coding proceeded, I became aware that some codes were relevant to more than one research question

and so were assigned two colours. For example, identity is listed as context or red code, but it also became apparent that it was an impact or purple code. The final list of first round codes is displayed in table 3.5, overleaf. Codes were both descriptive and inferential and were altered, refined, changed, and omitted as the analysis developed (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014, 56). Where two codes were essentially fulfilling the same purpose, I merged them. For example, three codes that were initially separate were ‘Planning & Admin’, ‘Lessons not planned’ and ‘Lack of Preparation’, after the third transcript, I noted that I was essentially assigning three codes to the same or similar pieces of data so I merged the codes to create a code called ‘Planning, Prep & Admin’. Similarly, as suggested by Richards, (2003, 274) even though ‘the data themselves provide the main resource for categorisation’, the process can also be guided by the literature review. As I created codes, I was aware and was constantly thinking about the literature this helped to ensure that codes became analytical.

Table 3.5 First Round Codes

Background	Context of Failure / Reasons for Failure	Impacts of the Struggles / Failure	Support Mechanism	New Supports / Implications for Support	Other
Background – Context	Personal or emotional context	Upset	HEI-PT Support	Change to assessment process	Market place pressure
Decision to enrol / motivation	Identity as a teacher	Emotional breakdown	Principal	Bespoke support	Professionalism
Naive Motivation	Linking academic to practice	Confusion / Despair	Mentoring	Programme flexibility	
Positive Academic Progress	Planning / Preparation & Admin	Feeling Rudderless	Raised Self-Esteem / Self-Efficacy	Burden of planning	
	School Context / Negative Relationship with CT	Isolation	College pressure	Clarify role of the co-operating teacher	
	HEI-PT Communicates Failure	Overwhelmed by teaching	College Support	Training for co-operating teacher	
	Focused on Self	Emotional energy required	Counsellor	Suggested form of support	
	Mental Health / Underlying Difficulty	Withdrawal / defer	Peer Support	Proactive ST	
	Relational Difficulties with pupils	Career choice	Family / friend support		
	No learner engagement	Stress	Co-operating Teacher Support		
	School expresses concerns	Identity	Structured reflection on practice		
	Curriculum / Pedagogy	Low self-esteem / low self-efficacy	Resilience		
	Classroom management	Segregation from peers			
		Never again – CT			
		Impact – CT			
		Impact – HEI-PT			

Once the first round of coding was completed, I engaged in a second round of coding. As already mentioned, the first round of coding utilised codes that were both analytical and descriptive. Following the guidance of Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014, 87), I created pattern codes, which essentially group codes together. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) suggest that there are four types of pattern codes, categories or themes, causes/explanation, relationships and theoretical constructs. The second-round codes used, mainly fall into the first two categories: pattern codes and categories and themes. Table 3.6, below shows the emergence of second round codes and the first round codes to which they are linked to.

Table 3.6 Emergence of Second Round Codes

First Round Codes	Second Round Codes
Identity as a teacher	Person as Teacher
Focused on Self	
Mental Health / Underlying Difficulty	
Relational Difficulties with pupils	
Planning / Preparation and Admin	Planning Difficulties
Personal or emotional context	Contextual or Environmental factor
School Context / Negative Relationship with CT	
Linking academic to practice	Features of practice
No learner engagement	
Curriculum / Pedagogy	
Classroom management	
HEI-PT Communicates Failure	Defining Failure
School expresses concerns	Emotional and Personal Impacts
Upset	
Emotional breakdown	
Confusion / Despair	
Feeling Rudderless	
Isolation	
Stress	
Low self-esteem / low self-efficacy	
Emotional energy required	

Once the second-round coding was completed, I created a number of matrices to allow me to compare the emerging findings. For example, I created a one-page matrix to summarise the forms of support that the interviewees described. I used the matrix to show the participants who identified forms of support, to indicate their opinions and to review my analytical findings in relation to the effectiveness of that support. I viewed these matrices as summary pages of data to help me crystallise my thinking. As this was phenomenological research, I was particularly interested in the individual stories of those who had experienced the phenomenon. In total, 31 cases of STs who struggled or failed SP were discussed during interviews. In an effort to reduce

data, to summarise those experiences and to allow me to engage in cross-case analysis, I created a short narrative of the experiences of each ST. Both Densombe (2007) and Smith et al (2009) suggest the creation of narratives in phenomenological research to engage in deeper analysis. I displayed all of the narratives in a matrix table and this allowed me to compare and contrast cases and assign emerging themes to each one. The typologies of STs that are presented in chapter 5 emerged from this analysis.

Throughout the coding and analysis, I engaged in jotting. On transcripts, I jotted notes that would help me on the next level of analysis and I also kept a word document open during analysis. On some occasions, I jotted questions that would cue my thinking, such as 'How does this relate to the experience of Hazel?' to allow me to ensure that I examined the issue during cross-case analysis. Another type of jotting referred to my own questioning during the interview and the fact that I may have directed the interviewee onto a particular topic. I also used memos, which I wrote on yellow sticky notes to summarise an interviewee's thoughts. During first and second-round coding and during subsequent analysis, I created longer memos. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014, 95) see analytic memos as 'a brief or extended narrative that documents the researcher's reflections and thinking processes about the data', while Bryman (2012, 573) suggests that a memo is an aid to the 'generation of concepts and categories.' During the analysis of the HEI-PTs transcripts, the need for emotional energy emerged for both the STs and the HEI-PTs. My memo on this referred back to Day's (2006) work on the emotional work of teachers and I listed what I saw were the emotions required for each of the members of the triadic partnership. I also created a memo relating to my emerging findings on reflective practice for the STs who were experiencing difficulties. This led me to a re-examination of Korthagen's onion model (2004).

Trustworthiness

I used Lincoln and Guba's framework of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to examine the issue of research quality. This framework provides a structure to discuss validity, reliability and generalisability 'outside of the linguistic confines of a rationalistic paradigm' (Tobin and Begley, 2004, 4). Lincoln and Guba, posit that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. To ensure trustworthiness, the research must consider credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

According to Bryman (2012), credibility parallels internal validity. The study acknowledges the variety of perspectives on the phenomenon of struggling and failing STs. Triangulation of sources was achieved by means of collection of data from these differing sources. To ensure alignment and valid data collection, interview schedules for all participants were created using the same headings and, in so far as was possible, all participants were given an opportunity to discuss similar questions and themes. I ensured that all participants were given comparable time for interview and I ensured that all data was examined equally during analysis and that the same levels of rigour were employed to all sets of data. To enable respondent validation (Bryman, 2012, 390), I e-mailed a draft copy of chapter five to all participants for their comments and observations. At various points during the research, I presented draft findings to my supervisor and to fellow doctoral researchers for peer review, to validate my analysis and gauge a reaction to my draft findings.

Transferability, (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, 316), which parallels external validity, refers to the generalisability of inquiry. 'External validity or generalisability is one of the most difficult subjects in qualitative research' Boeije (2010, 180). In qualitative research, there is no single or correct true interpretation and so the comparable external validity is substantially different. Qualitative research typically involves a small group of respondents and, therefore, the research findings tend to be orientated 'to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social work being studied' (Bryman, 2012, 393). My goal in completing this research was to generate 'thick description' (Geertz, 1975, 27) of views held by respondents who through their own agency have the capacity to make a valuable contribution to knowledge. Patton (1999) shows reservation towards generalising, explaining that qualitative findings are highly context and case dependent. Other researchers will need to judge the bearing that the findings of this research will have on the phenomenon of struggling and failing STs in their own contexts.

Dependability, which parallels reliability, is achieved through the process of auditing. Miles and Huberman (1994, 8) and Lincoln and Guba (1985, 319) call for transparency in every aspect of the research and for the maintenance of a clear audit trail at every part of the research. This allows for others to independently examine the data, processes, methods, decisions and end

product. While reliability is concerned with the ability to replicate findings in other settings, dependability is a more useful concept in qualitative research. I have made great efforts to ensure that the research has a clear audit trail. All records for all steps of the research have been maintained. Much has been included in the appendices of this thesis to ensure that the sampling, data collection and data analysis processes are transparent. In chapters 4 and 5, I have included portions of data to aid the transparency.

Confirmability parallels objectivity. Bryman (2012, 393) acknowledges that complete objectivity is not possible in the social sciences, but there is a need for it to be apparent from the research, that the researcher has not allowed personal opinions, feeling or theoretical learning to influence the direction of the research and, possibly, distort the emerging findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify various possible threats to validity and divided them into three broad headings: reactivity, respondent biases and researcher biases. Threat to validity in this research study include my own experience in initial teacher education and my perception and direct experiences with struggling and failing STs. By maintaining a reflexive stance and engaging in regular reflection and by declaring my own positionality, I have helped to identify any biases that I may hold. I worked hard to ensure that these biases did not affect how I conducted the research and the conclusions I made.

It is almost impossible to replicate interviews or data analysis, so I placed great emphasis on conducting a study that was trustworthy. This was achieved through the statement of clear aims and research questions, clear articulation of the context, inclusion of sufficient original data in the write-up, a thorough description of the methodologies employed, as well as the maintenance of all materials associated with the research to facilitate an audit if required by an independent third party.

Limitation of this Study

This study is limited like any other to the data that was collected to answer the research questions. The former STs, who participated in the study were reflecting on their experience and perceptions of events at a time in the past. A period of two years had intervened between their experience of

the phenomenon and the time of data collection. Their perceptions may have changed with the passage of that time and indeed might well change further, into the future. Similarly, the perspectives of the other participants, were their recollections of events, after a number of months. All of these perspectives were then interpreted from my vantage point as a researcher.

A further limitation of the sample, is the fact that all of the STs who were recruited to the study, did eventually successfully complete their programmes of study. While I had hoped to recruit STs who had either failed their ITE programmes, chosen to withdraw or had been removed from a programme of ITE, such candidates were not forthcoming at the time of sampling. Undoubtedly, former STs, with these experiences would have brought an additional perspective to the research.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed account of the philosophy that underpinned and informed the research and then outlines and analyses the approach of phenomenology. To effectively examine the phenomenon of struggling and failing STs and to realise the research questions, it was necessary to use qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews. The choice of methods facilitated alignment between the epistemological, ontological and research approaches, in that they are subjective. My research set out to examine the experience of the phenomenon from the perspectives of all of those in the learning to teach partnership. The chapter also outlines the considerations that were taken in the research design, the preparation for and the collection of data as well as the methods employed to analyse that data in an effort to answer the research questions posed. The next chapter presents an analysis of the data in an effort to provide answers to the research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected during the study and sets out to systematically answer each of the research questions as presented in chapter one. This thesis explores the phenomenon of student teachers (STs) who struggle or experience failure during the school placement (SP) component of their initial teacher education (ITE). As is defined in chapter one, for the purposes of this study a failing student teacher (ST) is understood to be a student who has received an overall fail grade on at least one block of SP and a struggling ST is one that experienced difficulty on SP, had one at least one observation visit that was deemed unsatisfactory and received an overall low grade for that block of SP or withdrew from a block of SP. The study sought to:

- Gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teachers.
- Explore the impact of the struggles and / or failure on student teachers themselves, on co-operating teachers and on HEI placement tutors.
- Identify the forms of support available to struggling and failing student teachers and examine their perceived benefits and limitations.

As indicated in chapter three, participants were recruited from across three higher education institutes (HEIs) that provide ITE in Ireland. The evidence presented in this current chapter is taken from interviews with five STs who struggled or experienced failure on SP; five HEI-placement tutors (HEI-PTs) and five co-operating teachers (CTs) who had worked with such STs, as well as the directors of school placement (DSPs) from the three HEIs. Research questions (RQ) one and two, directly acknowledge the multiple perceptions and ontologies of the four groups of participants. The data for each constituent group is presented and discussed separately. Questions three and four don't explicitly acknowledge the multiple perspectives, and as a consequence, a concurrent approach is taken to answering those questions. A descriptive, narrative approach has been taken in all cases to facilitate an exploration of patterns and themes. The pseudonyms outlined in tables 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 presented in chapter three are used throughout this chapter.

Overall the cases of thirty-one STs were discussed during the interviews. The STs all discussed their own cases and the CTs discussed the cases that they had directly encountered, with one CT discussing two cases. Three of the HEI-PTs discussed two cases, while two referred to three cases in detail. One of the DSPs explored three cases, while the other two discussed two respectively. Throughout the evidence, reference is made to blocks of SP, which are periods of several weeks of SP. The analysis of the transcripts and my narrative field notes have highlighted the fact that each individual case is a unique experience and that no two occurrences of the phenomenon are exactly the same. Such a finding confirms the need for a multi-perspective analysis, taking a phenomenological approach.

Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?

Participants tended to talk about the deficits in STs' practices and discuss the difficulties STs were experiencing, as well as the participant's perception of the underlying causes and the way by which STs learned or realised they were struggling, failing or had failed. The findings for this mirror many of factors identified by Wilkins-Rickman and Hollowell (1981) and by Knowles and Sudzina (1994) in their respective studies.

Perceptions of student teachers

The interviews with STs concentrated on their five individual journeys through ITE, with particular reference to the blocks of SP in which they struggled or experienced failure. Each ST had a specific story, for each, the experience had been painful and all of the STs acknowledged the difficulty or difficulties they were experiencing on the specific block. All five identified a HEI-PT as the person who verbalised to them in feedback sessions that they were actually struggling or were at risk of failing. On the SP blocks in which they failed, Stephen and Teresa received an unsatisfactory grading from their assigned HEI-PTs and both STs also received unannounced visits from another HEI-PT who also graded their visits as unsatisfactory. By the end of the block that she failed, Teresa had three unsatisfactory visits. The DSP invited her to the HEI for a meeting and confirmed to her that she had failed the overall block. Stephen failed two blocks of SP. Within his first block, one visit was deemed satisfactory and two further visits were deemed

unsatisfactory. Like Teresa, he met with the DSP in the HEI, who let him know that it was an overall fail grade for the block in advance of the release of results. Catherine, the third ST, was aware from the feedback from her HEI-PTs that the particular SP block was not going well, she also received additional unannounced visits. At the time in her HEI, the HEI-PT did not communicate to the student whether each visit was satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Catherine learned that she had failed the overall SP block when she received a letter outlining the result. It came as a huge shock to her that she had actually failed. In the cases of Frances and Patrick, they did not receive a fail grade for an overall block, but both had a visit where the HEI-PT rated their practice as unsatisfactory. In Patrick's case, he had subsequent visits which that were satisfactory and he received an overall pass grade within the particular SP block. Frances chose to withdraw from the placement after an unsatisfactory visit, as she was suffering from significant personal stress, due to bereavement at the time.

Planning and preparation was identified as a shortcoming in their practice by all of the STs. They all described the burden that planning became and their inability to keep planning up to date within the prescribed timeframes. In all cases, they perceived planning to be an extremely important feature of the requirements placed on STs, and in some cases, they perceived their shortcomings in planning to be the reason for receiving the fail grade in SP. Stephen spoke at length about his difficulties with paperwork. He didn't manage to complete lesson plans or get them uploaded to his online portfolio for many of his lessons. He felt that the reason that his first visit was deemed unsatisfactory was due to the absence of planning: "if my paperwork had been there and done, it would have been a pass visit."

Teresa admitted to not having good administration skills and ended up getting 'way behind' in planning. She was ill towards the end of the particular SP block, and didn't get planning completed and as a result a second visit was deemed unsatisfactory. STs indicated that an excessive focus was placed on planning and preparation, and that these factors were valued more than their teaching abilities. For the STs, the competent teacher, above all other things must have planning

and must have a record of that planning. In this way, planning is serving a performative purpose (Ball, 2003) and part of the managerial culture (Parker, 2015 and Connell, 2009).

Classroom and behaviour management were further factors identified by STs. Catherine highlighted her classroom presence and classroom management skills as reasons for failing SP. She described difficulties in keeping the children's attention and when the CT left the room 'that's when the messing would start' and said sometimes there was 'mayhem'. During her first supervised visit, the lesson "fell completely apart" and she said that children were poorly engaged and poorly behaved. Stephen didn't necessarily feel that his classroom management skills were his difficulty, but rather his presence and his belief in himself as a teacher. He felt that the children picked up on this and didn't respect him.

Deficits and gaps in theoretical, curricular and pedagogical knowledge and skills also emerged from the STs as reasons for failure. They reported gaps in content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986) and reflected on how such gaps affected their performance in the classroom. Teresa was open about the fact that she had missed out on a lot of lectures and workshops on curriculum and methodology. She described a literacy lesson:

I really didn't know what I was doing. It was a reading lesson...I just got them to read...I kinda relied on my instincts...I'm good you know....at oral...and discussion

In Catherine's case, her knowledge gaps related to early years' education and how to approach teaching an infant class:

I really didn't know where to start with them [infants]...they're so different...to like a 5th of 6th class...I found it hard to think of ideas.

Stephen's difficulties were more specific to the teaching of Irish as a subject. He described spending time 'trying to look for nice things to be teaching', but wasn't sure about how 'to actually teach the basics.' Both Patrick and Stephen were critical of the HEI and felt that they hadn't studied enough pedagogical courses in advance of their first block of SP. Patrick suggested that, in the absence of knowledge of curricular and pedagogical knowledge, he fell back on what Lortie (1975) described as his 'apprenticeship of observation':

I had a cursory knowledge of what to do but the nitty gritty was beyond me at that stage...I was kinda teaching the way I had been taught.

A number of STs identified events in their personal lives as contributing factors to their poor performance. This reflects the general acknowledgement in the literature, that events in teachers' lives impact on how they carry out their professional roles (Day and Gu, 2014 and Goodson and Hargreaves 1996). Knowles and Sudzina (1996) and Rorrison (2009) identified the personal life circumstances of STs contributory factors in the STs' professional difficulties in their respective studies. A very close friend of Frances' passed away in advance of the block. She described her anguish, how her life 'went into freefall', and her inability to focus on preparing for SP.

I felt like I was in a dark cupboard and I was meant to come out of that...and be this fabulous teacher.

Directly in advance of one of the blocks of SP in which he failed, Stephen's mother in-law passed away suddenly. She was a very significant person in his family's life and lived with the family. He described trying to put his 'emotions to one side' and to 'try to get through this final TP [SP]'. He was unable to focus and had to prioritise supporting his wife and deal with many of the practical family tasks, while she grieved. Teresa, a single parent, experienced severe financial pressure and had childminding difficulties. All three agreed that their life circumstances resulted in significant pressures, which distracted them from SP and impacted on their preparation, their performance, their abilities to focus and their confidence.

Four of the five STs claimed that the nature of the relationship with another member of the triadic partnership was a contributing factor to their struggles or failure. Patrick was very critical of the HEI-PT that he worked with. She was 'very negative' and was expecting him to be like 'a seasoned practitioner rather than a novice.' He felt that the HEI-PT's role was just to grade him and that feedback was not formative, and that the opinion of the CT had not been sought. He suggested that the HEI-PT's assessment or judgement didn't appear to be based on criteria but on the tutor's personal opinion:

She couldn't tell me how to improve. Everything I was doing was wrong. She...like...seemed to have her mind made up about me and that in her mind, I was wrong for teaching.

This evidence from Patrick calls into question the biases of the HEI-PT and also how she made decisions about his suitability. He was clear that the HEI-PT didn't talk about criteria when giving

him feedback, which suggests that the assessment judgements made by her were not based on teaching standards. Stephen contrasted the positive relationship he had with the CT within a later successful block, with the relationship with the CT within the block in which he failed. The relationship with the CT was very negative. The CT constantly criticised him and put him under additional pressure and acted more like 'tormentor' than mentor (Sudzina, Giebelhaus and Coolican, 1997). Catherine felt unsupported by the CT, who left the room when she was teaching, which she felt added to her classroom management difficulties. 'I felt like she didn't want to tell me, you know, things that I wasn't doing right...or help me when I got them wrong.' She felt that the relationship got worse as the SP block progressed. Catherine also suggested that one of the HEI-PTs who visited her was verbally aggressive and negative towards her and felt intimidated by her.

Perceptions of Co-operating teachers

The unique vantage point of the CT was highlighted by most participants. Áine (CT) claimed the CT 'knows from very early on how it's going to go.' Three of the CTs claimed that from very early in the placement, they knew the SP was going to be problematic. Aoife was concerned during the observation days, in advance of the SP, due to the fact that the ST had 'expressed a lot of anxiety about teaching an infant class.' She noted that he had great difficulty 'communicating with the children.' Fiachra (CT) knew 'quite quickly that there could be difficulties'. He described showing the ST where resources were and making suggestions about content and specific projects, but then feeling quite disheartened when the ST said 'I don't care, as long as it goes well for the inspector' [HEI-PT].

Deficits in STs teaching methodologies and understanding of lesson structure were raised by the CTs, pointing to gaps in the STs' knowledge of curriculum and gaps between theory and practice. Fionn (CT), claimed the ST's lessons 'weren't engaging' and that 'a lot of it was from the book'.

There was nothing...there didn't seem to be anything vibrant, or lively, or creative, or different about his lessons.

Úna noted that the ST's lessons were very teacher focused and was critical of the methodologies he used.

He just explained things to the whole class and then got them to do things in their copies or work sheets. There was no pair work...no collaboration...no fun...nothing interesting for the kids.

Regarding the ST's reading lesson:

I think he did most of the reading. I didn't feel they (the pupils) learned an awful lot. His lessons were stagnant, they were boring, they were staid.

Aoife expressed concern that the ST's lessons were not well structured and that tasks were not well designed. 'Almost all of his worksheets were blank pages, that the children had to draw their own picture.' The CTs linked the deficit in methodology to poor engagement by the children, and which furthermore sometimes resulted in classroom and behavioural management difficulties.

CTs highlighted the impact that the ST was having on the children's learning as a particular cause for concern, and evidence that they were struggling. Fiachra described feeling 'less than satisfied that she (the ST) didn't really care about the children's learning.' He claimed that 'she had no intention of teaching the children anything' or for them to make progress, 'she just wanted the supervised lessons to go well.' Fionn suggested that the ST was 'going through the motions' and wasn't aware whether or not they (the pupils) were learning. Aoife expressed concern that the ST 'didn't seem to need them to learn anything,' and contrasted the ST with her own motivation for the children's learning: 'I was very invested in these children and he was solely invested in getting a good grade.' This assertion by Aoife that her ST was only interested in a good grade is evidence of the performative nature of learning to teach and the marketisation of the ST's learning to teach experience. In order for him to be perceived as a good teacher, he needs to achieve a 'good grade.' Aoife and Fiachra suggested that they both had to go back over work with the children after the ST had finished the placement.

The relationship between the ST and a member of the learning to teach partnership, came out as a contributing factor from the interviews' data with the CTs also. This finding reflects the work of Dikdere (2009) and Sudzina (2004). The power differential between the other members of the partnership and the ST was evident. Áine and Úna discussed the relationships between their STs and the HEI-PTs. Both STs were repeating their final placements and both reported that the STs had made good starts to the SP block and that they were initially impressed.

Áine: ...she made a very good start and again was very willing to listen and again a lot of what she had done was very good. It was very well prepared, well sourced

Úna: In the class he was organised, he was extremely well prepared. He had resources for all lessons. I would have felt he was definitely trying all the methodologies.

They both cited the pressure of supervision by the HEI-PT as the point, where the ST really began to struggle. The ST working in Áine's class began to get visibly stressed in advance of the first visit and as the SP block proceeded, she became more and more anxious about the visits of the HEI-PT and began to fall behind in planning. Áine claimed 'her whole focus became about the visits.' Úna suggested that 'Maybe under scrutiny, he (the ST) crumbles'. Both of them noted significant differences in the STs' demeanour and confidence after the visits.

A poor relationship between the CT and the ST became evident, during Aoife's interview. She spoke very negatively about the ST, and there was a marked difference in her tone when she spoke about him. She referred to him as 'a boy' on four occasions during the interview.

He just couldn't seem to do anything right. No matter what I showed him or told him, he did his own thing.

I would have got great satisfaction with this boy coming in struggling and me helping him and him getting a great Grade. I would have, you know, given myself a giant pat on the back.

She described, in the first few weeks how she gave him feedback on every lesson. She also expressed a sense of bias towards the fact that he was a post-graduate student and contrasted her own experience with his.

For us it was different in [HEI name] we were all on a three-year degree focused on teaching, we had high points, we had to have honours Irish and we had to work really hard...

The CTs also suggested that underlying personal difficulties were a factor in three of the cases. Fionn expressed concerns about the personal hygiene of the ST that he worked with and also wondered whether or not the student might have been experiencing a mental health difficulty. Áine, reported that her ST appeared to be very anxious and described a situation where she became completely over-whelmed during a maths lesson and walked out of the classroom. In the case of the ST with whom Úna had worked, she suggested that he appeared to have low self-

esteem, manifested through his poor teacher presence and she questioned his motivation to be a teacher as she felt that 'he didn't have a heart for teaching.' Such factors which contribute to STs failing as perceived by the CTs are all in the affective emotional personal domain.

Perceptions of HEI placement tutors

It is evident from each of the five HEI-PTs that they are a key identifier of the phenomenon and that they are the main decision makers. All five HEI-PTs claimed that their assessment was clearly based on criteria that the HEI outlined, however in their descriptions of STs they didn't identify particular criteria that the STs were achieving. They did not make reference to standards or specific learning outcomes. The HEI-PTs made it clear that they made their assessment decisions independently of the CT, although in eight of the cases they reported upon, they said that they had received oral feedback from either the CT or the principal of the school.

Gaps in the STs skills and knowledge were also highlighted by HEI-PTs. Violet, Heather and Amanda (HEI-PTs) referred to deficits in STs' practices, a finding which resonates with Lannier and Little's (1986) assertion of a gap between theory and practice. Heather, Amanda and Norma all described situations where the ST's teaching did not reflect curriculum content or HEI advocated methodologies. An over theorisation of teaching, and an inability to translate theory to classroom practice was Norma's experience with one ST. She suggested that the ST's language was far too sophisticated and that lessons were pitched at much too high a level for the children.

To me she was removed...she was 4 storeys above Primary Teaching.
She just couldn't get down to the level of the children.

Norma described how during feedback she focused on practical suggestions, but that the ST just wanted to talk about the underlying psychological and sociological theoretical constructs.

Not surprisingly deficiencies and inadequacies in STs planning featured as factors in ten of the cases discussed by HEI-PTs. Norma described how in the HEI in which she works that HEI-PTs meet the STs in advance of SP to go through initial plans which had the potential to identify causes for concern ahead of the SP block. Heather, Amanda and Hazel all suggested that they were concerned about an ST before ever they went to the school, because of the absence of lesson plans and other documents in the student's uploads. Violet suggested that another ST

'became overwhelmed, by the workload, so wasn't able to develop planning at a professional level of competence.' Hazel was reflective about planning, and suggested that the absence of planning documents was sometimes a symptom of a deeper issue, such as poor understanding of curriculum or pedagogy, a stressful home situation or a significant life event. Heather's description of another ST was troubling. She said that the ST's teaching was well-thought-out, well-resourced and creative, but because there were a lot of gaps in her planning, Heather's assessment judgement 'had to be unsatisfactory.' HEI-PTs appear to focus considerably on the planning aspect of the STs work, pointing to a very performative approach to the evaluation of STs work.

The issue of some STs' specific personalities were raised by some of the HEI-PTs as a cause for concern. Norma, Violet, Hazel and Amanda all talked about the individual personalities of STs. Issues such as poor communication, poor perception, introversion, quiet personalities, and an inability to cope with the active and unpredictable nature of a classroom were raised. Amanda, Violet and Norma voiced the opinions that in these specific cases, the STs did not have a 'suitable' personality. Amanda spoke of one particular ST who she felt did not have the 'personality for teaching' and whose motivation to become a teacher she also questioned. In the literature pertaining to student teacher identity (e.g. Lamonte and Engels, 2010; Morrison, 2013) the importance of a teacher's personality and personal attributes is highlighted. However, the discussions with HEI-PTs weren't grounded in specific personality types, nor were their judgements or hypotheses guided by specific criteria or indeed competences. These types of references were concerning as they were based on personal opinion and at the very least open to an accusation of bias.

HEI-PTs linked the notion of personality with the matter of teacher presence as a key factor in the identification of an ST who is struggling or failing. Teacher presence was not specifically defined by any of the participants but they talked about 'inhabiting the role of teacher', 'being fully present', 'being confident in front of the class' and 'making connections with the pupils' as features of effective teacher presence. Teacher presence may relate to an ST's identity, mission and beliefs (Korthagen, 2006). Amanda was very concerned about one ST who had poor teacher

presence and lacked the ability to communicate with the class and asserted that the ST showed no emotion either with the class or during the feedback session.

An underlying mental health difficulty was suggested by three of the HEI-PTs as a possible explanation for poor teacher presence. Violet, noted a 'complete lack of perception' in one ST and claimed that the ST was 'oblivious to what was going on in the classroom', and described the ST's high level of anxiety during the feedback session. Hazel also described a situation where she felt the ST 'he was struggling and had an inability to cope' and had what she perceived to be a processing difficulty: 'His interactions in the classroom were very slow and were dulled.' In cases discussed by Hazel and Amanda, the school principals had expressed concern about the ST's interactions with others and for their well-being. It is important to stress that in these cases, it was the perception of the HEI-PT that the ST might be experiencing a mental health difficulty.

Poor skills or poor practice in the area of classroom and behavioural management was also identified by HEI-PTs as a factor, and in some of the cases this was linked to poor teacher presence. Violet described a male ST who had significant difficulties establishing a presence in the classroom. on one occasion, she was particularly concerned for the children's safety:

He had a complete lack of awareness about what was happening in the classroom. A couple of children actually went to leave the room, you know, there was a little anteroom, and he didn't notice they were leaving...

Norma described an ST, having difficulties getting and maintaining the children's attention. Much of the lesson was given over to management. She reported that 'he kept shouting, but they just ignored him, he had lost the children's attention and none of them were on task.'

A negative relationship between the ST and the CT was articulated as a possible factor by Hazel. She described a situation whereby an ST did well on the first visit, but on the second visit, she noted a significant deterioration in his performance. She noted that 'he seemed to have lost his self-esteem', and she felt that he was 'like a different person'. The ST told her that the CT didn't like him and that no matter what he did, he was a 'failure in her eyes.'

In four cases, the HEI-PTs raised factors in the STs' lives, such as a car accident, financial pressures and isolation from family and agreed that these factors were having a negative impact on the STs' performance.

The subject that the ST was teaching during the observed lesson was also raised as a contextual factor. Amanda noted that one ST taught 'a reasonably good' Gaeilge lesson,' but followed it with 'a disastrous maths lesson.' Amanda suggested that she was a native speaker and had a natural comfort with the language. Violet described how one ST's English lesson was satisfactory, but when he taught a science lesson that it completely fell apart.

Interestingly, the HEI-PTs dedicated most of their discussion to the actions of the STs, what they STs were or were not doing. They were very focused on the actions of teaching and made very few references to the pupils' learning experiences or outcomes.

Perceptions of directors of school placement

The DSPs experience the phenomenon from a similar vantage point to the HEI-PTs, however the data shows that they experience the phenomenon from a wider, institutional perspective. The findings from their data share many commonalities with the HEI-PTs, however, they were able to generalise to a greater extent about STs. The three DSPs agreed that the phenomenon of failure occurs in each HEI. Carmel and Antoinette estimated that STs struggle or experience failure in less than 2% of cases in a given year, while Jacinta couldn't quantify the frequency of the occurrence in her HEI, but agreed that there were a number of cases annually. A team approach is employed to the evaluation of all blocks of SP in Antoinette's HEIs and in the longer blocks in Jacinta's HEI, while on the shorter blocks one HEI-PT works with a student. In Carmel's HEI, STs are supported and evaluated by one HEI-PT. Both Jacinta and Carmel indicated that in cases where a visit was unsatisfactory, the ST would receive an additional visit from a different HEI-PT. The three DSPs agreed that there were specific criteria for the assessment of all STs. While these are essentially operating as competences / standards, the evidence from the DSPs, and indeed the HEI-PTs, is that in cases where STs are struggling, a lot of human and personal instinct is also brought into the decision-making process.

All three DSPs raised specific personality types. Jacinta suggested that some STs 'are simply not cut out for teaching'. Antoinette referred to STs personalities:

You might see that their personalities...are a little bit 'unusual', for want of a better word and they're not...you can see that they're going to struggle when it comes to interpersonal relationships and the relational dimension of teaching basically.

Carmel linked personality to classroom presence and how the STs interacted with children and other adults in the schools. Antoinette raised the issue of teacher presence with one particular student and suggested it was as a result of a lack of self-confidence and self-belief.

Mental health difficulties were identified as a factor by all three DSPs. Jacinta, noted: 'I have seen in more recent years an increasing number of student with mental health problems and challenges.' In some cases, the DSPs were aware of a diagnosed mental health difficulty, while in others, they perceived the existence of such a difficulty. Significant events in STs' lives were also raised by the DSPs. Jacinta and Carmel claimed that one of the challenges facing HEIs is that they are often not made aware of such events. Jacinta discussed one ST who had an extremely traumatic life event in advance of SP, but was unable to tell anyone, even members of her family. She failed the particular SP block and only then disclosed the nature of her difficulty to Jacinta after the result had been communicated.

The relationships with other members of the partnership and the particular class context were raised by the DSPs as contributing contextual factors. Carmel and Antoinette each referred to cases, where STs had specific difficulties relating to younger children. Jacinta related a case where a CT had unrealistic expectations for an ST, resulting in a strained relationship between the two. The DSPs also raised gaps in STs' knowledge and skills, gaps between theory and practice, classroom management, as a reason that some STs are identified as struggling or failing. The early identification of such STs, was mentioned as a priority by all three. Carmel and Jacinta, suggested that STs who have not been attending lectures and tutorials are a cause for concern and are monitored carefully on SP. In Antoinette's HEI, a pre-planning meeting between the ST and HEI-PT helps to identify STs experiencing difficulty with planning and preparation and triggers supportive measures.

What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?

This second research question also acknowledges the multiple realities within this social world, and it recognises that there are different and individual perspectives. The effects on the STs, the CTs and the HEI-PTS are discussed and presented as they impacted on the constituent members of the triadic partnership. This question did not specifically seek to explore the impact on the DSPs, however their experience of the phenomenon allowed me to access evidence of the impacts on each of the other groups.

Impacts on student teachers

The emotional and personal upset emerged as a significant personal impact on STs and was referred to by almost all participants. Catherine (ST) and Frances (ST) both described situations where they broke down in tears during feedback meetings, something that HEI-PTs also reported as a frequent occurrence. Fiachra (CT) described the ST being left in 'floods of tears', while Áine (CT), suggested that her ST was 'upset for the rest of the day.' At a private level, when STs learned that they had failed within a block of SP, there was considerable emotional turmoil. Stephen said he was 'gutted...I was like the walking dead almost...', while Catherine and Teresa used the word 'devastated.' Two exceptions were raised with regard to emotional impact, Norma and Amanda (HEI-PTs) noted that the STs were completely cold and devoid of emotion, when they had communicated with them that a visit had been unsatisfactory. Both of the HEI-PTs, articulated the view that they felt that the ST was experiencing underlying mental health difficulties.

Several of the STs identified that the emotional requirements of teaching are exacerbated and magnified when the SP is not going well and when STs' competences is being questioned, which aligns to Hebson et al's findings (2007). Frances and Teresa (STs) claimed that they had to assume a persona or way of being in order to demonstrate that they were an acceptable or competent teacher. This very much points at a type of enforced emotional labour, similar to that suggested by Hebson et al (2007). Stress was also commonly identified as an impact of struggling and failing. All five STs described feeling stressed during SP. Research has shown that stress is

generally experienced by STs on SP (eg Dikdere, 2007, Rorrison, 2007, White, 2009). However, Stephen and Frances acknowledged that SP is stressful for all STs but claimed that there was an additional level of stress for those who weren't succeeding. STs also reported that the experience of failing had an impact on their confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The data shows that STs who experience difficulty tend to have a greater number of assessment visits, from HEI-PTs and other college personnel. Teresa had three graded visits from HEI-PTs, one ungraded support visit and a graded visit from the DSP on the block of SP in which she failed. Stephen, Catherine and Patrick all had more assessed visits than were normal. Hazel (HEI-PT) also raised the number of visits as an issue, and suggested that one ST had an 'avalanche of people coming into him.' Jacinta and Carmel (DSPs), considered additional visits necessary in order to ensure that the assessment was fair. The STs reported that these additional evaluations of their competence added to an already stressful situation, concurring with the findings of both Perryman (2007) and Henson et al (2007).

Failing a block of SP may result in a longer route to graduation. Carmel and Antoinette (DSPs) argued that for some STs a period of rest or time away from the programme can be advantageous. Carmel talked about an ST who elected to take a year out of the programme to allow her to recover from a traumatic personal experience, and Antoinette discussed one ST who had spent much of the time out working in a voluntary capacity and observing in schools. In Stephen, Teresa and Frances' cases, it took them longer to complete their programmes than their peers. This left Teresa feeling isolated on the programme:

people had sort of moved on from their TP1 [SP1] to TP2 [SP2], or whatever, or on to do stuff and people had formed sort of study groups and stuff...and I wasn't part of this because I was on a different page.

The removal from the peer group resulted in the removal of a potentially powerful support mechanism for Teresa.

STs indicated that struggling or failing SP, made them question their suitability for teaching as a career. Frances said that she 'wanted to withdraw', and agreed to defer her programme instead because her husband and family encouraged her to stick with it. Stephen described several points

during his learning to teach journey where he thought about his suitability and thought about 'pulling out of the programme altogether.' Catherine also questioned whether or not teaching was for her:

I definitely questioned whether teaching was for me. And actually after I got the initial letter with the, you know, the failing. I did actually speak to my parents about it [withdrawing] and was thinking, you know, 'Is this a waste of time?'

The experience of struggling or failing had a significant impact on the subsequent career paths and choices of STs. While the five participating STs all eventually completed, each took a different path after graduation. Frances resumed studies after her bereavement and experienced success in later blocks of SP, was working as a teacher at the time of the interview and was quite philosophical about her experiences. Stephen had recently graduated, but was finding it difficult to get work. He felt that his low and fail grades were preventing him from getting interviews:

Anybody sort of looking at my CV and grades and that...they're...they wouldn't be the greatest so it's a way of sorting better teachers [for employers]. And most schools if they're looking...if they are looking for newly qualified teacher they'll be looking for [good] teaching practices grades.

Stephen indicated that failing within two blocks of SP had a financial impact on him and on his family. Teresa initially decided not to work as a teacher, but didn't manage to get work outside of education, and so tried to get substitute work. She then worked as a one-to-one tutor outside of the school system, but was unsure whether she would continue to seek work as a teacher. Catherine made a conscious decision not to teach. Failing SP had affected her self-confidence and her self-efficacy. 'My confidence was...was just too low. I didn't feel I could face into a career in teaching...I wondered if it was for me.'

Patrick's experience and his relatively low grades have impacted on how he views himself as a teacher. While he didn't fail any blocks of SP, he was very disappointed in his overall SP grades, but was working as a teacher. He found it difficult to get interviews for teaching jobs and felt that his lower grade affected his prospects and felt anger towards the HEI-PT and the HEI:

he gave me 43 [%] which is seen by a Principal who looks, and someone else with 70 or 72 [%] and says well that's him gone anyway. He's a half-marker, he'd no good to us. And I was trying to set out on a career that I was going to spend the rest of my life doing. I felt very...exceptionally resentful...to the college. To my inspector [HEI-PT] personally.

He described his first day as a qualified teacher as 'a daunting experience,' not because it was his first day, but because his confidence was low. He said, 'I went in feeling I was a passable teacher, I wasn't a good teacher.' Patrick's experience illustrates the effect that performativity and the competence approach to teacher quality can have. For the market to perceive him as a 'good' teacher, he needs to have a high grade.

Impacts on co-operating teachers

The impact on the CTs mirror many of the findings of Siebert et al's (2006) study. All five CTs reported that they found the experience of hosting the ST stressful. The stress manifested itself differently for each of the CTs, with Aoife suggesting it was 'the most stressful teaching experience of my life.'

Managing the interpersonal relationships became a tiring aspect of the experience for some CTs. As the placement progressed, the STs placed with Áine and Fiachra's became quite emotional when things didn't go well or when they received negative feedback from the HEI-PT. Fiachra described the situation and the effort that went into managing it.

the Supervisor [HEI-PT] would leave and I was still dealing with a student who was bawling her eyes out...perhaps for an hour or 2 after school. That you were still sort of sitting there...trying to...trying to find the balance of cheering somebody up, encouraging the, trying to help them build their confidence...and yet still responsible for the children...

When an ST is experiencing difficulty, the CT spends a lot of additional time supporting and helping the ST to prepare. All five CTs reported that this took place after school, in the CT's own time. Aoife estimated that she spent 2 hours each day with the ST and then had to do her own preparation. All five indicated their willingness to do this, but as time went on, some CTs reported a resentment towards this. Fiachra felt that 'he was left supervising someone he didn't have any responsibility for'.

Most of the CTs suggested that because the ST's teaching was of poor quality, there was a negative impact on the children's learning, which in turn resulted in an additional work load for the CT. Aoife, Fionn and Fiachra described having to re-teach some topics and lessons after the

ST had left. Fiachra and Úna felt that there was an impact on the children's behaviour and engagement in learning, which took them both time to sort out after the placement.

All five CTs identified a feeling of isolation during the experience. Aoife (CT) was particularly critical of the HEI and described making contact with the HEI to express her concerns, but felt that nothing happened. She was critical of the HEI-PTs who came to work with the student:

Not one of them asked me how I was coping. They didn't seem to care that the situation was so bad for me.

Fiachra and Fionn also suggested that they were not supported by the HEI. Fionn said that he asked the HEI-PT for suggestion on how he should work with the ST, but claimed that she didn't offer any practical help. Áine and her principal contacted the HEI and while they did receive some support, she still reported feeling isolated afterwards. Aoife (CT) relied on her husband and a colleague in school to provide her with emotional support through the experience.

In addition to the isolation, and a symptom of the lack of involvement of the CT in the ITE process, was the fact that CTs were unaware of the final outcome of the placement. Fiachra learned the ST had failed in the SP block when he met her by chance while out shopping several months later. Both Fionn and Áine learned that the STs had failed, when they happened to meet the HEI-PTs at a later stage at an unrelated event. Úna is unaware, whether or not the ST passed or failed the SP block, while Aoife assumes that he failed because the HEI removed him from the placement a week before the placement should have ended.

The HEI-PTs and the DSPs also indicated that they were aware that CTs find the experience with CTs stressful and frustrating. Hazel described one CT as 'being very dissatisfied with the situation'. Finally, according to many of the partners, many CTs, including Aoife, Fionn and Hazel (CT) encountered, vow never to host an ST again because of their experience.

Impacts on HEI Placement Tutors

There was general acceptance, amongst the HEI-PTs that working with such an ST is a stressful and challenging experience. In particular, they highlighted the feedback meetings where they

communicated feedback to the ST and had to tell the ST whether the visit was a satisfactory or unsatisfactory visit. Hazel discussed how draining it is to deliver such feedback and how hard it is when the ST is visibly upset. Both Violet and Heather used the word stressful to describe the experience. This is reminiscent of the findings of Lee (2007). The emotional energy expended by HEI-PTs in providing feedback to an ST was a recurring theme amongst the HEI-PTs. Norma described one situation as 'exasperating and exhausting. I really felt like I'd done 5 days' work in one day'. She also described providing feedback to a very defensive ST and said that afterwards that she felt like she had 'been dragged backwards through a hedge.'

In the case of two of the HEI-PTs, Violet and Amanda, there was evidence to suggest that there is an element of enforced emotional labour about their work as HEI-PTs. They see the portrayal of the emotional state as being part and parcel of their work. Amanda, described managing her emotions, and she 'detaches herself emotionally' and focuses on doing the job and giving the feedback. Violet, suggested that over time, she has learned to be less emotionally involved.

HEI-PTs discussed how they managed the impact and the personal support mechanisms that they relied upon. They used mechanisms such as discussing their experience with another HEI-PT, talking to a friend or family member and debriefing to the DSP in the HEI. All five, agreed that a formal support structure didn't exist in their HEI. The DSPs confirmed that while no formal support mechanism exists for HEI-PTs, informal mechanisms emerge among colleagues.

There isn't compelling evidence of professional impacts on HEI-PTs. Hazel and Violet, both talked about how much they have learned professionally from working with such STs. Heather considered giving up her part-time role, because of the challenges she experienced with one ST; 'I asked myself is it worth it? Will I do this anymore?'. This questioning of her role echoes the consideration of the CTs in Siebert et al's study (2006) and the HEI-PT in Lee's (2007) study.

What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school placement and how effective were these forms of support perceived to be?

During the interviews, all participants were asked about supports that were available to and access by STs. The research found that the supports provided or accessed fall into three distinct categories: personal supports, school-based supports and supports provided by the HEI. The supports identified as well as their perceived effectiveness are discussed in this section.

Personal supports

All five STs, indicated that they received support from members of family and friends. The supports provided by family appeared to be largely emotional. Stephen (ST) explained how his wife actively supported him during the first SP block in which he failed; ‘She was a great support through it all. She helped me and...and...counselled me.’ However, on Stephen’s second failed block, he felt more isolated as his wife had just been bereaved following the death of her mother. Frances, (ST) claimed that she wouldn’t have gotten through it without her husband’s support. When she considered withdrawing her family encouraged her:

‘...my family were all supportive. My husband, my kids, they all wanted me to do it, they kept saying it’ll get better.’

Both Teresa and Patrick said that their respective mothers provided both practical and emotional support. Patrick’s mother worked as a teacher so he was also able to talk at a professional level to her about some of his difficulties. Frances, described the support of a family friend, and former teacher. Frances said ‘she took me under her wing’ and an organic mentoring relationship developed, akin to the one described by Schmidt (1995).

STs peers also were an important support mechanism. Frances, Stephen and Patrick described how their class group supported each other by exchanging resources, plans and creating closed online spaces for discussion, debriefing and sharing. The discussion section of their HEI virtual learning environment (VLE) was available, but according to Patrick, Facebook was the preferred method of contact, as STs didn’t want to use the college VLE because it was accessible by college personnel. Frances highlighted the support of peers around the time of her bereavement.

Catherine (ST) emphasised the relationship that she and another student who had also failed and their mutual support for each other.

So I actually became very good friends with another student in my class who had had a very similar experience [failed a block of SP]. We became very good friends and when we were repeating everyone was doing their 3rd [block] and we were repeating our 2nd [block], so we would be on the phone to each other every night, giving each other...sending each other things...advice. If she had a bad day she'd tell me, I would tell her what to do, so she was...she was my mentor, and I was her mentor...

While Stephen indicated that his colleagues were of general support during SPs, it didn't extend to emotional support when he failed. Catherine (ST) described isolation and loneliness during the SP block in which she failed, because she was the only ST in that school, and contrasted it with the repeat SP where other STs were also on placement at the same time and were a positive support.

STs who struggled or failed had to draw on their own internal resources and determination to get themselves through. Stephen (ST) described failing as 'character building' and Catherine explained that she had to pick herself up and 'put a brave face on and get on with it'. Patrick described 'digging deep' within himself for the energy and determination to keep going. Hazel referred to a student 'who had just given up', while Violet talked about another student who 'just couldn't keep going. God love her, she just seemed to lack the motivation to keep going.' This internal determination and ability to pick themselves up and get back and to try again, pointed to the trait of resilience. Sautelle et al (2015), identifies resilience as one of the core qualities for admitting STs to ITE. The DSPs didn't feel that the ITE programmes directly examined the notion of resilience for teachers. Jacinta was less convinced that resilience is something that can be taught:

How do you teach resilience? You can't...that only comes with sheer experience in a classroom and also being in schools for extended periods of time where things are more likely to go wrong...

School based supports

There was overall consensus from the participants of the pivotal role is played by the CT in supporting an ST who is experiencing difficulty. As discussed earlier in the chapter, a negative relationship with a CT can have an adverse effect. Many of the CTs described how they worked

with the ST, provided them with resources, helped them with planning after school and in some cases provided them with feedback on their practice. The STs were generally positive about the support received from the CT. HEI-PTs also praised many of the CTs that they had encountered.

One of the key findings about the role of the CT is that there is a lack of clarity regarding the role. The five CTs indicated that they were unsure of their roles and had not received any specific training. They reported that they did not fully know what their role was with regard to STs as they were struggling. In most cases, the CTs reported relying on their own instincts to support the STs. All five CTs agreed that there should be some form of training or support for them to carry out their roles effectively. Fionn was unsure about how and when such training might be facilitated or how teachers would be motivated or encouraged to do such training.

Another school based support, identified by Fiachra (CT) was a school placement co-ordinator, who is a teacher in the school whose role it is to work with STs. The co-ordinators practically support the STs by ensuring that they have been briefed on school policies, know where resources are stored and have been given a tour of the school. Fiachra reported that when the ST struggled, the school placement co-ordinator, actively supported the ST and the CT in practical ways. Jacinta and Antoinette (DSPs) referred to a similar role in other schools. In such schools, one teacher (usually a member of middle management) was assigned the responsibility of liaising with the HEI and co-ordinating SP from the school's perspective. Antoinette (DSP) suggested that such a role might be expanded and that a more significant part could be played by this teacher in supporting STs through mentoring and feedback.

The school principal was also identified by some participants as a support for the ST. In many cases, principals took on a role similar to the school placement co-ordinator. Hazel described a situation where the principal actively supported an ST she was working with, by helping the ST with planning, helping her to focus on particular skills, observing her teaching and giving her feedback. Hazel indicated that the particular principal was interested in mentoring and she claimed that his efforts made a significant difference for the ST.

Supports provided by the HEI

A clear finding of this research is that the HEI-PT is a central player in the support of STs who are experiencing difficulty. In most cases, the HEI-PT's support was positive, however in some cases the role played was negative. Teresa (CT) praised one of her HEI-PTs in particular, and cited her clear advice and guidance, but contrasted her to another one who she claimed was very negative, and affected her confidence and self-efficacy. Hazel, Heather and Violet described providing support about planning and practical queries to STs by e-mail and over the phone. The dominant support described by all was the provision of feedback by HEI-PTs after viewing lessons in the classroom. The DSPs agreed that this was the dominant expected mode of support. Individual HEI-PTs described how they carried out the process. HEI-PTs and DSPs said that there were specific headings for the provision of feedback. Violet, Heather and Norma described situations where they provided resources for STs and spent time with them planning lessons. Catherine(ST) claimed that she didn't receive guidance from her HEI-PT on how to improve. The tension that exists between the HEI-PT's supportive and formative role and their assessment role came to the fore in discussion. This tension aligns with the findings of both of Rorrison (2009) and Anderson (2007).

In almost all of the cases, where an ST was experiencing difficulty, or had failed in a block of SP, an additional HEI-PT was appointed whose role it was to support the ST in a capacity that did not involve grading or assessment. Participants used different terms for this tutor with some referring to it as support supervisor and other using the term mentor. The use of the title mentor for a tutor from the HEI is unique to the Irish context, as much of the literature (eg Schmidt, 2009; Siebert et al, 2006) refers to the mentor as the CT or another teacher in the school. Jacinta and Carmel (DSPs) both suggested that the tutors who acted as supports or mentors are specifically chosen for their high quality interpersonal skills. There were apparent differences between the 'support' and the 'mentor'. A support appeared to be a HEI-PT who supported an ST during the SP with an ungraded formative visit, while a mentor appeared to be a HEI-PT appointed to support an ST in advance of a repeat block or where the ST has been identified as at risk of failure. Mentors meet with the STs outside of the school context and then visit them in a formative capacity in the classroom. Hazel (HEI-PT) described one ST that she mentored and her use of a motivational,

coaching approach. Jacinta and Antoinette (DSPs) both stated that the support provided by these kinds of tutors has to be focused on the STs area(s) of need. Stephen, Patrick and Frances were all critical of support and mentor visits and claimed that they were not bespoke or focused on their areas of need.

A gap that I noted in the work of the HEI-PTs including supports and mentors, was the absence of a defined process to support STs in reflecting on the observed lessons. There was no evidence of a particular method of reflective practice or of a dialogic approach to reflection on lessons, such as the one described by McIntyre and Hobson (2015). Respondents, including the DSPs were very vague on how support like this takes place. This is despite claims by the Teaching Council (2011) that reflective practice should be at the heart of SP or indeed the cornerstone of ITE as suggested by MacRuairc and Harford (2008).

Other HEI tutors support STs who struggle, albeit in an informal way. Jacinta (DSP) suggested that tutors or lecturers in her HEI are available to advise and support STs in specific curricular or methodological areas during SP as a matter of course. For some STs, a formative meeting with such a tutor might be arranged by the DSP or by a HEI-PT, but it is open also for the ST to make direct contact with the tutor or lecturer. Carmel suggested that students have access to both the online content of particular modules and can make contact with the tutors during SPs. None of the STs in the study made reference to accessing these types of support.

When an ST has failed a particular block of SP, or has been identified as being at risk of failure, there is evidence that additional classes, meetings and tutorials are put in place by the HEI for such STs in advance of the next or repeat block of SP. STs' evaluations of these types of support were mainly negative. Catherine (ST) described being invited to a support meeting with the DSP to discuss her case, but the DSP was unavailable, so another member of staff attended. Catherine said she felt the meeting 'was a waste of time,' and that the interaction was unstructured and unsupportive. She also described a tutorial convened ahead of the repeat block for STs who were repeating. She said it was 'a very basic information giving meeting' with no specific individual support. Stephen and Teresa (STs) both referred to meetings with the DSP

after they had failed. Stephen felt that the meeting was just to organise the next placement. At the meeting he was assured a mentor would be appointed ahead of the repeat block and was very critical of the HEI, because the mentor was only appointed the week before the commencement of the repeat. Teresa was more positive about the meeting and felt that it guided her and helped her prepare for the repeat block. Carmel (DSP) suggested that there was a power imbalance at these meetings and felt that she as DSP, was not the right person to lead such meetings.

A counselling service, available through the HEI was identified as another available support mechanism. The three DSPs discussed such services in their respective HEIs as part of the pastoral support for STs. Services were provided on a confidential basis, so the DSPs were not able to comment on the uptake of the service or on its effectiveness. The option of support from the counselling service was raised with STs during interviews. Four of the STs were aware of the existence of the service, one ST was unaware, while just one ST had actually accessed the service. Frances accessed the online counselling service that her HEI offered but was critical of it. She felt that it 'lacked the person-to-person' interaction, that it didn't suit her communication style and she questioned the method of engagement.

I talk a lot (laughter) I'm quite articulate in that respect, but when it comes to e-mails, when you're actually formulating what you want to write. Yes, ok it can be short and precise and whatever but sometimes, when it comes to emotion, do they really get it? Can they see your eyes? Can they feel your emotion? You know, are you just saying this? Are you actually heartbroken? Are you streaming with tears? Which many the time I was, when I wrote these [emails]. And that, I would have much preferred a person-to-person [counselling service].

Stephen, Catherine and Patrick, were each aware of the fact that their HEI offered a counselling service, but each felt that the service would not have been of benefit to them or their situation. In Patrick's case, the HEI-PT, suggested that he might consider the counselling service. Patrick rejected the possibility saying;

I felt that was for people who were having a serious issue...I was finding it tough, which everyone was. So I felt it wasn't for me, and again, you know, we'd be...we wouldn't be very touchy-feely where I come from.

The label of student counselling service, may prevent some STs from accessing such a service.

What additional supports were identified by members of triadic learning to teach partnerships as potentially being useful in this context?

During the interviews, each participant was given an opportunity to propose and suggest other possible supports for STs who struggle or experienced failure during SP. Many of the participants had difficulty with imagining other possible supports beyond the supports that they had experienced or beyond those offered by their HEI. The unique context of each STs' experience was discussed by many of the participants and almost all participants indicated that supports need to be bespoke and specifically focused at the individual ST's need. Antoinette (DSP) was clear that support packages need to be designed on a case by case basis. DSPs and HEI-PTs raised the labour intensive nature of supporting these STs as a challenge.

A very convincing finding among all of the perspectives articulated was the potential role that the CT could play with all STs and specifically in cases where the ST is experiencing difficulties. This research found that there is a need to clarify the role that the CT plays and to provide training for CTs. The policy thrust of the Irish Teaching Council (2011, 2013, 2014) has been towards greater partnership with schools and the enhancement of the role played by the CTs. This finding is discussed and analysed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

A number of participants suggested that the level of support provided by a HEI-PT or other HEI personnel outside of the grading context, should be increased. In the case of repeat blocks, the mentor or dedicated HEI-PT should be appointed for the CT well in advance of the block. Stephen was critical that his mentor was only appointed a week before he commenced the repeat block, and felt that he really needed help well in advance of the pending SP block. The HEI-PTs who had acted as mentor or given ungraded support also felt that they needed more time with the STs.

Videoring STs practice, to allow for structured reflection and dialogue on the practice was suggested as a possible support mechanism. Antoinette (DSP) highlighted that 'it is fraught with ethical difficulties.' Carmel suggested that it might be used in a 'micro-teaching way', which she understood not to be during SP but afterwards, to help them examine and change practices.

Studies like those by MacRuairc and Harford (2008) and Youens et al (2014) present possibilities for creating this type of support.

Tutorials type sessions were suggested by Antoinette (DSP), Stephen (ST) and Hazel (HEI-PT). Antoinette's HEI, was considering introducing these types of supports for groups of students experiencing difficulty with particular areas such as classroom management, specific methodologies, teacher presence on an optional basis after the conclusion of a block of SP.

Flexibility in course design was suggested by a number of HEI-PTs, STs and DSPs as a possible way of supporting STs who experience significant life events or illnesses during their programmes of study. Carmel and Jacinta (DSPs) acknowledged that programmes of ITE are tightly scheduled. Frances and Stephen (STs) were critical of the difficulties they faced when seeking a deferral of SP following their respective bereavements. Frances was granted a deferral while Stephen's wasn't. Hazel (HEI-PT) put forward the view that the only way to support those experiencing either a significant life event or a mental health difficulty was to 'give them the space and time to heal'. Jacinta (DSP), Fiachra (CT) and Norma (HEI-PT) all raised alternative exit routes and the opportunities to transfer credits for the parts of the programme an ST has successfully completed, when an ST records an overall fail for SP. Antoinette and Jacinta (DSPs) suggested that STs might have the option to study other modules to receive an alternative qualification.

More varied forms of pastoral support were also suggested. Stephen and Catherine both felt that counselling wasn't for them, but at the same time felt that there was no one else to turn to in the HEI. Antoinette (DSP) suggested an academic tutor to support STs in relation to course work and could also perform a pastoral role. Jacinta suggests that both the medical officer in the HEI and the chaplaincy services were potential channels for support. Carmel suggested the notion of a 'pathway tutor' for STs to generally support them through their programme and to be the 'go to person if they were in difficulty.'

This chapter has presented the findings of the research project and has attempted to answer the research questions posed at the outset of this thesis. The next chapter looks at synthesising the information from these findings to present a coherent understanding of the phenomenon, through the presentation of a typology of STs who struggle or experience failure. It also explores a framework of potential support mechanisms that might be used in the support of individual STs circumstances and presents and discusses a reconceptualised role for the CT.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Synthesis of Findings

Introduction

The data was collected and initially collated to answer the research questions presented in chapter one. Arising from the further analysis of the findings, outlined in chapter four, four distinct themes emerged for discussion in this chapter. Theme one explores the decision making process involved in the assessment of school placement (SP) and is discussed against the backdrop of the widespread use of competences and standards as part of the international focus on teacher quality. The second theme introduces six typologies of student teachers (STs) who struggle or experience failure on SP. As a direct consequence, the third theme examines the support and management responses for such STs. Five pillars for providing support are presented and the potential for their use in combination with the six typologies is explored. The fourth theme explores the lack of clarity and specificity regarding the role of the cooperating teacher (CT) during school placement (SP) in the Irish context. Suggestions are made for how the role might be reconceptualised, and some of the training needs of CTs are identified.

The data confirms the occurrence of the phenomenon of struggling and failing STs in the Irish context and shows that the experience has an effect on all of the members of the learning to teach partnership. The most profound effect is on the STs themselves whose self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy are clearly affected by their experiences. The data shows that some STs fail the programme and don't manage to graduate while others make a choice to drop out of ITE. Others still complete the programme but don't enter the profession. Some of those who do enter the profession, demonstrate a poorer conceptualisation of themselves as teacher. On the other hand, there is also evidence from some of those who enter the profession that they have learnt from the experience and show potential to be very effective teachers.

Standards and the Assessment of School Placement

As outlined in chapter two, the international focus on teacher quality has resulted in the development of standards, that outline a framework of competences for beginning teachers in almost all education systems in the world. In the Irish context, the Teaching Council published

learning outcomes for ITE in 2011, which effectively have become the standards that candidates graduating from ITE are required to meet. Conway et al (2009, p. xxxv), define standards as “statements of the attributes, skills and knowledge that teachers as professionals should possess and exemplify.” Critics of the competences and standards approach to the assurance of teacher quality, such as Connell (2009) and Moore (2004), have argued that the competences or standards becomes the whole focus of ITE.

Until 2011, HEIs providing ITE in Ireland, created and essentially quality assured their own standard and expectations for teacher completing ITE. This research found that the assessment judgements on SP, were not being led by the standards. Indeed, reference was not directly made by any of the respondents to the specific standards, i.e. the Teaching Council learning outcomes or indeed the programme learning outcomes, when respondents spoke about how judgement were made to fail an ST or deem their practice unsatisfactory. Assessment judgements in the Irish context are made primarily by HEI Placement Tutors (HEI-PTs) and overseen by the directors of school placement (DSPs). Discourse in the interviews with DSPs and HEI-PTs are devoid of any reference to the use of standard when making assessment judgement to fail an ST or to deem their practice unsatisfactory. Jacinta, Carmel and Antoinette, the three DSPs in the selected HEIs, all agreed that the assessment of SP was based on specific criteria and that a specific marking scheme was employed for SP. Each HEI, had its own criteria and marking schemes. Jacinta claimed that the criteria were based on ITE programme learning outcomes and were influenced by the Teaching Council standard.

A troubling factor within the data was the reliance by HEI-PTs and DPS on their own perceptions and instincts when making assessment judgements, particularly where the assessment judgement was to fail an ST or deem an observation visit unsatisfactory. Amanda, Heather and Violet (HEI-PTs) all related instances where they spoke about their feelings and perceptions with regard to an ST. A number of HEI-PTs and DSPs, such as Antoinette, expressed their perceptions regarding of STs’ personalities and their suitability.

You might see that their personalities are a little bit *unusual*, for want of a better word and they’re not... you can see that they’re going to struggle...
(Antoinette, DSP)

Jacinta suggested that some STs are simply 'not cut out for teaching' while Violet suggested that an ST she had worked with, didn't have the personality to be a teacher. She wasn't clear on what a teachers' personality should be like.

In some cases, there was evidence of the application of the assessor's own personal values or biases when making the assessment judgement. Norma clearly expressed opinion, without linking it to specific standards or criteria, in the way she described how she *liked* STs planning to be clearly laid out and organised in a particular way and that she particularly *liked* STs to have the children to be involved in group work. Amanda suggested that she preferred Irish lessons to be structured in a specific format. While these points may indeed be desirable and could be interpreted as hallmarks of good teaching, they were expressed in a subjective way that demonstrated personal preference rather than objectivity or linkage to a specific standard or criterion. Patrick (ST) was clear that his impression was that the HEI-PT working with him had a bias towards him:

She...like...seemed to have her mind made up about me and that in her mind,
I was wrong for teaching.

(Patrick, ST)

STs within the data made claims that they were unsure why it was they were struggling or why they had failed within a block of SP. Patrick and Frances both claimed that individual HEI-PTs were looking for different things and implied that they were being assessed on an individual HEI-PT's standard, rather than on a shared understanding of competence. The STs claimed that an undue-weight was placed on the assessment of their planning and paperwork and felt that other aspects of their practice were undervalued. None of the STs made reference to specific standards, particular criteria or specific learning that they were not meeting or that their practice was not achieving. It had not been communicated to them that they were not achieving a particular standard or standards. STs did not seem to have a shared understanding of what the HEI-PT was looking for, or assessing them against. Catherine was not clear about the aspects of practice that she under-achieving in and was not clear what she needed to do to improve. There was also a complete absence within the data from CTs of any discussion with participants of the learning to teach partnership regarding the attainment of particular standards.

These findings all point to the need for greater clarity and transparency in how assessment judgements are made, particularly judgements that result in the failure of an ST in a block of school placement. The overreliance on instinct and perception articulated in interviews, corresponds to an absence of true objectivity and points to a need for greater detachment from personal perceptions and indeed biases. In any human process, where a number of people carry out the same functions, it is difficult to achieve standardisation of approach. Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012), OECD (2005) and Conway et al (2009), all agree that objectivity and consistency can be realised by using teaching standards to definitively guide the decision-making process in assessment.

However, other commentators such as Ball (2003) and Sachs (2003) warn against teaching standards because of the resultant performativity and managerialism, while Connell's (2009) claims that standards can become 'a list of auditable factors'. This certainly does need to be guarded against. Standards-based assessment does not have to lead to managerialism and performativity. A middle ground between managerialism and the laissez-faire approach to assessment judgement formation that emerged from the data, can be achieved. Standards need to be framed so that they are not just a 'cluster of baseline technical skills' (Connell, 2009), but instead provide benchmarks to guide teachers' learning (Day 2006). If HEI-PTs and DSPs take their lead from Day's argument, and use standards as benchmarks to guide the assessment of beginning teachers' learning, undue managerialism could be avoided. Rather than using the standards as a stick or something to undermine the ST, they might be used to support feedback to an ST around what actions need to be taken to achieve the particular standard or standards. The open communication of standards provides a shared understanding (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The use of a standards approach to assessment, does not negate the need for a judgement to be made. The process will still require the human process of decision making, but by using standards to guide judgements, a common framework, language and expectation can be more effectively achieved.

Essentially, I advocate for a system of assessment with beginning teachers that is led by the standard or standards-led. This provides transparency and clarity for all, most especially the ST,

and protects against individual perceptions and biases. Ensuring that assessment is standards-led would avoid the current system whereby a HEI-PT finds an ST's practice unsatisfactory. This approach is negative in the first instances and essentially labels the candidate. In a standards-led approach to judgement making, labels are avoided and become detached from the person and refer to the ST not achieving a particular standard or standards. The judgement would be that a particular standard(s) has not been achieved or attained. Teacher educators and those involved in the quality assurance of ITE, owe it to STs, who have invested so much in their efforts to become a teacher, to provide a way of arriving at assessment judgements that are objective and transparent.

Typologies of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Fail

Within the collated data, there was considerable discussion, particularly with those who observed the phenomenon (HEI-PTs, DSPs and CTs) about their general perceptions of why STs struggled or failed. Much of the data emerged from the individual cases that participants discussed. A total of 31 specific cases of STs were discussed. Table 5.1, below outlines the sources for the cases.

Table 5.1 Cases of the phenomenon presented in the data

Student Teachers	5 cases
HEI – Placement Tutors	12 cases
Co-operating Teachers	6 cases
Directors of School Placement	8 Cases
Total	31 Cases

In order to summarise and reduce the data and to allow for comparative analysis, I created a narrative account of each of the cases. The narrative included the reported contextual factors, causes, behaviours and the reported deficiencies in practice as well as the suggested forms of support. This allowed for cross-case comparison and led to the identification of six typologies of STs who struggle or experience failure. Figure 5.1 (below) outlines the six typologies.

Figure 5.1 Typologies of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Fail

Typology 1	• The 'Wrong Job' Student Teacher
Typology 2	• The 'Life Circumstances' Student Teacher
Typology 3	• The Student Teacher With Mental Health Difficulties
Typology 4	• The 'Wrong Context' Student Teacher
Typology 5	• The Knowledge and Skill Deficit Student Teacher
Typology 6	• The 'Pressure of Evaluation' Student Teacher

These typologies have been extracted from the data, from the perceptions expressed of participants, as typifying the underlying reasons for the emergence of the phenomenon. The data also showed that the occurrence of the phenomenon is unique in each individual case. Individual cases might be interpreted using more than one typology. For example, STs who experience a significant life event may also be displaying deficits in knowledge or skills, while another ST who has experienced a life event, might also be understood using the mental health typology, because of evidence of depression or other reactive mental health difficulty. Each typology is discussed in detail using the data and in the context of some of the existing literature.

The 'Wrong Job' Student Teacher

This first typology of STs is essentially those for whom the underlying issue is that the work of teaching is not for them or that they are not suitable to become teachers. Those who fit this typology are perceived not to have the capability or the attributes to be an effective teacher. The general conversations with participants also suggested that some STs do not have what it takes” or are ‘simply are not cut out for teaching’ (Antoinette, DSP). It is important to state that within the data, these types of STs were identified from the perceptions of other members of the partnership. All of the cases within the data were described by STs, HEI-PTs or DSPs. None of the five STs who participated in the study, classified themselves within this typology. This typology is reflected

in Knowles and Sudzina (1994) study and in Lee's (2007) reflections. In the international focus on teacher preparation and teacher quality (e.g. OECD, 2005 and Darling Hammond and Liberman, 2012), the role of ITE is to deliver candidates to the profession who have the skills and attributes to be effective teachers. Arguably one of the purposes of ITE is to identify this typology of ST and ensure that they do not enter the profession. Studies by Wragg et al (2000) and Kent (2005) are critical of ITE programmes for not identifying such candidates at ITE level. The Teaching Council (2011 & 2013) advocates for 'the early identification' of such candidates.

Participants agreed, that when an ST is identified as not being suitable for teaching, it is a difficult situation for the HEI to manage and it can be a painful and damaging one for the ST themselves. In some cases, an individual's suitability might be questioned during lectures, workshops and through social interactions in the HEI, but it is often not until SP that difficulties truly come to the fore. Questioning an individual's suitability for the profession is linked to their identity as a person. Wragg (2000, p.36) posited that to question someone's competence or suitability 'is to attack that person as a whole, not just one element.' The data suggested that a factor for some STs is their individual motivations to become a teacher. They may have an idealised notion of what teaching involves or as one HEI-PT suggested, they were encouraged by others to become a teacher: 'someone at home thought it was a good idea for them to be a teacher' (Carmel, DSP). This suggests a lack of alignment between the inner held mission (Korthagen, 2004) of the ST and the realities of teaching. Úna (CT) linked motivation to 'drive and determination' or what Day (2004) might term 'a passion for teaching,'

A personality that is unsuited to the profession arose in the data, as contributing to this typology of ST, something that certainly aligns to the research on teacher identity. Participants identified introversion, lack of empathy, poor relational, communication and interpersonal skills as well a lack of patience amongst the traits of individual STs. These difficulties are encapsulated in these quotations from the data:

there was no intellectual understanding of what she was doing and there was no emotional or interpersonal ability seen in the classroom.
(Amanda, HEI-PT)

...just a complete lack of empathy, in terms of being able to relate...and deeper than lack of interpersonal skills, social skills. Even at an intellectual level, not understanding what children need.

(Violet, HEI-PT)

The literature on teacher quality, identity and recruitment point to personality as a key feature in selection for ITE and for success and effectiveness as a teacher.

The 'Life Circumstances' Student Teacher

In five of the cases in the data, there was evidence that the ST was experiencing or had recently experienced a significant life event or stressful circumstance in their personal lives. This event was adversely affecting their ability to function effectively on SP. Participants highlighted events such as bereavement, a sick child, an accident, a miscarriage, financial difficulty, isolation and poverty as factors. The impacts of such events on STs are evident from these two examples, and the fact that the STs may not have shared their worries with others, is particularly evident from the second example:

...he was a student that went through a bad time, I think there might have been issues outside of school but whatever it was outside of school it impacted on him and he lost his way for a long time.

(Hazel – HEI-PT)

...but nobody knew about the personal upset that the student dealt with that summer...nobody knew at all...and yet that student...and she had to then cope with going back in [to school] etc. ...and did disastrously. It was unbelievable. But nobody at home knew...nobody in the school knew...and I was the first person...so I had nothing on my desk and it was just one question ... "How are you?" And at that point ... the student said ... and told me what had occurred over the summer...and how that student managed to even present in the classroom at any one point...I don't know.

(Jacinta, DSP)

Knowles and Sudzina (1994) and Rorrison (2009), identify these kinds of circumstances in STs' personal lives as factors that contribute to their difficulties. The literature on teacher lives (eg Hargreaves, 1998, and Day, 2004) is clear that events and circumstances in teachers' lives diminish both teachers' effectiveness and their abilities to be resilient.

These life events were affecting an individual ST's ability to cope, it destabilised them, caused a great amount of stress and affected their resilience. They were unable to apply themselves to

preparation for SP and badly effected both their self-esteem and self-efficacy. STs' emotions were affected, as much of the ST's emotional attention is invested in the life event. SP is generally accepted as a stressful period of ITE (Dikdere, 2009; Cole and Knowles, 1993) and a significant challenge for all novice teachers is managing the emotional work that is involved in teaching (Day, 2006). The emotional challenge for STs with additional emotional burden and worry from a competing life event, must be immense.

The Student Teacher with Mental Health Difficulties

In six of the cases discussed in the data set an underlying mental health difficulty was suggested or perceived as a contributing factor in the emergence of the ST's difficulties. STs, like all groups in society, experience episodes of mental ill-health. The World Health Organisation (2014) contends that there has been a rise in the occurrence of mental health difficulties and that as many as 20% of people live with mental health difficulties or disorders. While no specific literature on the issue of STs' mental ill-health was located, Day and Gu (2012) claim that episodes of mental ill-health diminish experienced teachers' capacity to be resilient, and Foley and Murphy (2015) argue that it is a contributor to teacher burnout. Both Day (2004) and Hargreaves (1998) suggest that illness, including mental illness, can have effect on novice and experienced teachers' emotional energy and passion for the job and consequently diminish their effectiveness. For some STs, the stress and pressure of SP exacerbates an underlying or pre-existing mental health issue, or in some cases, such difficulties only come to the fore during SP.

This typology was identified in two ways within the data. Firstly, where the ST was aware of their own mental health difficulty and self-reported this to the DSP or the HEI-PT. The second, essentially is based on the perception of a HEI-PT, CT or DSP. In such cases the respondent wasn't actually sure, but their perception was that it was a possible, that the ST was experiencing a mental health difficulty. Common perceptions included poor levels of communication and engagement with children, lack of perception and awareness, lack of eye contact, high levels of anxiety, poor personal hygiene and grooming as well as depressive symptoms. Carmel (DSP) noted the damage that failing, does to the self-esteem of an ST who has mental health difficulties:

The cases of where there are mental health issues, I think that does huge damage to their self-esteem. (Carmel, DSP)

The STs who had disclosed their difficulties at institutional level received sympathetic support and accommodations including time out of the programme. A difficulty expressed by DSPs and HEI-PTs was the inability to effectively support these STs, because in many cases there was a denial of any difficulty as documented in Lee's (2006) study. There is evidence that there are overlaps between this typology and some of the others. A particular mental health episode may be reactive and may be linked to other significant life events. There may be some cases where the nature of the illness proves to be a barrier to the ST ever being effective as a teacher. The sensitive and sympathetic support and management of these STs is essential.

The 'Wrong Context' Student Teacher

For this type of ST, there is a contextual factor that affects the placement and the ST's performance, self-esteem and indeed their self-efficacy. Five cases within the data set were understood within this typology and essentially these STs were perceived to be in the "wrong place" or with the "wrong people". SP plays an important role in the socialisation of beginning teachers (Le Cornu, 2013 and Zeichner and Gore, 1990). A particular factor within each social context is the learning to teach triadic partnership, which comprises the ST, the HEI-PT and the CT. Relationships, by their nature can be both positive and negative. Essentially STs develop their first professional relationships, and as asserted by Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) professional relationships can be an important affirming support, but they can also be 'a potential threat to self-esteem' (p. 111).

There is a considerable power difference in the learning to teach partnership, with the power held by the HEI-PT, accepted as being in relation to assessment and ultimate grading (Ciuffetelli-Parker and Volante, 2009). Other studies such as Siebert et al, (2006), Sudzina and Gibelhaus (1997) and Anderson (2007) highlight the power held by the CT. Negative relationships between the STs and either the HEI-PTs or the CT were evident from the data. These relationships put additional stress and strain on the ST and were contributing factors to the STs' struggles or failure. Hazel's comments about the deterioration in a ST's performance cite the diminished self-esteem of the ST because of the relationship with the CT:

he seemed to have lost his...his self-esteem in the meantime. He was like a different person. He told me that the Class Teacher didn't like him and that she was very critical of him. That had impacted hugely on him, he didn't know what to do. He started to just not plan, not do anything, just turning up, doing whatever he could do and knowing he was...he was failing in her eyes.
(Hazel, HEI-PT)

Other examples of negative relationships were interpreted through the negative descriptions and tone of CTs, such as Aoife (CT), regarding interactions with the STs and were more aligned to what Sudzina and Giebelhaus (1995) would term a 'tormentor' type relationship rather than a nurturing, mentor relationship. The data also reflected that the relationship between the HEI-PT and the ST had a negative impact on some STs. Catherine and Patrick (STs) highlighted the negative tone and the lack of constructive feedback by their HEI-PTs.

The contextual factor of the age group of the children also emerged as a factor, with several STs experiencing difficulties with infant classes. This finding is corroborated in Knowles and Sudzina's (1994) assertion that some STs struggle because of what they term 'incongruent grade level placement.' The literature on teachers' efficacy and effectiveness in different contexts highlights that some teachers do well in some contexts, but don't succeed in others (Wragg, 2000; Le Cornu, 2013). While not necessarily evident from this data, it is safe to assume that other contextual factors, such as school culture and individual class grouping, may act as negative and indeed destabilising factors for some STs. These findings may also point to the absence of relational resilience, as identified by Day and Gu (2012).

The Knowledge and Skill Deficit Student Teacher

In almost all of the cases discussed within the data set, there was evidence that the ST in question had difficulties or particular deficits in their knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter or curriculum structure, or there were particular skills that they lacked or did not satisfactorily demonstrate. In many of the cases, these deficits in skills or knowledge were a secondary factor, with evidence of another underlying cause for their difficulties and so were classified under a different typology. However, in the cases of seven of the STs within the data set, deficits in their knowledge and

skills were the most significant factor and the underlying reason for their difficulties or cause of their failure.

Teresa and Patrick both felt that they had not enough knowledge regarding the curriculum and pedagogy in advance of the SP blocks in which they each failed. Teresa said she had missed quite a number of workshops and lectures and had not engaged with much of her course work. A number of participants suggested that some STs seemed to forget about the things they had learned in the HEI while working in schools during SP, concurring with the observations of Zeichner (2005) and Cole and Knowles (1998) and highlighting the common ITE theme of the gap between theory and practice (Lanier and Little, 1986; Korthagen, 2012). Others described how STs reverted to how they had been taught themselves, highlighting Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation. Table 5.2 (below) summarises the deficits in the knowledge and skills of STs in the study.

Table 5.2 Deficits Identified in Student Teachers' Knowledge and Skills

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor organisation skills• Poor planning skills• Poor communication skills• Poorly structured lessons• Lack of curricular knowledge• Lack of subject knowledge• Lack of content knowledge• Lack of focus on pupils' learning• Poor behaviour management skills• Poor classroom management skills• Over-reliance on didactic methodologies• Poor understanding of pedagogy• An inability to meet learners' needs• Content pitched at a level inappropriate for the learners• Poor assessment practices
--

Quite a lot of focus was placed in the data on STs' planning and preparation as a deficit in their skills. In some cases, the amount of emphasis placed, particularly by the HEI-PTs on this aspect of the STs' work was troubling and a symptom of a managerialist culture. Many of the STs were critical of the planning requirements. Frances, Stephen and Patrick in particular suggested that it created huge pressures, resulting in insufficient time for thinking about and reflecting on actual teaching. Where planning was absent, HEI-PTs reported that they had no option but to record an unsatisfactory or fail for the ST, irrespective of the quality of teaching observed.

The 'Pressure of Evaluation' Student Teacher

The existence of this typology emerged from the outlying data within the corpus. In two cases, the act of observing and evaluating the ST was found to have had a negative and destabilising impact on the ST. While initially, these two cases were classified under the 'wrong context' typology as the difficulties might have been understood in terms of a poor relationship with the HEI-PT. The fact emerged that in these two cases, the reason for struggling or failing was attributable to significantly more than a poor relationship or the normally reported stress and anxiety that many ST experience while being evaluated (e.g. Rorrison, 2009).

In the two cases, both reported by CTs, the impact of the HEI-PT's visit had an adverse effect on the ST's performance and caused a level of stress and anxiety over and above the normal and anticipated levels. Úna and Áine (CTs) both reported the positive starts that their respective STs made to the placement and their general initial satisfaction with their progress. Úna noted in her reflection on the HEI-PT's first visit:

in my eyes he (ST) had an awful lot of excellent teaching criteria, but something must have happened when somebody was scrutinising him.
(Úna, CT)

The case about which Áine reported was more marked. She described how the ST began to change and that her level of anxiety began to rise in advance of a first (announced) visit by the HEI-PT:

...there was a change in her reaction, again becoming more...more stressed in the mornings, more nervous, getting things ready making sure that everything was...perfect. By the morning of the visit...she...she was completely overwhelmed.

(Áine, CT)

She detailed positive elements of the ST's practice from unobserved lessons, that weren't features of her practice on evaluated lessons. Áine described how the ST was upset after each visit and how 'her levels of anxiety built and built until she could hardly function.' The impact of evaluation was over and above the normal stress and anxiety that is acknowledged in the literature. Perryman (2007) argues that the 'negative emotional impact of inspection on teachers goes beyond the oft reported issues of stress'. She cites the extreme effects of evaluation on some individual teachers, as including, panic, loss of self and an extreme emotional impact. The impact on Áine's ST was at the more pronounced end of the spectrum, however, the evaluation by the HEI-PT seemed to destabilise the ST completely, to the point that she didn't seem to be able to get the placement back on track.

The six typologies presented here provide a framework to understand the difficulties that may be causing an individual ST to struggle or experience difficulties on SP. As already exemplified, individual STs might be classified under more than one typology. These typologies are not hard classifications, but rather soft categories by which we might better understand the phenomenon. Table 5.3 (below) presents the six typologies that have emerged, together with some of the factors by which the typology may be evident.

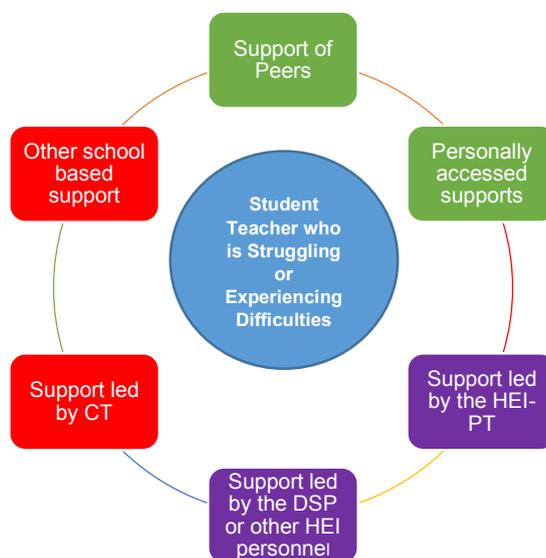
Table 5.3 Expanded Typologies of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Experience Difficulty on School Placement

The 'Wrong Job' Student Teacher	The 'Life Circumstances' Student Teacher	The Student Teacher With Mental Health Difficulties	The 'Wrong Context' Student Teacher	The Knowledge and Skills Deficit Student Teacher	The 'Pressure of Evaluation' Student Teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May struggle with the interpersonal requirements of teaching • Lacks some of the characteristics and traits required to be an effective teacher • Has difficulties coping with the demands of classroom life (beyond those normally experienced by STs) • Has difficulties in many areas of planning and pedagogy • Core mission, motivation and identity as a teacher is in question • Self esteem and self-efficacy are low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST is experiencing or has recently experienced life pressures or a significant life event • The events effect their ability to cope with the demands of classroom life (beyond those normally experienced by STs) • ST is experiencing significant difficulties with the demands of SP • Has difficulty in many areas of planning and pedagogy • Self esteem and self-efficacy are low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST is experiencing a mental health difficulty or there is an underlying mental illness • Has difficulties coping with the demands of classroom life (beyond those normally experienced by STs) • May be experiencing perceptual difficulties • ST is experiencing difficulties with the demands of SP • Has difficulties in many areas of planning and pedagogy • Self esteem and self-efficacy are low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship with the CT or the HEI-PT is adversely affecting the ST <u>or</u> the particular class or school context is the wrong fit for the ST • ST may have an identity or mission conflict with the other person / the situation / the context • May be experiencing difficulty in areas of planning and pedagogy • Self esteem and self-efficacy are impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST is experiencing difficulties with the demands of school placement • Has difficulties in areas of planning and pedagogy • Evidence of gaps in learning, knowledge and skills. • Evidence of a gap between theory and practice • Self-esteem and self-efficacy are impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CT reports that the ST is getting on reasonably well initially • Severe levels of anxiety build in advance of HEI-PT's evaluation visit • Noticeable differences in classroom practice during evaluation • Self-esteem and self-efficacy are noticeably affected by evaluation visit

Managing and Supporting Student Teachers Who Experience Difficulty

It is clear from the data that the management and support of STs who are experiencing difficulty is of concern to all involved in the 'learning to teach' partnership. Jacinta (DSP) suggested that support, 'cannot be vested in one person' and argued that there need to be multiple lines of support. STs acknowledged the efforts of CTs and identified other supports from outside of the learning to teach partnership. HEI-PTs and CTs identified ways in which they actively supported STs, while DSPs gave the institutional perspective on the management of cases. The supports identified by the various perspectives mirror many of the documented responses that exist in the literature. One of the most salient points coming from the data was that each individual case is unique and different and as a result supports need to be nuanced and be-spoke to the individual ST. Support from a variety of sources were identified in the data as set out in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Avenues of Support for Student Teachers



Support from peers and personally accessed supports, are important lines for the ST, but because they are provided from outside of the partnership, they are outside the scope of the aims of this study. When I analysed the supports provided by the HEIs and those provided by

school personnel, five particular methods or five pillars of support emerged and these are now presented in Figure 5.3. These pillars of support are not arranged in a hierarchical way.

Figure 5.3 Pillars of Support for Student Teachers



Pastoral supports are essentially those supports offered to an ST in a personal supportive capacity. They include one-to-one conversations where the ST is supported on a human, personal level. Korthagen (2012) highlights the importance of developing and supporting the person during ITE and places a responsibility on the HEI to provide for STs' personal development. This form of support is focused on helping the ST cope with the situations they are confronting or to help STs to make decisions about their programmes of study or in some cases exiting the programme. In some instances, such support may involve referring the ST to other services such as counselling, career guidance, chaplaincy, disability officer or medical professional. The data showed that this type of support is generally offered at HEI level, through meetings with people such as the DSP, the HEI-PT or a dedicated pathway tutor. However, in some instances a CT, the principal or other member of staff in a host school may provide this type of support.

The provision or availability of mentoring and coaching supports was evident within the data. The Teaching Council (2013) understands mentoring as encompassing 'all those means by which the student teacher is supported, advised and encouraged and his/her practice and thinking is affirmed and challenged'. According to Hobson et al (2012), coaching is a specific action included in a mentoring relationship. The data showed that for almost all of those

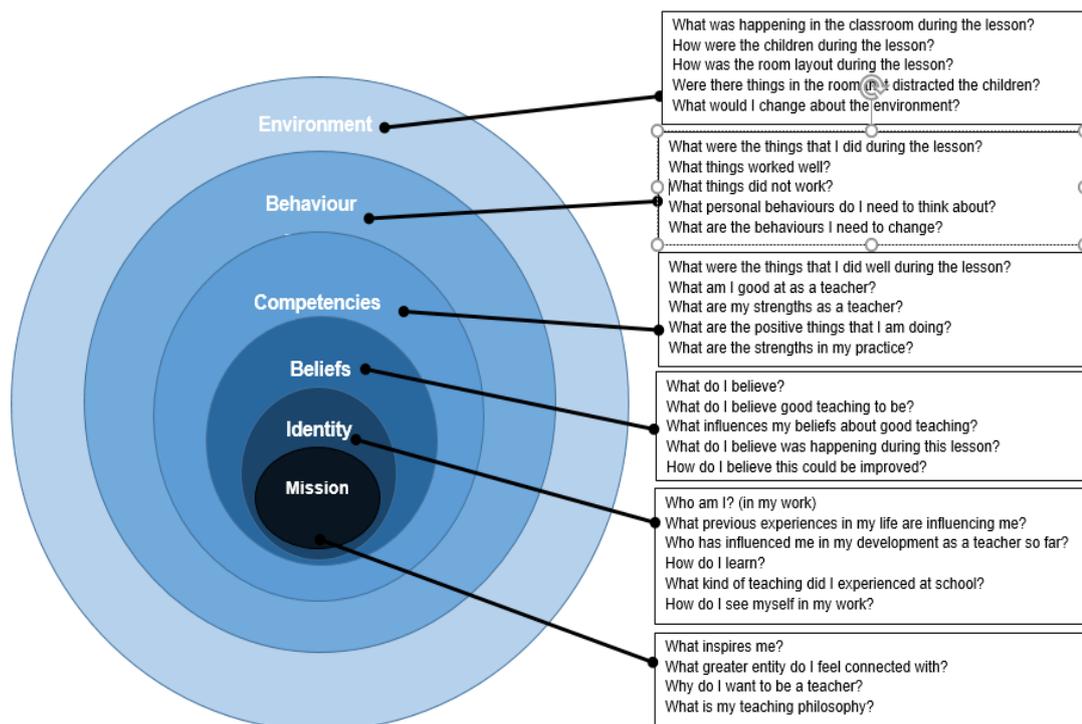
interviewed, they understood mentoring as a relationship between a HEI-PT and an ST. Mentors were assigned to STs experiencing difficulty to give distant phone and e-mail support and to visit STs in an observer only capacity in classrooms. These types of mentors encouraged, advised and tried to motivate STs. The literature generally understands a mentoring relationship to be between a CT and an ST (eg Anderson, 2007, Anderson, 2009). There was evidence within the data that some CTs took on a mentoring type role, albeit not explicitly documented as part of their role. The policy direction in the Republic of Ireland is for all STs to have a school-based mentor who is a CT (Teaching Council, 2013). A mentoring relationship might also be created between an ST and a subject expert or other staff member in the HEI to help an ST with an identified knowledge or skill deficit. There is scope in the Irish context to examine and develop mentoring as a form of support, and particularly to clarify who the mentor is or should be.

Observation and feedback was a dominant form of support referred to within the data. HEI-PTs reported observing an ST teach one or two lessons, followed by the provision of detailed oral feedback as typical. The challenge of providing useful feedback to STs who are experiencing difficulties was evident in the data. HEI-PTs described different approaches which took account of STs needs and on their state of fragility. STs indicated that this form of support was most effective when the HEI-PT gave them very specific ways to improve practice, when aspects of their practice were affirmed and when the HEI-PT was being transparent. Other STs were very critical of this process and did not feel it was supportive and suggested that there was a power imbalance, as the HEI-PT was also charged with assigning a grade in the final analysis. There is evidence within the data too of the provision of feedback by CTs, however this tended to be less structured and less formalised.

A structured dialogic approach emerged from the data as a potential form of support, although few actual concrete examples were evident within the data set. A dialogic approach involves the ST and the CT or the HEI-PT discussing and dialoguing on practice and together problem solving on actions the ST might take to improve practice, in what McIntyre and Hobson (2015), term a 'third space.' This kind of structured dialogue requires the ST to reflect on the practice

with another individual. Theorists such as MacRuaric and Harford (2008) suggest that reflective practice is the ‘cornerstone of initial teacher education’ and this is reflected in Teaching Council policy (2011). The data indicates that there is a gap between the policy rhetoric and the reality for STs. While STs engage in some reflection on their own practice, they generally see it as an administrative requirement and there was no evidence of specific models of reflection. The data from HEI-PTs and CTs shows that there is an absence of structured reflective dialogue as a method to work with and support STs and no specific model to facilitate this type of engagement was referred to by participants in the study. In an effort to fill this gap, I explored how Korthagen’s Onion Model (2004) might be used with an ST who is struggling or has failed SP within a block of SP (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Korthagen’s Onion Model (Revised, Kilroy 2016)



I feel Korthagen’s model is particularly useful because it provides a structure for reflection on the ‘actions of teaching’ as well as the ‘person of teacher.’ It might be used in conjunction with his other model, the ALCAT model (Figure 2.1, chapter 2) by either a HEI-PT or a CT to

structure reflective dialogue with an ST who is experiencing difficulties. The questions in the boxes on the right of the model are the redevelopments that I have added. They are phrased here in the first person for the ST to consider.

Removal and withdrawal emerged as a managerial response from the HEI for STs who are experiencing difficulty. Removal of an ST from the school before the end of SP occurred when there were significant concerns about an ST. The authority to remove is generally exercised by the DSP, but as detailed in the data, removal can sometimes occur on the request of the CT or the principal of the placement school. Such removal may be a temporary supportive measure, and the ST might be given an opportunity to complete SP at a later point or in a different setting. Some STs require a longer period of time, before repeating SP and this may need to be provided as a programme deferral or programme break. Encompassed in this form of support is the situation whereby the DSP or other member of academic staff in the HEI might counsel or support the ST to make the decision to withdraw from the ITE programme altogether. In very exceptional circumstances, the HEI might take the step to remove an ST from a programme of study. In instances, where the ST chooses to withdraw or where the HEI removes an ST, the issues of transfer of credits and exits routes for STs need to be considered by the HEI. Removal or withdrawal as a pillar of support requires great flexibility in programme design and flexibility in student progression through the course.

Supporting Individual Student Teachers

As indicated earlier in the chapter, each individual case is a unique instance of the phenomenon and each case may be understood under two or indeed more of the typologies outlined. As a result, the support and management of each individual case must be individual and needs to respond to the context of each ST. I suggest that the four principles outlined in Figure 5.5 be applied to the design of programmes of support for individual STs.

Figure 5.5 Principles for the Design of Programmes of Support



The first is the principle of bespoke design. Programmes of support need to be created specifically based on the needs of individual STs. In the data, Stephen, Catherine and Patrick (STs) were critical of the generic nature of the support that they received. They claimed that mentors from the HEI provided standard observation visits that were not focused on addressing their specific needs. Programmes of support need to be designed in consultation with the ST to ensure that they are effectively addressing the real issues.

The second principle is that of providing sufficient amount of time for support and to allow for the support to impact. This is often challenging given the pressure of assessment and the duration of SP. However, STs who are experiencing difficulty may need supports from the HEI well in advance of the commencement of the SP block and may need time during a block and between assessed visits to effect change. This requires a more flexible approach to the timeframes involved in the assessment of SP. Depending on specific context, sufficient time and space for recovery may be required. which in turn requires more flexible programme design.

The third principle is that of ensuring the minimisation of harm. Interventions and support mechanisms must be designed to ensure that any possibility of emotional, intellectual or personal harm to an ST is minimised. In Stephen, Teresa and Catherine's experience, the 'support' provided simply became an additional pressure. The children in a SP class and their education progress must also be considered, within the principle of minimisation of harm. The final principle is maintaining the dignity of the individual. Wragg et al (2000) identified the

complex and often emotive reality that is the questioning of an individual's competence or suitability for teaching, given the link that teaching has to peoples identity and their conceptualisation of themselves. Taking this into account, all supports need to be sensitive, yet appropriate and ensure the protection of the dignity of the individual human being.

Figure 5.6 Typologies of Student Teachers and Pillars of Support

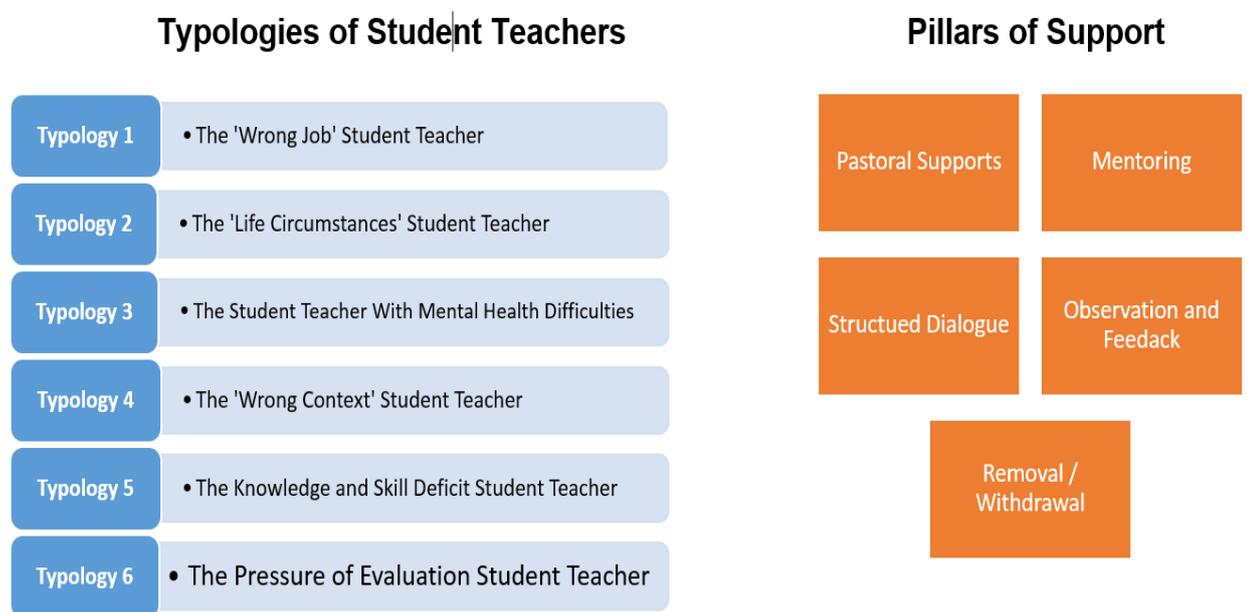


Figure 5.6 presents the 6 typologies of STs that have been discussed, together with the five pillars of support that have been identified. It might be used when considering how best to design a bespoke programme of support for an individual ST. An ST who has had a significant bereavement would be identified within typology 2. They may initially require pastoral supports and also may need removal from the programme for a period of time so that they can cope and recover from the bereavement. On return to the programme, they would need a carefully selected mentor at both HEI and school levels. An ST who is struggling because of deficits in knowledge, might be classified within typology 5 may need bespoke mentoring relationships with a subject specialist and a HEI-PT who will support them using a structured dialogic

approach. An ST who falls within typology 6, may need a very specific form of pastoral support initially to help them overcome their fear of evaluation. This may need to be followed with mentoring and observation and feedback of a supportive kind. Some STs will ultimately be identified within typology 1. This, however may be after a variety of other forms of support using bespoke combinations of pastoral, mentoring, observation and feedback and structured dialogue. Ultimately, all parties may agree that the only form of support that remains open is removal / withdrawal from the programme. While it may seem to be a contradiction, removal or withdrawal can be supportive if enacted sensitively.

The Role of the Co-Operating Teacher

It was obvious from the point of recruitment and sampling in this study, that the CT was a peripheral figure. The HEIs did not hold any means by which to directly contact CTs. However, the research found that the CTs can play a pivotal role in the support of all STs, but particularly STs who are experiencing difficulty. However, there was very clear evidence that CTs were unsure of their roles, and that there is a lack of clarity and specificity about the part that they play. There is a significant and urgent need for the role of the CT to be reconceptualised. In the Irish context, unlike many other jurisdictions, the functions of CTs are not formalised. Many of the studies involving CTs (eg. Anderson, 2007; Siebert et al, 2007; White, 2007; Le Cornu and Ewing, 2008) present and describe a figure that is significantly more central to the process. Clear structures and parameters exist, and functions such as formal weekly planning and feedback meetings (Anderson, 2007), defined roles in assessment (Siebert et al, 2007), direct links to the HEI-PT (Lee, 2006) and clear mentoring responsibilities (Le Cornu, 2009) are established features of practice. Research by Ní Aingléis (2007) in the Irish context, has shown that, the CT is more of a 'host teacher' and facilitates the placement by providing the class and supporting the ST in an ad-hoc way, however she also demonstrated a willingness by Irish teachers to support and mentor STs on SP, but a reluctance to be involved in assessment and grading of SP (2007 & 2009). Similar findings resulted from this research.

Jacinta and Antoinette (both DSPs) were definite in their assertion for the need for schools and CTs to play a more significant role in the support of all CTs, but particularly those who are experiencing difficulties. This view was also echoed by some of the HEI-PTs. Antoinette, called for all teachers in schools facilitating SP to be trained as mentors. You could argue that DSPs and HEI-PTs have a vested interest in involving CTs to a greater extent in supporting STs. However, the call for a greater role to be played by the CT is triangulated across the voices within the data. There is evidence from STs that they turned to the CT for support and that CTs were willing to support them. Patrick and Teresa described daily support from their CTs.

Teaching Council policy requires HEIs to build partnerships with schools and for a more significant role to be played by schools and particularly CTs during SP (2011, 2013). The Council acknowledges (2013, 3) that schools and HEIs face challenges in the implementation of these changes. The most significant challenge to the implementation of this policy is the cultural shift that is required for schools and teachers. The cultural shift required is summed up in Jacinta's (DSP) observation, 'we're not there as a country yet, and we have a journey to travel'. The Irish system has allowed the HEIs and policy makers to define how teachers are educated and what good teaching is. The system has allowed the HEI (the university or academy) to take the lead on the formation of teachers. This 'top down' approach to policy formation and implementation and the "passive" role played by teachers and schools in the preparation of teachers for entry to the profession might be understood as symptomatic of a managerialist approach to teacher professionalism (Ball, 2003; Connell, 2007; Parker, 2015). Essentially, Irish schools and CTs are entrepreneurial in their professional orientation (Sachs, 2003). They allow the HEIs to define how STs are supported and comply with this. In the data, Hazel suggests the need for teachers to adopt a different professional approach and greater proactivity towards ITE in general and to the support of their future colleagues in particular. Essentially she was calling on school and CTs to reject the managerialist approach to working with STs and exercise autonomy and become activist in orientation (Sachs, 2003). By becoming more active in the process, CTs reject the imposed, top-down model of ITE and instead embrace an agentic, bottom-up approach to supporting STs.

In order to involve CTs more actively in SP and specifically in the support of STs, the roles and responsibilities of CTs, schools and the HEIs need to be clearly defined and documented. In particular, the duties of CTs need to be clearly agreed. The literature from other countries makes reference to training provided by the HEI for CTs (Siebert et al, 2007; White, 2009) and the Teaching Council (2011, 2013) have called for the provision of such training by HEIs for teachers in partner schools. Within the data, indicated that they felt unprepared to support STs and called for training opportunities. They highlighted the particular need for training with regard to supporting STs who are experiencing difficulties. While the same principles of support may well apply to all STs, the specific needs of STs who are experiencing difficulty are more complex. Through analysis of the data, the training topics, outlined in table 5.4, crystallised to better equip CTs to effectively mentor and support all STs.

Table 5.4 Topics to address the Training Needs of Co-operating Teachers

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring and Coaching • Expectations for STs' phase of development • Observing STs teaching • Structuring reflection • Facilitating a dialogic approach • Providing feedback • Methodologies and pedagogical practices advocated by the HEI • Approach to planning advocated by the HEI • Dealing with conflict • Support available to the ST from the HEI |
|--|

Many CTs raised time as the greatest barrier to their engagement in such training. The three DSPs shared this concern and also raised the significant challenges of financial and human resources within the HEIs to the provision of such training programmes.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings were discussed and synthesised based on four themes that emerged from the data. The first involved the examination of the assessment of SP, particularly in light of the international focus on teacher quality and the use of competences and standards in an effort to ensure teacher quality. Six typologies of STs who struggle or experience difficulty during SP, which emerged from the data were then introduced and discussed. The third theme discussed the possibilities for supporting these STs. Five pillars of support emerged from the data and the potential for each was discussed. The role of the co-operating teacher in the Irish context was highlighted in the final section, as a factor in the experience of STs in general and specifically in the cases of STs that experience difficulty which is pivotal to effective support and remediation. The discussion has created resources that have potential for use by teacher educators and policy makers in the area of ITE and particularly in relation to supporting STs who experience difficulty. In Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, the implications for the use of these resources will be discussed, conclusions are drawn and recommendations for further study are also made.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This research set out to explore the phenomenon of student teachers (STs) who struggle or fail during school placement on their programmes of initial teacher education (ITE). The research explored the phenomenon from the perspectives of those in learning to teach partnerships in the Republic of Ireland and, in so doing, identified and endeavoured to fill the existing research gap. It focused on the emergence of the phenomenon, the reasons for its occurrence, the personal and professional impacts and the ways in which STs are or indeed could be supported. Significant findings emerged from this research, resulting in the provision of:

- Six typologies of STs who struggle or have failed during school placement (SP)
- Five pillars of support for use with STs who are struggling or who have failed SP
- A re-envisioned role for the co-operating teacher (CT) in the SP process in the Irish context
- A call for a standards-led approach to the assessment of SP, particularly where STs' competence is assessed as failing or struggling

These findings may be of interest to policy makers interested in ITE and the question of teacher quality. The findings as analysed will be of direct relevance to DSPs and programme leaders in higher educational institutes (HEIs) that provide programmes of ITE and to HEI-PTs and cooperating teachers who work with STs on SP.

There has been a sustained focus on the question of teacher quality in recent years and the topic has been the focus of much international research and policy discussion (Cochran-Smith, 2012). The focus on teacher quality has resulted in an examination of who become teachers, on how students are prepared for teaching and, in this context, high expectations are placed on programmes of ITE (Darling Hammond and Liberman, 2012). In a culture of increased managerialism in education (Ball, 2003), governments and policy makers have

attempted to bring about improvements in teacher quality through the introduction of standards, which set out the competences required by graduates of ITE (Connell, 2009). It was in the context of the focus on teacher quality that this research set out to examine the phenomenon of STs who fail or struggle on SP. To fully understand teacher quality and how it is assured, there is a need to present and interpret the experiences of all of those who strive to become teachers, including those who fail or experience difficulty in their quests.

This research has also responded to *Learning to Teach* (DES, 2005), a report which highlighted the need to study the experiences of the STs whose practices were considered unsatisfactory or who were at risk of failing. Anecdotal reports as well as some empirical research suggest that these STs are of concern to teacher educators (Knowles and Sudzina, 1994, Lee, 2007 and Rorrison, 2010) and to schools and to the CTs who work with them (Siebert et al, 2007). A very limited body of research into the phenomenon is available and a particular dearth is noted in studies that investigate the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. Learning to teach is a complex process (Shulman, 2004), and SP is challenging for almost all STs (Dikdere, 2007). This research acknowledged that SP takes place in a complex social environment and explored the occurrence of the phenomenon from all of the perspectives of the triadic learning to teach partnership (Korthagen, 2001); the ST, the school and CT; as well as the HEI and HEI-PTs.

Those STs who commence programmes of ITE do so with great hope and optimism and for many becoming a teacher has been the ambition of a lifetime and a significant dream. This research project confirmed that there are a variety of outcomes for the group of STs who struggle or experience failure. These outcomes can be categorised into four groupings. STs who fail blocks of SP and repeat them to successfully graduate, and become effective teachers. STs who manage to successfully graduate, but choose not to work as teachers. STs who choose to withdraw from their ITE programmes and do not to finish their studies. STs who go on to attempt repeat blocks, but are unsuccessful and are withdrawn or excluded from their programmes of study.

Research Aims and Questions

The aims of this research were to:

- Gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teachers.
- Explore the impact of the struggles and / or failure, on student teachers themselves, on co-operating teachers and on HEI placement tutors.
- Identify the forms of support available to struggling and failing student teachers and examine their perceived benefits and limitations.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school placement and how effective were these forms of support perceived to be?
4. What additional supports were identified by members of triadic learning to teach partnerships as potentially being useful in this context?

The evidence for this qualitative, phenomenological study came from 18 semi-structured interviews. Participants were drawn from across three HEIs that provide ITE in the Republic of Ireland. Five STs who had failed or scored below 45% on at least one block of SP, five HEI-PTs and five CTs who had worked with STs who had failed blocks of SP, as well as the three DSPs from the HEIs participated in the research. The STs were all recruited from post-graduate ITE programmes. The data captured with regard to each of the research questions is presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Synthesis of Key Findings

The research clearly demonstrates significant findings which may be of use to policy makers interested in ITE and the question of teacher quality, HEI personnel who work with STs during

SP, including those who manage SP on ITE programmes, and to school leaders and CTs in schools that host and support STs on SP. Six typologies of who struggle or fail on SP and five pillars of support to support and manage such STs have emerged as resources from the research. A re-conceptualised role for the CT in the SP process and a standard led approach to the assessment of SP are also suggested.

Typologies of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Fail

One of the most significant outcomes of the research was the emergence of six typologies of STs. Within the data, all participants put forward theories regarding their perceptions of the reasons why STs struggled or failed within blocks of SP. While the occurrence of the phenomenon is unique to each individual circumstance, these six typologies emerged from the data as those that typified the perceived underlying reasons for failure. In some individual cases, there may be overlap between the typologies and individual cases might be understood under more than one typology. These typologies should not be viewed with a diagnostic lens, but rather as way to potentially understand the circumstances of individual STs and also with a view to be-spoke support?

Figure 6.1 **Typologies of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Fail**

Typology 1	• The 'Wrong Job' Student Teacher
Typology 2	• The 'Life Circumstances' Student Teacher
Typology 3	• The Student Teacher With Mental Health Difficulties
Typology 4	• The 'Wrong Context' Student Teacher
Typology 5	• The Knowledge and Skill Deficit Student Teacher
Typology 6	• The 'Pressure of Evaluation' Student Teacher

The first type of STs are essentially those who have made the incorrect career choice and essentially do not possess the attributes to be an effective teacher. For the 'life circumstances' ST, a significant life event is occurring or has recently occurred that is placing additional personal stress and pressure on the ST, that results in the ST's inability to prepare for, cope with and be effective during the SP. The third Typology, STs with mental health difficulties are experiencing a period of ill-health or an underlying mental illness, that affects their ability to cope and be effective on SP. The 'wrong context' ST is an ST who in essence, is in the wrong place. Their difficulties may be caused by a poor relationship with a CT or a HEI-PT or the particular class, the age group of the children or the school culture is the wrong fit for the ST. The fifth typology is those STs who have gaps in specific areas of knowledge or pedagogical skills, that prevent them from being effective. They may be STs for whom there is a gap between theory and practice. The final typology emerged from some outlying cases within the data corpus and is a group of STs that experience undue pressure when they are being observed or when their competence is being evaluated, resulting in their inability to perform effectively when under observation.

Supporting Student Teachers Who Struggle or Fail

STs who fail or struggle on SP receive support from a variety of sources. This research found that much of this support is provided in an ad-hoc way. However, five distinct pillars of support, seen below in figure 6.2 emerged as having the potential to undo the potential negative impacts of the experience of failure and therefore an essential positive outcome of the research. The pillars of support should be employed to meet the specific needs of a particular ST. The pillars are not vested in one person, but would rather be co-ordinated at a HEI level or might be drawn on by a cooperating teacher or HEI-PT in their efforts to support STs. Pastoral supports are personal supports provided at HEI level that include one-to-one supportive conversations as well as referral to HEI services such as counsellor, medical professional, career guidance service and chaplaincy. Mentoring / coaching are supports provided through relationships with the HEI-PT or CT or other individual, that professionally enable and encourage the ST. Structured reflective dialogue may occur within a mentoring relationship, and is the deliberate thinking about and dialogue around practice in a supportive

and discursive way. Observation and feedback is a situation where the CT or a HEI-PT views an ST teaching and afterwards provides them with an analysis of their practice and suggestions for improvement. Removal / withdrawal are management responses where an ST might be removed or withdrawn from the block of SP or from the programme in a supportive way for a period of time. Ultimately, in the event that practice is not reaching the required standard the ST may need to be removed from the ITE programme.

Figure 6.2 Pillars of Support for Student Teachers



Four principles for the creation of support packages for STs who are struggling or who have failed a block of SP also emerged. Support programmes need to be bespoke to the individual ST's context and focused on their identified areas of need. Sufficient time needs to be provided for the support to take place and for it to take effect. The minimisation of any risk to harm to the individual ST and the maintenance of their dignity need to be integral in the planning and provision of all supports. The minimisation of harm to other members of the learning to teach partnership and to the children in the placement class, where applicable, also need to be taken into account.

Figure 6.3 Principles for the Design of Programmes of Support



Reconceptualising the Role of the Cooperating Teacher

A clear finding of this research is the nature of the role played by the CTs which is subordinate to the HEI-PTs in the learning to teach partnerships. Currently, the main responsibility of the CT is to host and facilitate the placement. None of the CTs in the study had received any training for their role and were critical of the communication from the HEI. Although CTs did support STs who were experiencing difficulties, they reported that there was a lack of clarity about their roles and that the HEI-PT did not communicate with them or make suggestions as to how best they might support the STs. STs indicated that the CT is the member of the partnership that is best placed to support them. There is a significant need to reconceptualise the role of the CT to allow them to play a more significant role in the process. CTs need to be empowered to take leadership in the support of CTs during SP. Similar to the findings in Ní Aingléis' work (2007), this study noted a reluctance by Irish CTs to be involved in the assessment of STs' practice. However, in this research, while a similar reluctance was expressed by some CTs, there was evidence from other CTs that they were willing to contribute to conversation in relation to assessment of STs. This will require the HEIs to work with schools and CTs and training needs to be provided for CTs so that they have the skills necessary to work with STs, particularly in the context of remediation. This would also ensure cohesion and a shared sense of purpose.

A standard-led approach to the Assessment of School Placement

In this time of unprecedented focus on teacher quality in education systems around the world, a surprising, yet illuminating finding from the data was the absence of significant influence of standards in the assessment of STs in the Irish context. While there were some references to the assessment of STs using criteria and HEI prescribed headings, in the discourse with participants, there was also a lot of evidence of reliance on instinct, perception and personal opinion. Specific standards for beginning teachers are commonplace in many education systems worldwide (Darling-Hammond, 2010) and in the Irish context have been defined by the Teaching Council (2013) in the form of learning outcomes for beginning teachers. The use of these learning outcomes to inform the assessment of SP was not evident in this study and their absence, as well as the evidence of the reliance on personal instincts and perceptions is a cause for disquiet. Almost ten years ago, Burke (2007) argued for the introduction of competence based standards in the Irish context so that there would be a shared understanding of the expectations for STs' learning and stage of development.

While considerable criticism exists within the literature on the over-reliance of a standards approach to ITE (Connell, 2009; Ball, 2003), the findings of this study show that in their absence, there is a lack of a shared understanding and consequentially, assessment becomes instinctive, subjective and potentially biased. STs work is being deemed unsatisfactory and fail grades are recorded, without specific reference or consideration of a shared standard. While STs agreed that the HEI communicated the criteria for evaluation, specific standards appeared not to have been shared with STs, as advocated by Darling-Hammond (2010) and feedback was not based on specific standards. Assessment judgements need to be led and underpinned by the agreed standards. This is not a call for increased managerialism or overt performativity. It is a call for transparency and clarity through a system of assessment which will ensure that judgements and feedback to STs are standard led. HEIs and those charged with the assessment of SP, owe it to STs who have invested so much in attempting to become a teacher, to ensure that judgements are made in a standardised, open and objective way.

Implications of the Key Findings

The key findings presented here, result in a number of fundamental implications for policy makers. The first is the conundrum that a standards-led approach to the assessment of SP poses and the second is the financial consequences of the key findings for the educational system.

The Standards Conundrum

As has been discussed, there are considerable mixed feelings in the literature regarding the use and impact of standards on teacher professional development and the assessment of beginning teachers. Commentators such as Connell (2009) in Australia, as well as Stevenson and Wood (2014) and Ball (2003) in England have all argued that the impact of a standards-led approach is reductionist and performative, and negatively impacts on beginning teachers and on teaching as a profession. In England in particular, standards have long since been a feature, and might be considered part of the cultural context. As previously outlined, standards in the Irish context are a new phenomenon. Indeed, in the Irish context there is a publicly stated commitment by the Minister of Education to reject a business capital approach. He informed teachers that performance related pay, league tables and a narrow approach to the use of standards in teacher development, were not within his vision for accountability (Quinn, 2014). The debate ahead of the Teaching Council's development of defined standards (eg Burke 2007, O'Doherty, 2009 and Conway et al, 2009) also warned the council against the narrow definition of standards. The learning outcomes that have emerged are broad and balanced. They include standards that are about the professional work of teacher, many are dispositional and essentially are broad in spirit. They are not just the narrow cluster of skills, feared by many. They have been influenced by systems such as the Scottish and Northern Irish models, where the standards approach has received better press.

While the findings of this study are advocating for the use of a standard-led approach to the assessment of SP, in the interest of transparency and protection of STs, I also wish to exercise caution. Policy maker in Ireland need to continue to ensure that standards are used for their

intended purposes. They must guard against their use in a reductionist way for managerialist purposes. They need also to ensure that they do not become narrowly interpreted at a local level. As the standards are refined and redefined in an evolving system, care should be taken to maintain their broad and encompassing spirit.

Financial Implications

The pillars of support suggested in this research as well as the enhanced role advocated for the co-operating teacher, would undoubtedly be a positive support to any ST who struggles or experiences failure during SP. However, these forms of support have considerable cost implications for providers of ITE and for schools. From a HEI perspective, providing the full range of supports, would require additional personnel. An enhanced role for the CT requires teachers to be trained by the HEIs and requires CTs to be released from regular teaching duties, to perform this work. The question of the remuneration of CTs also needs to be addressed.

The economic climate in the Republic of Ireland, post 2008 is a difficult landscape. Stevenson (2014), found that the impact of pay reductions and severe cut-backs in the educational system has damaged morale and willingness amongst teachers. The enhanced role for the CT is part of the policy direction in the Republic of Ireland (Teaching Council, 2011), however additional resources have not been provided at HEIs or at system level to enable the policy to proceed to any great extent. An understandable reluctance exists amongst teachers to further this policy, and this reluctance was echoed amongst the CTs in this study. The OECD (2005) and Sahlberg (2010) highlight the link between high levels of teacher quality and high governmental spends on ITE and teachers' remuneration. Fundamentally, in order for the role of CTs to be enhanced in the Irish system of ITE, and for the range of supports advocated for in this study to be provided, the funding provided for ITE in the Republic of Ireland needs to be increased. Specific ring-fencing of funds for the support of STs and for the development of the role of co-operating may be required.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for policy makers, HEIs that provide ITE, DSPs and heads of department in HEIs and for schools and CTs who are supporting student teachers' learning. They are made based on the findings of this research.

- In an effort to understand the phenomenon of STs who struggle or fail, DSPs and heads of departments in HEIs should use the typologies of STs who struggle or fail, with HEI-PTs and other members of faculty, to explore how the phenomenon occurs in their HEI and to discuss how occurrences can be minimised or prevented.
- To try to avoid occurrence of the phenomenon, the typologies of STs who struggle or fail should be considered by those responsible within the HEIs, for the recruitment of STs to programmes of ITE.
- DSP, heads of department and HEI leaders should examine the five pillars of support in an effort to examine the possibilities for support for STs who struggle or fail SP in their HEIs. The potential of the pillars for use by members of HEI staff and CTs should be examined. Particular attention should be given by HEIs to the adequacy and accessibility of pastoral supports for STs.
- DSPs and other HEI staff members responsible for organising programmes of support for STs should ensure that such programmes are flexible, bespoke in design and based on the specific needs of the ST.
- The assessment process in HEIs should be examined to ensure that HEI-PTs exercise objectivity at all times and in the formulation of assessment judgements and that any judgement which could be deemed to be based on personal opinion and bias be substantiated with evidence and reference to agreed standards.
- In the Irish context, the standards for beginning teachers, in the form of learning outcomes for programme providers (Teaching Council. 2013) should to be used by HEIs as the framework for the assessment of school placement. In the interest of openness and transparency, assessment judgements and feedback on school

placement should be led by the standards. This is of particular gravity in cases where the competence of student teachers is called into question. In so doing HEIs also need to ensure that the use of standards does not become reductionist and does not result in an overtly managerialist approach.

- Practicing teachers should embrace the reconceptualised role of the co-operating teacher, as it allows them an opportunity to be agentic in their professional orientation and allows them an opportunity to autonomously shape what is understood by good teaching.
- HEIs need to enable schools and particularly co-operating teachers to play a more active and significant role in the support of STs, particularly those who experience difficulty. Support measures need to be put in place by the HEIs for CTs as they engage in this kind of work.
- Training and release time should be provided for cooperating teachers to enable them to fulfil their reconceptualised roles. This will have human and financial resource implications.

Suggestions for Further Research

There is an overall paucity of research into the phenomenon of STs who fail or experience difficulties on SP. The research in this thesis is the only known example that explores the phenomenon from all of the perspectives in learning to teach partnerships and the only known piece of qualitative research in the Irish context. Further research, similar in orientation and enquiry to this study is required to extend the understanding of the phenomenon further. The following are some possible areas that are worthy of research in light of the findings of this study and in light of its given limitations.

- The STs that participated in this study were all drawn from post-graduate programmes if ITE, as this was the sample available. Further similar research should be conducted with ST drawn from undergraduate programmes.

- A limitation of the sample of STs that participated in this study is the fact that they all ultimately successfully graduated from their ITE programmes, albeit after completing repeat SP blocks. The perspectives of former STs who failed SP and failed the overall programmes; those who were removed or withdrawn from programmes of ITE; as well as those who chose not to continue after they failed SP, are worthy of investigation. The personal impacts on these groups of former STs would be particularly enlightening.
- The HEI-PTs, the CTs and the STs that participated in this study were not in learning to teach relationships with each other. The examination of triadic learning to teach partnerships, where the ST has failed, using a case study methodology is worthy of research. Such a study would present ethical dilemmas, but would provide a rich insight, based on the shared experiences.
- The emergence and causes of the phenomenon is worthy of further investigation with other populations of STs. The six typologies of STs who struggle or fail that emerged from this research, might guide such a research project.
- Each of the five pillars of support that emerged from this research is worthy of further research with STs who are experiencing difficulties or who have failed SP. The effective impact and the way in which the specific type of support transacts could be investigated from the perspectives of STs, HEI-PTs, CTs and indeed DSPs.
- The role of the CT and the HEI-PT in relation to STs who struggle or experience failure should be further investigated.
- There was evidence from the data that the experience of failing or struggling on SP had a significant impact on the former STs' conceptualisation of their professional selves. This is worthy of further research. A longitudinal study could be initiated to examine the experiences of teachers, who as STs failed or struggled during SP, to

examine how their perspectives on their professional selves changes and develops over time.

This research has also raised other interesting findings, that are worthy of further examination in research projects that do not necessarily use the lens of the phenomenon of STs who have struggled or failed.

- The finding that standards are not operationalised in the assessment of SP in the Irish context, points to the need for the investigation of the impact of the standards' movement on assuring teacher quality in the Irish context.
- In recent years Teaching Council policy has called for a more significant role for the CT, through a school partnership model in ITE. This study has found that that the role of the CT is underdeveloped and is in need of reconceptualisation. Many of the HEIs have already commenced pilot partnership projects with schools. The experiences of principals, CTs and HEI-PTs in these pilots should be investigated to inform the training needs and the further development of the role of CTs.
- The ability of some STs and the inability of other STs to be resilient was an evident finding. Resilience as a concept amongst STs is under-researched and is worthy of study. Questions such as how resilience is built and maintained; the factors that limit resilience; how relationships affect the resilience of STs, would all be of interest to teacher educators.
- The findings suggest that some STs engage in an enforced emotional labour as their competence is questioned. The occurrence of this pressure is worthy of further investigation.
- There was also a suggestion that some HEI-PTs adopted a different persona in their engagement with STs which was suggestive of enforced emotional labour. There is

virtually no research into the role of the HEI-PT or indeed into the role of teacher educators in the Irish context and research into the topic would be timely in light of the findings of research.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Application Form

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION – PGR STATEMENT OF RESEARCH ETHICS

(This form should be used by all students studying for a PhD, EdD, Prof Doc, or MPhil)

Name (Student): Leo Kilroy

Supervisor: Professor Howard Stevenson

Research Topic: Student Teachers Who Struggle or Experience Failure during School Experience



The University of
Nottingham



	Tick where appropriate
1. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011).	✓
2. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics of the University of Nottingham. For a copy of this document please click here: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx	✓
3. I am aware of and have discussed with my supervisor(s) the sections of the Data Protection Act (1998) that are relevant to my research study: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents .	✓
4. Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.	✓
5. The purpose and procedures of the research, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective research participants at the outset.	✓
6. My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.	✓
7. Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.	✓
8. All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant.	✓
9. In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role'.	N/A
10. Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in research activities.	✓
11. The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.	✓
12. I will provide participants with my contact details (and those of my supervisor), in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the research, should they wish to do so.	✓
13. Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.	✓
14. Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants. (see BERA, 2011)	✓
15. I have considered carefully to what extent, if any, my research might expose me to any kind of risk to my personal safety. I have also discussed this with my supervisor and have taken appropriate steps to respond to any risks identified. Where such a strategy has been agreed a record of it is attached to this submission.	✓

16. At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.			✓
17. The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.			✓
18. The views of all participants in the research will be respected.			✓
19. Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.			✓
20. Data generated by the research (e.g. transcripts of research interviews) will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected.			✓
21. Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.			✓
22. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants - e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.			✓
23. Where possible, research participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.			✓

24. Does your research involve (please tick **ALL** that apply):

Schools? Vulnerable Adults? Children? None of these groups

* The research will involve some semi-structured interviews with student teachers who have struggled or experienced failure during the school experience component of their initial teacher education. Some of these individuals may be recounting an experience that was difficult or emotional. Such individuals might be considered vulnerable due to the emotional nature of the subject matter being discussed. In order to ensure that these individuals are protected and so that no harm is caused the researcher will ensure the following:

- Participating student teachers will be made fully aware of the nature of the research well in advance of any commitment.
- Extra care will be taken by the researcher to ensure that consent is fully informed and that participants are clear on their right to withdraw. Additional time will be spent by the researcher at the start of the interview talking to the interviewee about the items mentioned on the consent form.
- During the interviews, breaks will be taken as necessary if there is evidence that the interviewee is becoming overtly emotional. Interviewees will be afforded the opportunity to stop the interview at any time.
- The researcher will ensure that ample time is scheduled for the interview so that stoppages can be facilitated and so that the interviewee will not be rushed or put under a time pressure.
- Interviews will be held in a venue that is convenient and comfortable for the interviewee. Care will be taken to select a venue that is not in a public area and where there is no chance of disturbance.
- All participants will be provided with an information sheet at the end of the interview with the contact details for free counseling / support services.

PLEASE SEND AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THIS FORM, COPYING IN YOUR SUPERVISOR, WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION TO EDUCATIONRESEARCHETHICS@NOTTINGHAM.AC.UK . IF YOUR SUPERVISOR IS COPIED IN WE WILL TAKE THIS AS PROOF THAT THEY HAVE SEEN AND APPROVED YOUR APPLICATION (THEREFORE A SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM IS NOT NECESSARY)

25. a) Will your research be conducted in (please tick **ONE BOX** only):

UK only? Outside the UK only? UK & outside the UK?

b) If outside the UK, please name the country(ies) involved:

The Republic of Ireland

26. FOR ALL STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS I have received Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance **through the University of Nottingham** and the School of Education Research Office has the reference number. *This applies even when data are collected outside of the UK.*
NB: All students must remember to apply for their University of Nottingham DBS disclosure when they are visiting the UK.

27. FOR ALL NON UK STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS
 Where available, I have received a Certificate of Good Conduct (or equivalent)* and the School of Education DABS Coordinators have a copy of this**

I hold Garda (Police) Clearance for my current job and this is updated every three years. The most recent Garda Clearance that I received was in 2012

* Countries that produce a Certificate of Good Conduct are: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Irish Republic, Italy, Jamaica, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden & Turkey.

** UK students who have lived in one of the above countries for 6 months or more may also need to apply for one of these.

Please provide further information below in relation to any of the above statements which you have not been able to tick, explaining in each case why the suggested course of action is not appropriate (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

Please outline any areas of research ethics related risk, which have not been referred to above, associated with your research, and how you intend to deal with these (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

Checklist:

PLEASE SEND AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THIS FORM, COPYING IN YOUR SUPERVISOR, WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION TO EDUCATIONRESEARCHETHICS@NOTTINGHAM.AC.UK . IF YOUR SUPERVISOR IS COPIED IN WE WILL TAKE THIS AS PROOF THAT THEY HAVE SEEN AND APPROVED YOUR APPLICATION (THEREFORE A SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM IS NOT NECESSARY)

Please check that you have attached 1 – 4 (& 5 where appropriate) and return with the form to the Postgraduate Research Students Office

- (1) a brief statement of my research aims or questions and proposed methods of data generation (maximum 200 words);
- (2) a brief statement of how I plan to gain access to prospective research participants;
- (3) a draft information sheet to be provided to prospective participants;
- (4) a draft consent form to be used with prospective participants;
- (5) a record of the agreed strategy between myself and my supervisor(s), identifying any potential risks to my personal safety, and stating how these will be addressed during my research study. (Only needed where researcher safety issues identified)

NB Please do NOT include copies of research instruments (e.g. questionnaires).

Signed (student)  Print Name (Student) Leo Kilroy Date: August 1st 2014

Signed (supervisor 1) _____ Print Name (supervisor 1) _____ Date _____

Signed (supervisor 2) _____ Print Name (supervisor 2, _____ Date _____
where appropriate) where appropriate)

PLEASE SEND AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THIS FORM, COPYING IN YOUR SUPERVISOR, WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION TO EDUCATIONRESEARCHETHICS@NOTTINGHAM.AC.UK . IF YOUR SUPERVISOR IS COPIED IN WE WILL TAKE THIS AS PROOF THAT THEY HAVE SEEN AND APPROVED YOUR APPLICATION (THEREFORE A SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM IS NOT NECESSARY)

Appendix 2: Ethics Committee Response

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form



Name Lee Kilroy
Main Supervisor Howard Stevenson
Course of Study EDD
Title of Research Project: Student teachers who struggle or experience failure during school experience
Is this a resubmission? No **Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office:** 29/08/14

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

The information provided meets the criteria for ethical approval of this research.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. <http://www.educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx> <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines> If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:

Approved

Revise and Resubmit

Signed:

Name: Prof W.J. Morgan

Date: 7/10/14

W. J. Morgan

(Chair of Research Ethics Committee)

Appendix 3: Anonymised Recruitment Letter

19 Glenmalur Pines,
Greenane,
Rathdrum,
Co. Wicklow,
12th of October 2014

Dear Former Student,

I hope that all is well with you. My name is Leo Kilroy and I am currently working on some research through the University of Nottingham.

My research is a study on the experiences of student teachers who struggle or experience difficulty on school placement (or teaching practice). There is very little research into this area and it is an important area to understand so that we can help prevent such events and so that we can help support student teachers in such circumstances.

One of the key holders of information to inform the research are people, such as yourself who have been student teachers in the past few years.

I am particularly interested in hearing from you if you have had any of the experiences below, when you were a student teacher.

- You struggled or found teaching practice a very tough experience
- You received an 'unsatisfactory' grading on any teaching practice visit
- You received an overall grading of between 40 and 45% on one of you blocks of teaching practice
- You received an overall fail grade (ie. below 40%) on any block of teaching practice
- You had to repeat any block of teaching practice

Participation in the research will not be too onerous. It will involve just one interview and a little bit of preparation in advance of that interview. The interview should take less than an hour and can be arranged at a time and place that is suitable for you. Interviews can also be arranged via skype.

The research and all correspondence will be 100% anonymous. No individual who participates in the project will be identified in any way. I understand that you may be feel reluctant to be involved in the research, or that you feel that you already have a lot on. However, you could possibly hold very valuable information and your experience could help shape how teaching practice placements are structured and how student teachers are supported.

For further information on the research, or to offer to participate please make contact with me by e-mail, leokilroy@gmail.com or by phone, 087 7378262. I am happy to answer any questions that you have about the research even if you are unsure whether or not you would like to participate.

Kind regards



Leo Kilroy
leokilroy@gmail.com 087 7378262

Appendix 4: ST Interview Schedule

Research Questions:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school experience?
4. How effective were these forms of support and what additional supports could have been provided?

<p>Background: Talk to me about your background? Why did you decide to become a teacher?</p> <p>Talk to me about your initial experiences on your ITE programme?</p> <p>Probe: Experiences / Role in school / Previous difficulties / experience of taught component of the course</p>
<p>RQ1:</p> <p>Talk to me about school placement? How was it generally?</p> <p>You told me that you failed (or struggled) on a block of School Placement. Tell me about the story? What happened?</p> <p>How did you struggle? What was happening at that time?</p> <p>Who told you were struggling / failing? How was the assessment judgement communicated to you?</p> <p>Probe: Underlying reasons / Context / relationships / assessment judgements</p>
<p>RQ 2:</p> <p>What impact did the experience have on you?</p> <p>Personally? Professionally?</p> <p>Who supported you?</p> <p>What were the impacts on the CT / HEI-PT?</p> <p>Probe: Emotions / feelings / personal impacts / professional impacts / changes as a result / debriefing / referral</p>
<p>RQ 3:</p> <p>How were you supported?</p> <p>What did the college do to help and support you?</p> <p>What did the CT do to help and support you?</p> <p>Who else supported you?</p> <p>Probe: Efficacy / models of support / management of support / addressing needs / gaps in the support / personal supports / peers</p>
<p>RQ 4:</p> <p>How could you have been supported in a better way?</p> <p>If you were redesigning the course, how would you organise supports for STs like you?</p> <p>How could the role of the CT be different?</p> <p>What changes need to be made?</p> <p>Probe: Models of support / ideas / the role of the CT / school / College responsibility?</p>
<p>Final Comments: Is there anything that you would like to add or discuss that you haven't had a chance to mention?</p>

Appendix 5: HEI-PT Interview Schedule

Research Questions:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school experience?
4. How effective were these forms of support and what additional supports could have been provided?

<p>Background: Talk to me about your background in education and talk to me about your experience in initial teacher education.</p> <p>Probe: Experiences / Role as a HEI-PT / Other experiences as relevant / Background in education.</p>
<p>RQ1: Have you experienced the phenomenon of STs who struggle or experience failure? In general terms, what do you think are the causes? How is it identified?</p> <p>In preparation for today's interview, I've asked you to think about two cases where the ST struggled or experienced failure. Tell me the story of how this happened. How did it come to light? Describe how you were involved in the situation?</p> <p>What were the things you noticed about the ST's work?</p> <p>Describe how you made your assessment judgement?</p> <p>Probe: Underlying reasons / Context / relationships / assessment judgements Note: HEI-PTs were given opportunities to discuss at least two cases in detail using the above structure.</p>
<p>RQ 2: What were the impacts of this experience on the ST?</p> <p>What were the impacts of this kind of work on you?</p> <p>How was the experience affecting the CT?</p> <p>Probe: Emotions / personal impacts / professional impacts / changes as a result / debriefing / referral for ST</p>
<p>RQ 3: In general terms, how are STs who experience difficulty or fail supported in the college?</p> <p>With reference to the cases you discussed, how were these student teachers supported?</p> <p>What specific ways was support provided?</p> <p>What role did the CT play?</p> <p>What other supports were available from the HEI?</p> <p>Were these supports effective?</p> <p>Probe: Efficacy / models of support / management of support / addressing needs</p>
<p>RQ 4: What other forms of support would you provide?</p> <p>If you were redesigning the programme with these kinds of STs in mind, how would you support the students?</p> <p>What changes need to be made?</p> <p>Probe: Models of support / ideas /</p>
<p>Final Comments: Is there anything that you would like to add or discuss that you haven't had a chance to mention?</p>

Appendix 6: CT Interview Schedule

Research Questions:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school experience?
4. How effective were these forms of support and what additional supports could have been provided?

<p>Background: Talk to me about your background in education and teaching? Talk to me about your experience in facilitating and supporting student teachers?</p> <p>Probe: Experiences / Role in school / Other experiences as relevant / Background in education / Experience with ST / Own SP</p>
<p>RQ1: Have you experienced the phenomenon of STs who struggle or experience failure?</p> <p>In preparation for today's interview, I've asked you to think about your experience where the ST that was working in your class experienced difficulty? Tell me the story of how this happened. How did it come to light? Describe how you were involved in the situation? What did you observe?</p> <p>Were you involved in assessing the ST?</p> <p>Probe: Underlying reasons / Context / relationships / assessment judgements</p>
<p>RQ 2: How was the experience for you? What was the impact on you? Personally? Professionally?</p> <p>Who supported you?</p> <p>What are the impacts of this experience on the ST?</p> <p>Were there impacts on anyone else?</p> <p>Probe: Emotions / personal impacts / professional impacts / changes as a result / debriefing / referral for ST</p>
<p>RQ 3: How was the ST supported? What did the college do to support them? Had you a role in supporting them? How did you support them? Were others in the school involved in the support?</p> <p>Probe: Efficacy / models of support / management of support / addressing needs / gaps in the support</p>
<p>RQ 4: How should the ST have been supported? How could the role of the CT be different? If you were redesigning the programme with these kinds of STs in mind, how would you support the students? What changes need to be made?</p> <p>Probe: Models of support / ideas / the role of the CT / school / College responsibility?</p>
<p>Final Comments: Is there anything that you would like to add or discuss that you haven't had a chance to mention?</p>

Appendix 7: DSP Interview Schedule

Research Questions:

1. Why do some student teachers come to be identified as struggling or failing as perceived by members of the triadic partnership?
2. What are the personal and professional impacts of these experiences on the members of the triadic partnership?
3. What forms of support were accessed by or provided for student teachers who struggled or failed during school experience?
4. How effective were these forms of support and what additional supports could have been provided?

<p>Background: Talk to me about your background in education and talk to me about your experience in initial teacher education.</p> <p>Probe: Experiences / Role as a HEI-PT / Other experiences as relevant / Background in education.</p>
<p>RQ1: Have you experienced the phenomenon of STs who struggle or experience failure? In general terms, what do you think are the causes? How is it identified?</p> <p>From a HEI perspective, what are the implications? Do you have an oversight role around these STs?</p> <p>In preparation for today's interview, I've asked you to think about two cases where the ST struggled or experienced failure. Tell me the story of how this happened. How did it come to light? Describe how you were involved in the situation?</p> <p>What were the things you noticed about the ST's work?</p> <p>Describe in general, how assessment judgements are made about STs work? Describe how assessment judgements are made with these kinds of STs? Is a different approach taken?</p> <p>Probe: Underlying reasons / Context / relationships / assessment judgements Note: HEI-PTs were given opportunities to discuss at least two cases in detail using the above structure.</p>
<p>RQ 2: What are the impacts of this experience on the ST?</p> <p>What are the impacts of this kind of an experience on the HEI-PT?</p> <p>What were the impacts of this kind of work on you?</p> <p>How was the experience affecting the CT?</p> <p>Probe: Emotions / personal impacts / professional impacts / changes as a result / debriefing / referral for ST</p>
<p>RQ 3: In general terms, how are STs who experience difficulty or fail supported in the college?</p> <p>With reference to the cases you discussed, how were these student teachers supported?</p> <p>What specific ways was support provided?</p> <p>What role did the CT play?</p> <p>What other supports were available from the HEI?</p> <p>Were these supports effective?</p> <p>Probe: Efficacy / models of support / management of support / addressing needs</p>
<p>RQ 4: What other forms of support would you provide? If you were redesigning the programme with these kinds of STs in mind, how would you support the students? What changes need to be made?</p> <p>Probe: Models of support / ideas /</p>
<p>Final Comments: Is there anything that you would like to add or discuss that you haven't had a chance to mention?</p>

Appendix 8: Research Information Form

A Study of the Phenomenon of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Experience Failure during the School Experience Component of Initial Teacher Education

What is the project about?

The focus of this project is on the experiences of student teachers who struggle, experience difficulties or indeed fail the school experience (or teaching practice) component of their initial teacher education. There is very little research into this phenomenon within education and there is no research at all in the Republic of Ireland. The study is being conducted as part of doctoral research through the University of Nottingham.

What are the Aims of the Research?

The study has three broad aims:

1. To gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of struggling and failing student teachers.
2. To explore the impact of the struggles and / or failure, on student teachers themselves, on co-operating teachers and on HEI placement tutors.
3. To identify the forms of support available to student teachers who struggle or experience failure and examine their perceived benefits and limitations.

Who else will be Involved?

The research will be conducted by Leo Kilroy, a doctoral student at the University of Nottingham. He is inviting directors of school experience, HEI placement tutors, co-operating teachers and former student teachers from a range of colleges in the Republic of Ireland to participate in the study.

What sorts of methods will be used?

Data will be collected using semi-structured interviews.

What are you being asked to do?

People involved in the research will be interviewed by the researcher. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidence, and the results will be reported anonymously. The data captured during interviews will only be used to support the research described above.

Contact Details:

Researcher: Leo Kilroy leokilroy@gmail.com or phone 087 7378262

Supervisor: Professor Howard Stevenson - howard.stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 9: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: A phenomenological study of student teachers who struggle or experience difficulties during the school experience component of their initial teacher education.

Researcher's name: Leo Kilroy

Main Supervisor's name: Professor Howard Stevenson

Please tick in each box to signal your agreement or place an X if you do not agree.

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I authorise the researcher to audiotape the interview.
- I understand that data from the interview will be stored digitally. (All files will be anonymised and will be stored on a password protected device that will be accessible only to the researcher.)
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (Research participant)

Print name **Date**

Contact details

Researcher: Leo Kilroy leokilroy@gmail.com or phone 087 7378262

Supervisor: Professor Howard Stevenson - howard.stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 10: Sample of Coded Piece of Transcript

LK: [12 min] So you relied on people outside of the College for that support in that 1st Block.

ST5: I was. I would have yes. I found my own Inspector somewhat...un...not particularly approachable. Perhaps that was my own fault as well but I... was slow enough to get in contact with her as regards feedback.

LK: Ok. Right.

ST5: I had my feedback, and I said 'I'm going to try my best now to fix this.'

LK: Right ok.

ST5: And it was fixed, but the fact that I performed so badly in the 1st Visit probably knocked...knocked the stuffing out of me as regards the marks.

LK: Did it knock your confidence?

ST5: Hugely.

LK: Right.

ST5: Hugely. Yeah, I came out of it saying 'Oh God, I do love this but is it for me at all? Am I not cut out for this.' Because it's not an easy game to get into and I thought I was. 'God will I...will I pack it in altogether?'

LK: Right.

ST5: Briefly I thought to myself but I said 'No man, stick it out.'

LK: Right.

ST5: 'Stick it out and see what happens. You're better than that.'

LK: Right. Ok.

College Support

low self-Esteem

low Self Efficacy

Career Choice

Withdrawal/Defeat

Appendix 11: Expanded Typologies of Student Teachers Who Struggle or Experience Difficulty on School Placement

The 'Wrong Job' Student Teacher	The 'Life Circumstances' Student Teacher	The Student Teacher With Mental Health Difficulties	The 'Wrong Context' Student Teacher	The Knowledge and Skills Deficit Student Teacher	The 'Pressure of Evaluation' Student Teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •May struggle with the interpersonal requirements of teaching •Lacks some of the characteristics and traits required to be an effective teacher •Has difficulties coping with the demands of classroom life (beyond those normally experienced by STs) •Has difficulties in many areas of planning and pedagogy •Core mission, motivation and identity as a teacher is in question •Self esteem and self-efficacy are low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ST is experiencing or has recently experienced life pressures or a significant life event • The events effect their ability to cope with the demands of classroom life (beyond those normally experienced by STs) •ST is experiencing significant difficulties with the demands of SP •Has difficulty in many areas of planning and pedagogy •Self esteem and self-efficacy are low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ST is experiencing a mental health difficulty or there is an underlying mental illness •Has difficulties coping with the demands of classroom life (beyond those normally experienced by STs) •May be experiencing perceptual difficulties •ST is experiencing difficulties with the demands of SP •Has difficulties in many areas of planning and pedagogy •Self esteem and self-efficacy are low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The relationship with the CT or the HEI-PT is adversely affecting the ST <u>or</u> the particular class or school context is the wrong fit for the ST •ST may have an identity or mission conflict with the other person / the situation / the context •May be experiencing difficulty in areas of planning and pedagogy •Self esteem and self-efficacy are impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ST is experiencing difficulties with the demands of school placement •Has difficulties in areas of planning and pedagogy •Evidence of gaps in learning, knowledge and skills. •Evidence of a gap between theory and practice •Self-esteem and self-efficacy are impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •CT reports that the ST is getting on reasonably well initially •Severe levels of anxiety build in advance of HEI-PT's evaluation visit •Noticeable differences in classroom practice during evaluation •Self-esteem and self-efficacy are noticeably affected by evaluation visit

Appendix 12: Model to support structured reflection or dialogues based on Korthagen's Onion Model

