University of Dublin

Trinity College

# To examine the professional development of pre-service modern language teachers from a consecutive program of study in terms of both knowledge and identity underpinned conceptually by the Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF)

A thesis written in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Letters (M.Litt.)

April 2021

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April 2021

# Abstract

This study tracks the professional development (PD) of two cohorts of student language teachers (ST) in Initial Teacher Education in both their learning and school placement throughout a year of their studies in terms of teacher knowledge development and teacher identity development. Using a multiple nested case study approach, this study utilizes Mezirow's *Transformative Learning* (TL), and the *Threshold Concepts Framework* (TCF) to identify the Threshold Concept (TC) encountered by the participants and to track their transition from a novice to an expert teacher via the thematic analysis tool of I-poems (Brown & Gilligan, 1991). The TC of *Teaching as Relational* was identified as Threshold Concept (TC) for this study. In order to achieve this, the TCF model was utilized and adapted as the interrelated framework to examine the influences of internal and external factors on the development of a teachers' knowledge and identity regarding their schooling, professional development, and classroom practice.

# Summary

This study tracks the professional development (PD) of two cohorts of student language teachers (ST) in Initial Teacher Education in both their learning and school placement throughout a year of their studies in terms of teacher knowledge development and teacher identity development. Using a multiple nested case study approach, this study utilizes Mezirow's *Transformative Learning* (TL), and the *Threshold Concepts Framework* (TCF) to identify the Threshold Concept (TC) encountered by the participants and to track their transition from a novice to an expert teacher via the thematic analysis tool of I-poems (Brown & Gilligan, 1991). In order to achieve this, a methodological framework to investigate how STs develop and transform over their course of their program and to demonstrate how the fields of teacher cognition, teacher identity, teacher development, and transformative learning interact with each other was required. As a result, the TCF model is utilized and adapted as the interrelated framework to examine the influences of internal and external factors on a teachers' cognition regarding their schooling, professional development, and classroom practice. Beyond that, this study identifies challenges which the student teachers experienced as *troublesome* and *transformative*, two imperative characteristics of what TCs must entail.

With ITE in Ireland undergoing a transition, this study was able to offer a unique perspective on this transition from that of the student teachers (STs) involved and how various structural elements were essential in the transition of understanding the identified TC in this thesis and how it related to the formation of their teacher identity.

With the utilization of I-poems, the focal point was placed on how the participants attempted to overcome these challenges, identifying the turning point which triggered the transition with the integration of alien knowledge. The data collection process consisted of semi-structured email

interviews (n = 50) over an eight-month period with a follow-up face-to-face interview (n = 5) to consolidate the email interviews held at the end of their term and resulting in a total of 75,000 words collected for this study.

Stemming from the thematic analysis of the data collected and focusing on the three primary characteristics of a TC, *Teaching as Relational* was identified as the TC in this thesis. For each student teacher involved, being 'stuck' in the liminal state, what 'teachers know, believe, and think (Borg, 2003) was tracked to investigate how they attempted to confront and overcome the challenge of Teaching as Relational. While most of the participants displayed positive indications of overcoming the challenge, there are instances where more time, guidance, and effort is required to do so as they remain in the liminal state. The influence of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) was profound in the case of some participants as their preconceptions exerted considerable influence over their idea of how a teacher should behave in class and how students should respond. When confronted with the 'praxis-shock' (Kelchtermans, 2009), where there was a divergence between their preconceptions and reality of the classroom, some participants embraced the challenge in attempting to understand their students' needs, and foster relationships, while some reverted back into their Schooling (Borg, 2006).

This study also examined the consequences of learning which stemmed from the collected data, noting the 'developmental potential' (Timmermans, 2014) of the TCs themselves. Being stuck in the 'liminal state' (Meyer & Land, 2005) and its importance was seen as a significant step in the teacher's professional developmental process, both in their acquisition of knowledge and their belief about the nature of reality: the reality of their evolving language classrooms. The liminal state denotes an unspecified period where the respondents endeavor to transform the newly acquired concepts from their teaching and learning into their adapted knowledge as they strive to increase their 'Pedagogical Content Knowledge' (Shulman, 1987), belong to a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1998) and 'lifelong learning' (The Teaching Council, 2016).

However, when emerging from this space, there was dissonance encountered where the new concepts were either referred to but not incorporated or determinedly rejected by the participants. As learning does not take place in an individual's mind as it is dependent on the context (Nias, 1999), instances of 'emotional geographies' (Hargreaves, 2001) are strengthened with some teacher's 'well-defined views of themselves' (Nias, 1989). These barriers to change include *system level barriers*, *impostership*, *negative effect of emotion*, and the *lack of self-reflection* which prevented the participants from becoming an expert teacher or 'adaptive expert' (Hatano & Oura, 2003).

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# List of Abbreviations

CP – Classroom Practice

CT – Co-operating Teacher

HEI – Higher Education Institute

ITE – Initial Teacher Education

NQT – Newly Qualified Teacher

PD – Professional Development

PT – Placement Tutor

SP – School Placement

ST – Student Teacher

TALIS – Teaching and Learning International Survey

TC – Threshold Concept

TCF – Threshold Concept Framework

TL – Transformative Learning

# 1  Introduction

'I kinda felt like I was winging it, just going in there pretending I was a teacher'

(T1, Interview).

This feeling of impostership for T1 above represents a significant stage in the first year of an initial teacher education program for many beginning teachers - a developmental stage that some educators remember with 'fond' memories. A developmental stage where teachers attempt to come to terms with the pressure of not yet being fully trained or qualified, and nonetheless endeavor to comprehend the educational needs of a classroom full of teenagers. A stage where student teachers attempt to discover what it is really like to feel, think, and act as a teacher, and grapple with such unyielding emotions as a lack of confidence to teach the course material, a fear of failure, trying to adjust and harmonize into the school culture, fear of losing control, and, most critically for some, fear of being found out at a moment's notice by peers, colleagues, or even worse, by the very students who they are tasked with teaching (Nias, 1989; Brookfield, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Valencia et al., 2009; Zembylas, 2003; Fairbanks et al., 2010).

These problematic emotions can be potently experienced by student teachers (ST) and newly qualified teachers (NQT), but from another contrasting perspective, it can also allow them to grapple with their identity and to ultimately feel 'like a teacher'. This feeling of anxiety, confusion and impostership (Brookfield, 2006) does subside for the vast majority of STs and NQTs and, in time, they transform into expert teachers whose disciplined improvisation (Sawyer, 2003) or practical reasoning (Pendlebury, 1993; Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993) enables them to approach and manage various instantaneous situations that arise in the classrooms, thus increasing their Professional Development (PD) capacity. Nevertheless, it is not only continuous practice or repetition of classroom tasks that can enable this development or shift in identity. One does not ensure their trajectory into becoming an expert teacher purely from teaching a required number of hours per year, although some outside the sector may feel this is so (Nias, 1989; Britzman,

2003; Brookfield, 2006). Nor does PD need to only focus on the lack of subject knowledge that STs require (Wiliam, 2011). Teachers have to constantly reflect on their practice and consider their students' learning needs, the classroom context and the incorporation of materials into their lesson planning, to name but a few. As Dewey notes, practice itself is not sufficient, and educators must reflect on that practice 'to extract its net meaning' (1916: 4). Actively reflecting on classroom practices does initially aid understanding of how complex a given situation is and shape professional identity; an identity that is constantly shifting with multiple aspects. As a result of these interrelated concepts, classroom teaching has become 'perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species ever invented' (Shulman, 2004: 504). It is little wonder why there is no consensus on how teachers should learn, and to presume that there is one would be imprudent given the diverse nature of the teacher, the subject matter, the context and most importantly, their learners.

This study is focused on the shaping of the modern student language teacher as they undergo a process of transformation in their initial language teacher education (ITE) program. How teachers develop confidence to deal with unpredictable contexts and, at the same time, not to resemble an imposter when interacting with disciplinary experts or challenged by their students is an imperative aspect that this study investigates. Living the life of a student teacher involves living within certain systems 'tugging in different directions' (Grossman et al., 1999: 5) or 'wearing three hats' as one participant of this study commented (T6, Email). As Hammerness et al. state, teachers need to be equipped with systems and techniques not only for their classrooms but also for 'lifelong learning' which allows them to aspire to be 'adaptive experts' over their career (2007: 358-360). However, caution is advised as teacher education has 'always been a difficult and complex enterprise, perhaps made more difficult by the lack of consensus and limited research evidence about what makes teaching "great."' (Fairbanks et al., 2010: 168). This thesis sets out to examine current understandings of teacher development during ITE and build on this with an in-depth qualitative case-study of pre-service language teachers using the lens of the Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF).

This introduction will lay the foundation for the following chapters setting out Purpose of Research (1.1), its relevance and importance within the specific research context addressed (1.2). A brief synopsis of TCF, Global Research on the OCED Studies, ITE Research in an Irish Context, Teacher Identity, and Modern Foreign Language Pedagogy are presented in section 1.3. Finally, an overview is provided of the study (1.4).

## 1.1 Purpose of Research

The main purpose of this study is:

**To examine the professional development of pre-service modern language teachers from a consecutive program of study in terms of both knowledge and identity underpinned conceptually by the Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF)**

Specifically, the objectives of this thesis are:

1. What is the experience of student language teachers on a consecutive ITE program in terms of:
    a. Knowledge development
    b. Identity development
2. What helps or hinders this development?
3. Do aspects of this development constitute a Threshold Concept?

What is the Threshold Concept(s) that exists in a cohort of STs and how is it classified as TC from the data collected? Which characteristics of a TC are fulfilled in the identification of this TC? This framework is utilized to identify the troublesome aspects the teachers experience in

both their learning and classroom practice, and if these challenges assist or hinder their development.

Therefore, this study will explore teacher knowledge and identity as it develops and the anxieties that this developmental process can engender. While much has been written on the anxieties felt by STs as they start on their developmental journey and attempt to enact the theories and methodologies that they have been exposed to in their program of study (Britzman, 2003; Conway et al., 2012; Kennedy, 1999; Nias, 1989), there is an inherent necessity for increased in-depth studies on the nature of that anxiety and how teachers surmount it, specifically Modern Language Teachers. Coupled with the reconceptualization of ITE undergoing in Ireland, this period of transition can be analyzed further from the perspective of the STs.

As a result of this, Mezirow's (1978) theory of transformation learning (TL) is an important aspect of this study as through this lens those challenges, and anxieties experienced by the teachers will be documented, to determine the cause of these difficulties and how teachers attempt to prevail over them. The process of transformation is a significant facet and 'is often triggered through encountering dissonance' (Land, 2016: 12). Fuller (1969) provides one such example of a developmental process which teachers undergo ($self - task - impact$) as they attempt to understand the 'nuts and bolts' of their classrooms, thus, increasing their teacher knowledge through deliberate and thoughtful practice.

Among the growing desire for countries to provide 'clear and concise statements of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do' (OCED, 2005a: 9), Irish ST and newly-qualified teachers are no different in this requirement (section 1.2) with the scale of change in Ireland being reported as 'unprecedented' (O'Donoghue et al., 2017). No more is this prevalent than at the beginning of their career. As ST attempt to understand their sphere and teaching principles within the institutional values of their Higher Education Institute (HEI) providers, there is a need to understand more about the process that they undergo. Strong desire is also prevalent to provide

more systematic programs of ITE in the context of major global financial restraints so that they may develop into 'life-longer learners' (The Teaching Council, 2011) and 'adaptive experts' (Hammerness et al., 2007: 358-360). Therefore, a methodological framework is required to investigate how STs develop and transform over their course of their program and to demonstrate how the fields of teacher cognition, teacher identity, teacher development, and transformative learning interact with each other. The TCF is the model used to achieve this outcome, linking these aspects together.

Therefore, this thesis utilizes the Threshold Concepts Framework (Land et al., 2016) as an integrative framework within which to examine the challenges that the STs experienced in both their learning and school placement (SP). This identifies the troublesome issues that were encountered and if these issues were overcome, categorizing the catalysts and barriers to change experienced by each ST. This links the TCF with TL within the ITE participants of Modern Foreign Languages within their program of study and does posit that transformative for everyone is not linear and is a deeply personal process as they are confronted with an epistemological shift in their ways of thinking and knowing.

## 1.2   Global Research

In a context of reforms in teacher education and education more broadly, it is imperative to understand teachers. Hammerness, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007: 358) note that 'how teachers learn and develop as professionals is a question that has compelled teacher educators and researchers for many years.' Shulman also states how complex, challenging and demanding classroom teaching is (2004: 504) while the OCED Report of 2012 supports this noting that new teachers enter a 'poorer classroom climate' compared to their more established and experienced colleagues (2012: 28). Bransford et al. state that '[a]bove all, teachers need to keep what is best for the child at the center of their decision making' (2007: 2) and 'we make assumptions about

what is important for people to learn, about who can learn well and why, and about effective strategies for enhancing our own learning and what of helping others' (Bransford et al., 2007: 41). This indicates the effect that teacher cognition and beliefs can have on ST's learning.

STs need to be equipped with effective tools, techniques and systems for 'lifelong learning' and since they acknowledge that everything a teacher needs cannot be taught in such a short space of time in education programs, a conscious effort to assist and develop teachers throughout their careers is needed to become what they term 'adaptive experts' which they consider to be the 'gold standard' of any teaching professional (Hammerness et al., 2007: 358-360). Lifelong learning has also been adopted by both the EU and The Teaching Council of Ireland as a policy objective for PD (The Teaching Council, 2016: 4). *Adaptive experts* are 'characterized as educators who exhibit such traits as 'innovative within constraints,' 'particularly aware of the larger social contexts in which they operate,' 'ability to learn from others,' and 'discovering the need to change…as a success and an inevitable, continuous aspect of effective teaching' (Hammerness et al., 2007: 360-363). Hatano, the originator of this term, states that 'novices become adaptive experts – performing procedural skills efficiently, but also understanding the meaning and nature of their object' (Hatano & Inagaki, 1986: 262). This core concept can be viewed as an overall goal that all teacher education programs, whether pre- or in-service should be reaching for (Hammerness et al., 2007: 360).

Contextual, societal, and historical aspects contribute to shaping the identity and expectations of teachers. Teacher education has a significant role to play in the development of teachers and can break the mold that remains in the minds of teachers from their earlier childhood classroom experiences. However, Britzman states 'it is little wonder that many students leave compulsory education believing that "anyone can teach"' as pedagogy is not something that students consider (Britzman, 2003: 27). The question of redesigning these 'frames of reference' or 'habits of mind' stems from Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation model and Mezirow's (1978)

Transformative Learning model with the social aspect of institutional bias among staff members and reference groups (Nias, 1989: 44).

## 1.3    Reconceptualizing of ITE in Ireland: at a moment of transition

This thesis aims to examine the professional development of STs of modern languages in Ireland over the transition period from Higher Diploma to Master level qualification (2013 and 2017, respectively) and to present the background context which brought about these changes.

Researchers state that 'the teaching profession in Ireland is held in high esteem and this respect is deeply rooted in history' with 'very keen' competition with the 'top 15% of academic achievers' being exclusively eligible to participate in the undergraduate teacher education programs (O'Doherty & Harford, 2018; Ni Dhuinn, 2019; Hyland, 2012: 8; Conway et al., 2009; Conway et al, 2014) which propagates this degree of high esteem. This was further supported in Sahlberg et al.'s report (2012: 15) where teaching in Ireland is viewed as 'a high status profession.'

Murchan (2018) notes that few changes to the manner in which languages were taught took place due to the strict rigidness of the external examination system in Ireland with this assessment system exerting a negative impact on teaching and learning leading to a major curricular reform of lower secondary education. This aims to remove the negative washback effect of a rigid external assessment system and improve learning outcomes for students. In a post method era of language teaching where teachers are expected to form their own theories of practice based on elements from methods and approaches which best facilitate learning in their context (Kumaradivelu, 2001), the Irish education system was in need of substantial reform.

This was compounded further by the results of the 2009 OECD *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) tests of literacy and numeracy (Perkins et al., 2010; Perkins et al.,

2012: xii-xvi) which indicated 'deterioration in the attainment of Irish 15 year olds between 2000 and 2009' (Hyland, 2012: 6) and along with recommendations outlined in the *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of the Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (Sahlberg et al., 2012), led the government to initiate a strategy document entitled *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* which proposed lengthening the Higher Diploma of Education courses to two years and an additional 60 ECTs (Quinn, 2012; Hyland, 2012; Ni Dhuinn, 2019).

The fall in PISA scores also led to a critical review of the ITE provision in Ireland by the then Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, to investigate the 19 public-funded institutions providing over 30 programs for both primary and secondary level teachers to discover ways of improvement (Quinn, 2012; Hyland, 2012: 3), and 'to identify possible new structures based on a reconfiguration of existing programs in order to strengthen the quality of teacher education' (Sahlberg et al., 2012: 9). Due to the growth of teacher education programs during the last decade in a 'piecemeal and un-coordinated manner,' there has been only a limited amount of collaboration, and concerns were raised about its effectiveness as considerable financial stringencies imposed on the public sector and severe cutbacks to staff have been realized (Hyland, 2012: 3) with suggestions made that the Education students are seen as the 'cash-cows' allowing universities to divert the fees received to other departments (Hyland, 2012: 20).

Conway et al. (2009) study of nine different European countries noted that government legislation, policy making, and curricular reforms were a major focus in the last two decades in Irish education. One such example of a significant change has come in the form of the establishment of *The Teaching Council*, which oversees the accreditation of teachers for primary and post-primary levels in Ireland. Since its foundation in 2006, it has been mandated by law to 'both promote and regulate the profession' (The Teaching Council, 2016: Foreword), and functions range from ITE, lifelong learning, and the continuing professional development of

teachers throughout their careers (The Teaching Council, 2011) as well as funding research on specific core areas such as School Practice (SP) (Hall et al., 2018). An Advisory Group was established on ITE in December 2010, tasked in 'reconceptualising programmes of initial teacher education at primary and post-primary level' (The Teaching Council, 2011: 4) where 'the focus on ITE should be on providing student teachers with a set of high-level beginning competencies to be built on through the continuum of teacher education' (ibid: 11). Consequently, Kennedy notes the importance of a country developing its ITE: 'it is evident that ITE functions as an indicator of both economic wellbeing and political popularity' (2018: 638).

Previously, prior to 2013, applicants would enroll in a postgraduate, consecutive one-year *Professional Diploma of Education* (PDE) program in order to achieve accreditation to teach in a secondary school in Ireland. This was extended to two years (*Professional Master of Education* (PME)) by the Teaching Council and the Department of Education and Skills (Hyland, 2012: 10) with the introduction of learning outcomes for all its ITE graduates (Hyland, 2012: 6). There was an increased focus on SP in terms of program design, learning and assessment, with STs required to have a high focus on 'teaching practice' (or *school placements* as they were now referred to in this thesis although the former phrase is used internationally in ITE) with 32% of their overall grade achieved from these four on-site assessments. This increase of an additional year indicates a moment of dramatic transition of ITE in Ireland and, thus, this study appears in a timely-manner to benefit from the STs before and after these changes.

ITE refers 'to the foundation stage of learning to be a teacher when aspiring teachers are engaged in a recognized teacher education program provided by a higher education institution' and offers a combination of coursework in teaching methods, subject matter but also in psychology, sociology, philosophy of education along with a period of teacher practice (The Teaching Council, 2010: 10-11). The teaching practice runs concurrently, i.e. a ST is placed in a SP when participating in Higher Education Institute (HEI) courses. Alternating days are spent in a

secondary school teaching the STs chosen subjects. The SP for post-primary should be 24 weeks or equivalent (The Teaching Council, 2011a; The Teaching Council, 2017).

Reflection is also an important factor ensure that the 'teaching itself is understood and practised as a form of self-critical learning by student teachers, with ample opportunities for individual and collaborative reflection, and engagement in and with research' (The Teaching Council, 2010; 2011a; 2015; 2017; 2020) with a Professional Portfolio being one instrument to achieve this (The Teaching Council, 2017).

## 1.4 Brief Synopsis of Key Areas

The following section will provide a brief introduction and overview of the key areas in this study.

### 1.4.1 Threshold Concepts Framework

Stemming from The Enhanced Teaching-Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses (ETL) project between 2001-2005, this framework allows for the identification of concepts that students consider troublesome and difficult to their understanding of a subject and offer significant potential for educators in their course planning and teaching. The Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF) is characterized as having five main traits: transformative, irreversible, integrative, bounded and being troublesome (Cousin, 2006, 2010; Meyer & Land, 2003; Timmermans, 2014; Land, 2016) with Meyer and Land (2003) categorizing transformative, troublesome, and integrative as being primary characteristics. While there have been numerous tcs identified in various fields, for example, *measurement uncertainty* in Physics (Aderlind, et. al., 2012), *thinking like a linguist* (Anderson, 2016), and *legal reasoning* (Aderlind, et. al., 2012), *legal questioning,* (Steel and Fitzsimmons, 2013), *intellectual property law* (Azam, 2012), *Academic and Professional Skills for Language Learning* (Orsini-Jones, 2008), more research is required to examine what the tcs are within ITE.

### 1.4.2   Teacher Identity

In examining that is meant by 'identity,' Beijaard et al. note that it 'is not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life' (2004: 107). Nias states that the 'self is a crucial element in the way teachers themselves construe the nature of their job' (1989: 13). Rogers and Babinski state: 'despite all of the research and all of the books and articles written about the difficulties endured by beginning teachers, the first year of teaching continues to be an exceptionally difficult time for most of them' (2002: 2).

### 1.4.3   Teacher Development

Previously, teacher training programs were seen as teaching the 'tricks of the trade' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008: 396) which seemed to 'lie in the traditional approach to teacher education, which was based on the assumption that theory can be taught to (student) teachers with the effect that they apply this theory within the school context' (Korthagen, 2017: 529). However, this resulted in limited emphasis being placed on understanding how students learned or developed; nevertheless, over time this transformed into theories and classroom practices that are known today, such as, child development, language acquisition, curriculum design, social contexts of education, and assessment. Consequently, this resulted in a stronger focus on development teachers which led to professional development programs. The OCED notes that most teachers participate in PD with governments placing an emphasis on their ITE programs (2016) resulting in PD creating increasing opportunities in line with connections to 'many school-improvement efforts around the world' (Borko et al., 2010: 548).

'The standard model of teacher professional development is based on the idea that teachers lack important knowledge, particularly subject knowledge' (Wiliam, 2011) with calls to develop teachers to be more adaptive and (Lindvall and Ryve, 2019) and for providers to develop a 'common framework' required (Desimone, 2009: 181). Consequently, PD is viewed as a dynamic process (Day et al., 2006).

Kumaradivelu (2001: 537) highlights the need for 'enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize' supporting Burke's (2011) view that teachers' beliefs need to be made explicit and questioned in order to bring about change, which involves teachers challenging their often unconsciously, and perhaps innocently accepted values, beliefs and practices passed down through generations (Burke, 2011), highlighting the role of teacher beliefs' in the emergence and acceptance of new paradigms.

The link between teacher knowledge and good teaching was strengthened by recent studies. *The Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* report noted that student learning is influenced by various factors such as 'teacher skills, knowledge, attitudes and practices' (OCED, 2005a: 2) and that the profile of teachers' competencies needs to 'encompass strong subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, to contribute to the school and the profession, and the capacity to continue developing' (OCED, 2005a: 10). Leigh's (2010: 487) empirical study to measure teacher effectiveness concluded that teacher qualification, considering alternative salary structures and reducing class sizes would lead to attracting and retaining the best teachers and increasing teacher effectiveness.

### 1.4.4 Modern Foreign Language Pedagogy

In line with a global paradigm shift (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001; 2003; Robinson, 2001) foreign language teaching in Ireland has undergone significant changes in the last 100 years, moving from a teacher-centered structural approach relying mainly on the grammar-translation method and audiolingual methods which stressed the importance of accuracy and memorization (Kissau, 2013: 580) to a communicative approach which emphasizes communicative competence and student interaction in the L2 via participation in relevant and cooperative tasks (Lee & VanPatten, 1996). Teachers play a crucial role in the change process as implementers of reformed curricula in the language classroom with assessment practices which fail to match the new approach (Brown, 2007), uncertainty seen as a problem to be rectified (Barradell and Kennedy-Jones, 2015), and specific content or action points in a learning discipline that is highly troublesome or difficult to understand, but without which the learner – or teacher – cannot progress (Carson, 2017). Additionally, paradigm shifts delivered in piecemeal fashion without being linked to the bigger picture of educational theory (Jacobs and Farrell (2001: 13) also compound this. Kennedy et al. (1999) suggest that successful implementation of change involves changing attitudes and beliefs as well as creating favorable working conditions for change as well as considering national and organizational cultures and potential cross-cultural conflict.

This global shift was echoed in Irish secondary schools by a shift towards communicative principles in new syllabuses for modern foreign languages (MFL) in the early 1990s, no significant changes took place to alter the rigid external assessment system in Ireland, resulting in minimal changes in the way languages were taught and assessed (Murchan, 2018).

## 1.5   Thesis Overview

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. This chapter provides the purpose and primary motivation for conducting this study, as well as the main research questions. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 furnishes an in-depth review of the literature relating to the field

of teacher cognition, teacher development and teacher identity, and the Threshold Concepts Framework as the methodological component for this study.

In considering the research questions, Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study as a multiple case study. The chapter also examines the instruments utilized in the data collection process, specifically semi-structured email interviews and face-to-face interviews. Data analysis, in the form of thematic analysis and I-poems are utilized, and ethical considerations pertaining to conducting this study are also of fundamental importance in this chapter. Finally, the procedure for the data collection process is presented. In addition to that, Chapter 3 also reveals the procedure and timeframe that this study, detailing the procedure adopted to identify the Threshold Concept from the data collected.

Chapter 4 presents the findings, in particular the challenges encountered by the student teachers (STs) in relation to their teacher belief, teacher identity, self as learner, self as teacher, Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), impostership and adaptivity, primarily using the lens of Threshold Concepts Framework (TCs) to identify the troublesome, transformative, and integrative aspect for each respondent throughout their year of learning (Professional Coursework) and Classroom Practice. This chapter also presents the Threshold Concept of Teaching as Relational that were uncovered in this thesis, as well as tracking the identity of the participants via I-poems.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings which examines the consequences of learning that the participants underwent in this study when they encountered the Threshold Concept. This chapter also investigates the catalysts and barrier to change that supported or inhibited the student teachers in their learning and classroom practice and examines the importance of being in the liminal space.

Finally, the conclusion is presented in Chapter 6 providing thesis contributions and direction for

future research.

# 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the literature review for this study, specifically teacher development within ITE and global research on this, the construction of teacher identity, Transformative Learning and how adults make meaning of their experience, and the Threshold Concepts Framework with its characteristics.

### 2.1.1 Overview of chapter

Section 2.2 examines the literature on *teacher knowledge* and with a specific focus on professional development, PCK, and important aspects of ITE programs. Mezirow's *Transformative Learning* is also presented in this section. Following from that, Section 2.3 presents the literature on *teacher identity* focusing on the construction of teacher identity and linking professional development to identity. This precedes discussion on *Threshold Concepts* in section 2.4 including the TCF which is the methodological framework this study adopts as it allows for the identification of challenges that teachers experience in their classroom teaching. This will provide a basis for the presentation of the methodological framework and data collection in Chapter 3.

The next section will present the recent developments in teaching which examines some of the key terms and related studies in the teacher education literature.

## 2.2 Teacher Development

In teacher education, continuous learning and development is an important aspect to one's development. Kagan refers to this as professional growth which she characteristics as 'changes over time in the behaviour, knowledge, images, beliefs, or perceptions of novice teachers' (1992: 131). This highlights the interconnectedness of beliefs and knowledge for all teachers, including STs. Ongoing learning or 'lifelong learning' is often classified as an objective in teacher education manuals which is also reiterated by The Teaching Council of Ireland (2011a), often to develop adaptive teachers who can deal with ongoing policy changes. Annual workshops, often mandatory for public teachers, do not always connect effectively with the needs of the participants and fall to connect with significant issues of student learning and curriculum while mostly often quick and fast solutions (Ball and Cohen, 1999: 4).

Phillips (1993: 59) notes that it is 'now recognized that there is no absolutely secure starting point for knowledge; nothing is known with such certainty that all possibility of future revision is. All knowledge is tentative.' Providing an introduction of these key concepts for this thesis, Schraw & Olafson state that: 'Epistemology is the study of beliefs about the origin and acquisition of knowledge. Ontology is the study of beliefs about the nature of reality' (2008: 25). This is also supported by Allison (2000), Hofer (2004), Lincoln and Guba (2000), and Shadish et al. (2002), while Samarji and Hooley (2015: 3), focusing from a teacher education perspective, provide a more 'working definition' of *epistemology* as being 'the inquiry about the concept of knowledge which constitutes best practice for a practitioner (e.g. teacher, educator and lecturer),' and *ontology* being 'the inquiry about the being and identity of a practitioner (e.g. teacher, educator and lecturer) and all the perceptions formed around such being and identity'. Other researchers call for a more holistic approach which includes a sociocultural element (Beijaard et al., 2004; Fairbanks et al., 2010; Huang, 2016).

This section presents the literature related to teacher development focusing specifically on the research related to ITE and its impact on development. As Professional Development (PD) is a cornerstone of being a teacher, that is presented first, before moving on to teacher education

programs in general, and then more specifically, ITE. Additionally, other key areas such as Transformative Learning, Lifelong Learning, Placement Tutors, and School Placement will be presented in this section.

First, Professional Development (PD) will be presented before moving on to Teacher Education.

## 2.2.1  Professional Development (PD)

**Professional development** (PD) is defined as, 'activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher' (OCED, 2009: 49). 'The standard model of teacher professional development is based on the idea that teachers lack important knowledge, particularly subject knowledge' (Wiliam, 2011). While focusing predominately on 'documenting teacher satisfaction, attitude change, or commitment to innovation', the concept of PD has received more attention in recent years with a focus on defining the paraments of this construct, as well as, advocating for a 'common conceptual framework' which would assist the general understanding of 'how best to shape and implement teacher learning opportunities for the maximum benefit of both teachers and students' (Desimone, 2009: 181). Consequently, PD is viewed as a dynamic process (Day et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, Sztajn et al. (2009), Hill et al. (2013), and others note that the substance of PD programs is 'tremendously various, raising questions about why something so various is uniformly assumed to be a good thing' Kennedy (2016: 945). There is also some more criticism of research on PD which generally tend to be on small-scale studies and, thus, questionable in terms of sustainability (Hill et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2016) with an increasing call for programs to be more coherent and specific in terms of their structure, reforms, and common curriculum (Garet et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 2001; Garet et al., 2016; Soine & Lumpe, 2014).

On examining the literature, the following five aspects of PD feature:

> 'The five features emphasize the importance that teachers work together with colleagues (*collective participation*), that the PD include multiple sessions spread over a longer period of time (*duration*), that it give teachers opportunities to actively engage in tasks connected to their classroom work (*active learning*), and that the PD content focus on a combination of subject-specific matters and pedagogy (*content focus*), as well as be aligned with policy standards and teachers' knowledge and beliefs (*coherence*)' (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019: 140).

Fishman and Krajcik (2003: 572) call on teacher learning research to support adaptation and customization to 'fit the demands they make upon their users and the capacity of the teachers and schools who hope to use them.' To highlight the importance of PD, there are also connections to be made with the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), reflecting on teacher change in belief (Guskey, 2002) and learning as being interactive and social (Greeno, 1997).

## 2.2.2 Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and Teacher Knowledge

Dewey (1916) refers to the role of subject-matter knowledge in teaching and suggests that scholarly knowledge of a discipline is not the same as the knowledge needed for teaching, while general pedagogical knowledge entails skills and strategies that are not necessarily subject-related.

Huang notes that knowledge 'has long been valued in teacher education' (2016: 947) while Fairbanks et al., (2010) refer to the general assumption that good teaching is based on the application of knowledge. Shulman (1987) argues that teachers must understand different categories of knowledge in order to be effective. With this in mind, a definition of teacher knowledge must be presented. Connelly and Clandinin define **teacher knowledge** as:

> 'a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons…Personal practical knowledge…is in the persona's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions…. It is seen and found in our practices'                                                  (1988: 25).

This includes 'a body of professional knowledge that encompasses both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught" (1988: 54).

Therefore, processing the core skills and experience indicates that teachers need to process teacher knowledge. Processing teacher knowledge makes a significant contribution to effective teaching and students learning (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2007; Grossman and McDonald, 2008; Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, and Pape, 2006). Research on teacher expertise highlights the importance of teachers' professional knowledge for the successful mastering of tasks that are typical of their profession (Berliner, 2001; 2004).

The literature notes that teachers are acting in a similar vein to other professionals such as doctors, lawyers, etc. who 'draw on a shared fund of professional knowledge and accumulated experience to take them as far as possible in specific situations' instead of drawing on 'prescriptions and formulae laid down for them from on high' (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004: 4). Freeman, (2002: 1) supports this claiming that the knowledge-base for teaching is drawn from other disciplines while Milner (2001) explains that this knowledge base is subject to some tensions, such as the epistemological position of teachers as they construct knowledge. Kincheloe views teacher research as a means to resist the domination by which the curriculum has and continues to control the class in recent years (2005).

Shulman's **Pedagogical Content Knowledge** (PCK) refers to the influence that the subject matter has on a teacher's decision or planning in class and refers to the tacit and unique knowledge gained from classroom experience in facilitating student learning or interpreting certain activities that can engage in this learning (Shulman, 1987; Bauchmann, 1984; Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Fernandez, 2014). Bauchmann (1984: 32) points out the importance of subject-matter knowledge for teachers:

'It would be odd to expect a teacher to plan a lesson on, for instance, writing reports in science and to evaluate related student assignment, if that teacher is ignorant about writing and about science, and does not understand what student progress in writing science report might mean.'

For Howard and Aleman (2008: 158) understanding what is to be taught i.e., the subject matter is an essential component of teacher knowledge and is a central requirement which teachers should have (Shulman, 1987; Wilson et al., 1987; Ball & McDiarmid, 1990). While teachers who have majored in the area they are teaching do assist in student achievement (Monk, 1994; Monk & King, 1994), teachers who have a deep understanding of the subject-matter in a manner suitable for teaching may be more effective in teaching that material to students (Ball and Bass, 2000; Ma, 1999). Tarone & Allwright (2005: 18) emphasize the importance for teachers to understand their learners in the framework for teacher knowledge. This is viewed in terms of how students learn and what motivates them, leading to a 'management of learning' where learners and the teacher negotiate the learning activities together (ibid). Shulman notes the intersection of content and pedagogy as 'that special amalgam' that 'belongs only to the universe of teachers, their special form of professional understanding' (1986: 9). This highlights the importance of pedagogical content knowledge as a core skill, along with knowledge and dispositions that teachers possess in today's classroom (Howard & Aleman, 2008: 157) although this view is not widespread.

### 2.2.3 Transformative Learning (TL)

Transformative learning (TL) was developed by Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1991, 1997, 2000) and Nohl (2015) and Cranton (2016) and focuses on how adults learn when faced with a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1981).

Mezirow founded TL on extensive grounded research in the 1970s on women's re-entry programs into university after they had a lengthy period at home raising their children (stemming from his wife, Edee's return to college), and refers to it as a particular type of adult learning – a learning

where one becomes caught in their own history and reliving it (1978a: 100; 1978b: 1-2; 1981: 6). Mezirow notes that 'women's re-entry programs are a new phenomenon in community colleges' in 1978 with the number of women aged between 25-34 enrolling in college rising more than 100 percent from 1970 to 1975 (1987b: 2). Cranton states that Edee was a part of the 'women's liberation movement' in the 1970s and was intrigued by the 'events her classmates discussed in relation to their roles as wives and mothers' (2016: 1). Mezirow major theoretical finding of that 1978 study was the 'identification of perspective transformation as the central process occurring in the personal development of women participating in college re-entry programs' (1978b: 7). He defined perspective transformation as 'the process by which adults come to recognize culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and take action to overcome them' (1978b: 17) and aligned this with Habermas' (1971) emancipatiory learning which Cranton notes is 'related to how we work to become free from constraints' (2016: 4) while Dirkx added that there is a 'dramatic shift in how we come to know and how we understand ourselves in relation to the broader world' (2012: 116).

The motivation for including TL into one's teaching sphere was encapsulated by Mezirow in the learning that adults undertake when reflecting and reliving their experiences and attempt to use it as a fulcrum for future learning and development. Brookfield noted that these meaning schemes and perspectives could also be applied to college teachers for the sake of their survival (2006: xv). Critical reflection is also a critical aspect where the adults will take some time to reflect and consider the assumptions (Mezirow, 1981; Cranton, 2002: 65). In time a different vantage point can be gained and, therefore, move towards a fuller maturity (Mezirow, 1978a: 106). As a result of this, and in the spectrum of the ST, TL is seen as a beneficial instrument which can be utilized by this thesis to investigate if the participants have transformed after being confronted with a 'distorting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1981: 7).

## 2.2.4   Teacher Education Programs

'Never before in the history of education has greater importance been attached to the professional development of educators' (Guskey, 2000: 3). Lindvall and Ryve note that the 'days of a single degree lasting a full career are long gone' which also applies to teacher education programs (2019: 140). In former times, teachers were expected to prepare 'only a small minority [of their class] for ambitious intellectual work,' whereas in contrast to the present day paradigm, they are expected to prepare all students regardless of their academic ability or performance (Darling-Hammond, 2006b: 300). This diversity and inclusion aspect of teaching proves challenging for teachers but represents the ever-changing nature of the classroom.

Previously, teacher training programs could be seen as teaching the 'tricks of the trade' such as introducing a lesson, classroom management, and aspects of how to teach a certain topic or point to an atypical class of students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008: 396). This seems to 'lie in the traditional approach to teacher education, which was based on the assumption that theory can be taught to (student) teachers with the effect that they apply this theory within the school context' (Korthagen, 2017: 529). However, this resulted in limited emphasis being placed on understanding how students learned or developed; nevertheless, over time this transformed into theories and classroom practices that are known today, such as, child development, language acquisition, curriculum design, social contexts of education, and assessment. Consequently, this resulted in a stronger focus on development teachers which led to PD programs. The OCED notes that most teachers participate in PD with governments placing an emphasis on their ITE programs (2016) resulting in PD creating increasing opportunities in line with connections to 'many school-improvement efforts around the world' (Borko et al., 2010: 548).

In line with a focus on PD for the STs, Huling-Austin (1990) set out five fundamental goals for teacher education programs: (1) to improve teaching performance; (2) to increase the retention of

promising beginning teachers; (3) to promote the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers; (4) to satisfy mandated state or district requirements; and (5) to transmit the culture of the educational system to beginning teachers (1990). Fives and Buehl (2016: 119) note that PD 'to support new standards needs to explicitly help teachers to develop beliefs aligned with the intended practices. Given the nature of beliefs (i.e., often implicit, deeply held, resistant to change), teachers need to engage explicit reflection on their beliefs and need time to develop beliefs that support the intended practices. Thus, to assess effectiveness of new practices, teachers need time to align beliefs and practices to be optimally effective for student learning.'

The literature has found that teachers who participate in traditionally inclined programs were more likely to adopt the practices of their former teachers (Goodlad, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Kennedy, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001) with powerful learning experiences occurring from observing others and through self-reflection (Putman & Borko, 2000). An increased focus on teacher learning came about when teacher education became more school-based and researchers conducted workplace studies (Fuller & Unwin, 2004), and the relational aspect that STs had with their peers and PT was emphasized (Leeferink et al., 2015). This is also prevalent in Second Language Teaching where country-wide imposed reforms are detected with distrust, often demonstrated for the inspector and officials in evaluations and 'open classes' before reverting to more traditional and comfortable practices (Shim & Baik, 2004: 246; Carless, 2004: 658). Some studies note the conceptual and structural fragmentation in teacher education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008: 391; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008; Goodlad, 1990) with little connection to practice (Barone et al., 1996; Ingersoll, 2016) while Freeman et al. stress, 'An abundance of research confirms that preservice teachers are unprepared to work with diverse populations,' (2012, p.1) drawing attention to the issue of diversity for teachers as increased mobility take places in society.

The European Commission has been straightforward in rebuking a lack of focus on ITE stating that 'the quality of teacher education requires more attention' (2007: 7) and that teacher attrition is a driving factor in the shortage of skilled teachers world-wide (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018;

Fern, 2017). This along with a focus on understanding teacher attrition rates and shortages has led to uncovering factors such as low salaries (Carlo et al., 2013; Mertler, 2016), poor working conditions (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Dias, 1989; Carlo et al., 2013), quality of the teacher education programs themselves (Goldhaber & Cowen, 2014; Goldhaber et al., 2016), and the teaching workload (Carlo et al., 2013; Hakanen et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2012).

### 2.2.5   Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

'School placement is a central feature of initial teacher education, where student teachers are welcomed and supported by HEI tutors, school principals, class teachers and the school community. Student teachers' rich contribution to pupil learning and school life is recognised and celebrated.'

− Tomás Ó Ruairc, 2019 (The Teaching Council, 2020: 4).

Although there was a brief introduction to ITE in Chapter 1 ('Reconceptualizing of ITE in Ireland: at a moment of transition'), the explicit purpose of this section is to present the literature on ITE so that interconnecting aspects of PD programs can be set out for the remainder of this chapter.

The Teaching Council states that ITE refers 'to the foundation stage of learning to be a teacher when student teachers are engaged in a recognized teacher education programme provided by a Higher Education Institution' (2011b: 11). They also note the importance of ITE in regard to the development of 'knowledge-of practice, knowledge-for practice and also student teachers' capacity and skill for reflecting critically on their own practice and that of others' and that it should be aware and mindful of 'the attitudes and beliefs of about teaching and learning which student teachers carry with them and which inform and guide their professional practice' (ibid: 11). This is also an ongoing process with reports and action plans, focusing on a shared vision for SPs which allows collaboration and support engagement (The Teaching Council, 2019) and placing 'school placement as the fulcrum of teacher education' (The Teaching Council, 2020: 10).

Consequently, ITE is viewed as a complex and difficult process, but an equally significant phase of a ST's development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; 2008; 2010; 2012; Conway et al., 2009; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; 2010). To avoid confusion and to provide a contrast, Hall (1982) noted that the term 'the induction years' was not referred to until about 1982 and this term now refers solely to education or training after the preliminary ITE phrase. Previously, the teacher education process consisted of being trained to teach at a university and then assuming the roles of teaching in schools after their training was completed (Odell et al., 2000: 3) and, as a result of its low demands on teaching capacities and university resources, this concept of teacher education remained steadfast over time. This reality resulted in some novice teachers experiencing significant struggles as they attempted to learn on the job (i.e. induction after their ITE) in practically every aspect of teaching, although they had been officially 'trained' and 'qualified' as a teacher (Kennedy, 1998).

However, this concept of teacher education was redesigned and developed over the years to incorporate a more sequential, natural progression with initial lower-level concerns of self and classroom management introduced before student well-being and achievement were acquired (Odell et al., 2000: 5). In an Irish ITE context, Sahlberg at al. (2012), set out the provisions and clarify that teaching is increasingly viewed as 'a high status profession,' and that 'research-based teacher education' should be employed to assist teacher in diagnosing their own teaching and learning with a view to understanding their students and 'to find the best methods of work' (ibid: 15). This high caliber of entrants into ITE in Ireland is prevalent in the literature (Harford, 2010; O'Doherty & Harford, 2018) indicating the influence that the high status can have on recruitment and the decision for becoming a teacher.

Kennedy (1998) argues that STs need to be allowed to experience the learning of teaching practices firsthand, specifically as learners themselves while Darling-Hammond (2007: 397-8) emphasizes the need for novice teachers to make sense of the 'big picture,' and to allow them to gain 'clinical experience early, and throughout a teacher education program.' Goodlad (1990)

believes that good teacher education programs should provide opportunities for their STs to become more 'other-oriented' and to increase their identification of the culture of teaching, raising the importance of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998) within PD and the STs identity. This is also echoed in Feiman-Nemser who argues that STs bring their own past experiences, images and beliefs that teacher educators need to recognize so that they can be extended or transformed to increase professional development (2001b: 1025). This is also in line with the objectives of The Teaching Council in terms of 'lifelong learning' as a key component of its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (2011b; 2016).

The next sub-section will examine the literature concerning disciplinary experts in ITE and the role they place in the ST's teacher development.

### 2.2.6   Placement Tutors / Co-operating Teachers in ITE

Firstly, while the term 'mentor' or 'supervisor' is used throughout the literature, The Teaching Council refers to the supervisor as a **Placement Tutor** (PT) who is registered by the Higher Educational Institute (HEI) providing the ITE program. A PT is defined as 'a person engaged by a programme provider to support and mentor student teachers and evaluate their practice, while they are engaged in the placement element of the programme' (2011a: 5) and under the recent Céim report, places the 'school placement as the fulcrum of teacher education' (The Teaching Council, 2020: 10) calling for a diversity of placement settings with a minimum of two (ibid.: 18) and that at least 50% of PTs be registered with the Teaching Council itself. However, regarding the TP and this section, the most important aspect is:

> Due to its critical importance and relevance to entering the teaching profession, a student teacher is required to pass the school placement element of his/her teacher education programme independently of any other element of the programme, to achieve the qualification being awarded. Students who fail a module of school placement shall be offered teaching enrichment and mentoring support before being afforded not more than one opportunity to repeat that placement, with due regard to the institution's fitness to practice code. (ibid.: 19).

With these significant recent developments, it is worthwhile to examine where they stem from. Feiman-Nemser and Parker note that the work of mentoring differs from the work of classroom teaching and requires a different skillset, but it can sometimes reinforce 'traditional norms and practices rather than promoting more powerful teaching' (1993). Mentors may be viewed as 'gatekeepers as well as guides. They stand at the boundary of the old and new worlds, and as such they hold the keys for successful passage' (Daloz, 2012: 96). As the role of the 'mentor teacher' is not 'well understood' (Graham, 2006: 1119), mentors require preparation in methods to assist how novices handle their typical classroom and teaching issues: 'classroom management, basic lesson design and delivery, evaluating student progress' (Little & Nelson, 1990: 2). Since mentoring is viewed as more than passing on a 'bag of tricks,' mentors must be able to 'describe and demonstrate underlying principles of teaching and learning.' They also need to learn how to 'talk clearly and straightforwardly about teaching without offending the teacher' (ibid: 4).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007: 412) state that university supervisors play an important role in the training of ST but that what exactly is classified as important or effective needs further clarification. They draw on Feiman-Nemser's (2001a) strategies, obtained from a 30-year veteran support teacher or mentor, and concluded with results such as 'finding openings,' 'pinpointing problems,' 'probing novice's thinking' and recognizing 'signs of growth on the part of the student teachers' as balancing personal experiences that the teachers have and 'maintaining a sense of professional accountability that comes from understanding good practice.'

Other researchers note the importance of STs observing other teachers, in their teacher education, (Putman and Borko, 2000; Johnson & Birkenland, 2003), while Guskey (2000) notes the effectiveness of being involved in school administration tasks for the ST's learning opportunities as they grapple with the daily routine required of them after there are qualified. There are some caveats from the literature before proceeding here. An experienced teacher does not automatically lead to a good mentor (Feiman-Nemser, 1998), and is a highly individualist process (Feiman-

Nemser, 2001b) although there are documented cases of this working well in the literature (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a).

Access to these experienced and accomplished teachers is a key feature of ITE programs in recent times (Conway et al., 2012) especially in the School Placement (SP) phase which can forge a strong relationship between student and PT. In order to gain entry to that community, the STs must be given access, and this can be facilitated by the members of staff within the SP. This demonstrates the influence they have over the STs in classroom teaching and can operate as 'co-learners' developing resilience that allows for positive adaptation regardless of the scenario (Le Cornu, 2009; Ulvik & Langørgen, 2012; Young & MacPhail, 2015) and reducing the attrition rate and burnout in teaching (Achinstein, 2006; Ulvik & Langørgen, 2012: 43). Young and MacPhail note that collaborative relationships provide STs with a 'scaffolded entry into the teaching profession' (2016: 298). Therefore, there is a growing trend in teacher education to make the role of the Co-operating Teacher more prominent (Koster et al., 1998; Graves, 2010: 15; Young & MacPhail, 2016: 287).

However, there has been some criticism stemming from the literature, with CTs seen as untrained in mentoring skills, unpaid, and, as a result, the quality of training can be inconsistent as there are 'no formal partnerships between teacher education institutions and CTs in schools as well as ambiguity partnerships in the school placement process' (Young & MacPhail, 2015: 223; Young & MacPhail, 2016: 222; Conway et al., 2012; Dunning et al., 2011). Conway et al. (2012) noted in their study that support from mentors did not often come in the form of classroom observation of the CT's class or discussion on pedagogical practices, although Graves (2010: 10) states that the heart of the teaching practicum is the relationship between the ST and the CT. This was termed as the 'invisible learner phenomenon' where, if given the choice, STs prefer to remain hidden and 'glide past without anyone noticing' (Long et al., 2012: 621). The prevailing concept of 'sink or swim' which is seen as the predominate model of teacher learning, provides too few opportunities for teacher discussion and experimentation, forces unnecessary pressure onto the STs and thus,

consigns them to the 'over-reliance' on their 'apprenticeship of observation' or 'frames of reference' (Conway et al., 2012). Having said that, many CTs are uncomfortable in giving constructive feedback 'as they believe it may damage the positive relationship which they had established' with their co-learners (Young & MacPhail, 2015: 224) which impacts on their co-teaching and, thus further impedes the development on the ST.

### 2.2.7 School Placement (SP)

SPs are the most 'pervasive pedagogy in teacher education' which has a 'profound impact on student teachers' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007: 409). The Teaching Council defines the **School Placement** as:

> 'that part of the programme which takes place in school settings and which is designed to give the student teacher an opportunity to apply educational theory in a variety of teaching situations and school contexts. It affords the student teacher opportunities to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported. The Council is aware that the term "teaching practice" is the more widely used term in the Irish teacher education context. However, it considers the term "school placement" more accurately reflects the nature of the experience as one encompassing a range of teaching and non-teaching activities.' (2011b: 5).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007: 401) note that, whereas, traditionally, teacher preparation programs would deliberately place clinical practice towards the end of their programs, after the acquisition of theory, for instance, this is in stark contrast to recent times where an increased focus on placing theory and practice side-by-side to allow the STs to implement, apply and reinforce what was learned in their classroom to their teaching practice: 'It appears that when teachers have multiple opportunities to experience and study the relationship of theory with practice, their learning is enhanced.' To further support the importance of this, an OCED report noted that: 'A significant practice component is now seen as an essential element to teacher preparation in order to help future teachers understand the dynamics of classroom teaching and the principles underlying it, helping to spare beginning teachers a "reality shock"' (2005b: 108) and also calls for the CT component to be introduced early in the ITE program (2005b: 108). This

is echoed by Feiman-Nemser who states that 'we have to offer more powerful learning opportunities to teachers' (2001b: 1014) while Hall et al. note that having experience 'in more than one school is also necessary and STs are expected to get experience of teaching across all the levels of schools e.g., junior and senior cycle classes' (2018: 10). This is also supported in a call for diverse teaching practices which would enable 'broaden and diversity teachers' knowledge and create opportunities to see new versions of teaching and learning, and to understand things differently' (Ball and Cohen, 1999: 15), along with guidance offered from their co-operating teachers in their SP (Conway, 2012; Meegan et al., 2013; Young & MacPhail, 2015; Hall et al., 2018; The Teaching Council, 2020: 19).

Tannehill notes that the purpose of a SP is viewed as an internship so that STs can gain 'experience to build upon, practicing while still learning, and discovering what it is really like to be a teacher' (1989: 245). It is the place where in-class college theories and teacher methodologies are put into practice; where the STs can really 'cut their teeth' and experience the real classroom and gain knowledge from these experiences (Hardy, 1999; Behets & Vergauwen, 2006; Anderson, 2007; The Teaching Council, 2011b; Hall et al., 2018). In addition to that, the process of observing other teachers teach on its own is inadequate and that strong links between the integration of theory and practice need to be forged (Hall et al., 2018: 11). Darling-Hammond et al. (2007: 409) refers to it as a kind of 'trial by fire' where the ST is essentially dropped in the deep end to deal with the day-to-day running of the classroom. At this early stage of their development, as noted from the previous section, the influence of the experienced members of staff that can be exerted over the ST can change their teaching methodology and behavior extensively (Keay, 2009).

In the following sub-section, the disharmony between theory and practice in teacher development will be presented from the literature.

### 2.2.8 Disharmony between theory and practice

Despite recent changes and improvements in teacher education programs, there has been disharmony between theory and practice which can lead to ill-equipped NQTs. This is due to STs being unable to teach everything in such a short timeframe and attempting to enable them with strategies for lifelong learning (Hammerness et al., 2007: 358-359). This leads to the thesis that teacher education does have a dramatic and sometimes negative impact on induction level teachers which can leave a detrimental long-lasting impression on both them and their learning (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Kelchtermans, 2002; Van den Brandon, 2006). Van den Brandon terms this 'post-coursal depression' (2006) which aptly presents the situation where teachers entrance into the classroom is one of pressure and sometimes, depression as they try to bridge the gap between what they have learned in their program of study with the reality of their classrooms. They often experience heavy workloads with little or no institutional support (Nias, 1989; Huberman, 1993; Achinstein, 2006; Ingersoll, 2012; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). The emphasis in work that conceptualizes learning to teach as the development of a teacher identity, rather than on the acquisition of a set of skills and techniques, is an ongoing process of 'becoming a teacher' as 'survival becomes a goal in its own right' (Mayer, 1999).

This 'survival' mode become acutely important for STs as they view teaching as 'more than a job' with 'no expectation of extra reward' (Alsup, 2008 :20). Mitter (1985) pointed out the challenges faced between what teachers learned in teachers' college and what confronted them in the real classrooms 'phase of disenchantment'. Teachers must deal with various aspects and take on increased responsibilities. To combat this, the overloaded teacher will fragment and divide their work under their already constrictive working time limitations. Over a period, this will reduce the amount of attention that they can give to each task and thus decrease their overall productivity (Woods et al., 1997). This fragmentation of the teachers' work leads some teachers to think that they are teaching badly and doubting themselves (Esteve, 2000). Behavioral problems with

students and classroom management also compound these issues especially when there was a lack of support (Nias, 1989; Johnson & Birkenland, 2003).

Nemser (1983) characterized the initial period of teaching as a time of survival, discovery, adaptation and learning, focusing on strategies to aid 'survival' and often continuing to rely on these strategies whether or not they are considered best practice (Lortie, 1975). Many assume that classroom management is such an area that demands attention (Grossman, 1990) while others argue that STs face challenges to be accepted and gain control which must be dealt with first before they can focus on teaching and student learning (Fuller, 1969). Sockett strongly criticizes teacher education as by definition 'parasitic on the practices of teaching' where there is 'little shared professional identity or equivalence of status between the practitioner and the academic (2008: 45).

However, Bartell states that 'no matter what initial preparation they receive, teachers are never fully prepared for classroom realities and for responsibilities associated with meeting the needs of a rapidly growing, increasingly diverse student population' (1995: 28-29). If second language (L2) teaching is examined, Golombek states that 'L2 teachers' knowledge is, in part, experiential and constructed by teachers themselves as they respond to the contexts of their classrooms' (1998: 447). This relates back to teachers being 'adaptive experts' (section 2.4.2), responding to what happens in real-time in their classrooms and constructing their own professional practice which allows them to identify themselves as a teacher with. This 'adaptiveness' can only be developed in the context of classroom teaching and the experience gained from that challenges new teachers to be responsive and being flexible to suit the needs of their students. This leads to what is referred to as 'inherently paradoxical' in that they must demonstrate skills and knowledge that they might not have yet at that stage of their development but can understand these skills more by beginning to do what they do not know (Schon, 1987). This vulnerability due to their unfamiliarity of the teaching environment is heightened by 'reminding teachers at every turn of what they cannot do yet' (Fieman-Nemser, 2001: 1028). Therefore, there is a call for creating a classroom culture that

offers appropriate support where teachers are not judged on just maintaining quiet and well-managed classrooms. Prendergast (2017: 158) also links practice education itself as a professional block which can be classified as a 'threshold to a particular professional.'

Not only is there disharmony between the theory and practice that STs must invariably struggle against but there is also the contradictory knowledge that they may have acquired in classrooms throughout their childhood schooling and the sociocultural aspects entailing with this. Initial teacher preparation can go a long way towards counteracting this 'apprenticeship of observation' simply by acknowledging it; but because the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for optimal teaching cannot be fully developed in ST education program, student-teachers need to be "equipped for lifelong learning" (Hammerness et al., 2007: 358).

The following section will focus on presenting the literature on *teacher identity*.

## 2.3    Teacher Identity

This section will present the Construction of Teacher Identity (section 2.3.2) which will utilize Rodgers and Scott's (2008) four contemporary basic assumptions about identity as a basis for discussing the literature and its interrelated facets (2.3.3). After that the Identity of STs will be presented (section 2.3.4) before a summary of the sub-section (section 2.3.5).

### 2.3.1    Introduction

A part of teacher identity is being able to converse with students, parents and colleagues (*social relations* and *interactions*) and present concepts to students confidently (*articulation*). However, this process for STs is a complex one as they attempt to forge their professional teacher identity using a mixture of clinical field placements (or School Placements as they are termed in this

thesis), previous experiences, learning, and societal expectations (Beltman et al., 2015: 225). Luehmann (2007: 827) defines **teacher identity** as 'being recognized by self or others as a certain kind of teacher.'

The next section will explore the identity of the teacher before focusing specifically on STs from the literature. Firstly, a definition of identity is required before presenting Rodgers and Scott's (2008) contemporary assumptions when discussing identity.

## 2.3.2    Construction of Teacher Identity

In examining that is meant by 'identity,' Beijaard et al. note that it 'is not something one has, but something that develops during one's whole life' (2004: 107). Nias states that the 'self is a crucial element in the way teachers themselves construe the nature of their job' (1989: 13). In Nias' study, teachers expressed a passion for teaching and invested their 'whole selves' to it marking it as an 'affective rather than a cognitive one' (1989: 184) while the emotional reactions to their work also a factor in how they view themselves (Nias, 1999). It is also important to note that unlike other areas, teaching is predominating done in isolation from colleagues (Shah, 2012; Heider, 2005) which can be particularly 'difficult for newcomers' (Ingersoll, 2016: 47), thus impacting further on the development of their identity.

Mead (1934; Mead et al., 1967) elaborates on the distinction between the '*I*' and '*me*' which the latter can be shaped with interaction and experience with others as 'I' represents the individual's response to 'the attitude of the community' (Mead et al., 1967: 196). As Mead states, within the social fields, 'the individual mind can exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings' (Mead and Miller, 1982: 5), thereby displaying the need for 'the social act.' This compared to Dewey's 'the act' that associates the extent to which the environment has over an individual and 'being connected with other being cannot perform his own activities with taking the activities of

others into account' (Dewey, 1916: 7). Mead states that the formation of self does constitute a social process which gives us a deep sense of the 'ideal self' and the 'real self' which can give rise to 'multiple selves.' Giddens (1991: 68) notes that the 'ideal self' is a key part of self-identity because 'it forms a channel of positive aspirations in terms of which the narrative of self-identity if worked out.' Foulkes argues that support for different fields and disciplines comes from the 'situational self' as attempts to sustain and perpetuate the values that one thinks derives from others (1975: 60). This concept of wanting to belong to a like-minded community is also prevalent in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Rodgers and Scott state that teachers 'should work towards an *awareness* of their identity,' 'make a psychological shift in how they think about themselves as teachers' and '(re)claim the authority of their own *voice'* (italics in original, 2008: 773) and must adopt a critical perspective on practice which can also benefit them later in their teaching responsibilities (Grossman et al., 1999). This sense of agency is as important facet which allows for the active construction of forging one's identity (Arata, 2001; Zembylas, 2003: 224). Influenced by Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1995) and Mead (1934), much of the recent research takes places within a social constructionist perspective focusing on the 'role of interpersonal relations of teachers' with special interest paid to 'the emotions of teaching, the emotional politics of teacher development and educational reform and their implications for teacher education' (Zemblyas, 2002: 187). As Hall et al. (2012: 104) note the difference between reification (procedures, policies, textbooks, timetables, and lesson plans for example) and participation as a 'dualistic relation' where participation is 'the space for the emergence of identity and the authoring of a self.'

### 2.3.3   Rodgers and Scott's contemporary assumptions in discussing identity

In teacher education, Day at al. note that the 'concepts of self and identity are 'often used interchangeably' (2006: 602) and this can lead to considerable confusion while Jeffrey & Woods

(1996: 326) state that teaching 'is a strongly emotional business.' Due to this and to provide a consistent anchor for this section, this chapter will focus on Rodgers and Scott's four contemporary basic assumptions that are shared when discussing identity as a means of determining what it is and how does it evolve in relation to teachers and what is specific about STs' teacher identity in their PD. The four assumptions are:

(1) that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation;

(2) that identity is formed in *relationship* with others and involves *emotions*;

(3) that identity is *shifting*, *unstable*, and *multiple*, and,

(4) that that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over time                                                       (2008: 733).

This section will look at each assumption in turn as a guiding compass for greater understanding into the complexity of this area and for directing this section.

**1. that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation;**

The formation of identity is dependent upon the school or classroom contexts and does come across robustly in the literature with Kegan (1982, 1994), Gee (2001), Hargreaves (2001), Britzman (2003) and Beijaard et al. (2004) being prominent. Gee provides four interrelated perspectives on identity: the nature perspective (*N-identity*), the institutional perspective (*I-identity*), the discourse perspective (*D-identity*) and the affinity perspective (*A-identity*). Each of these provide an 'interpretive system' which:

'may be people's historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions and rules of institutions; it may be the discourse and dialogue of others; or it may be the working of affinity groups. What is important about identity is that almost any identity trait can be understood in terms of any of these different interpretive systems. People can actively construe the same identity trait in different ways, and they can negotiate and contest how their traits are to

be seen (by themselves and others) in terms of the different perspectives on identity' (2001: 107-8).

Day et al. (2006) and Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) note that the influence of the school context has a strong effect on the identity of the ST as they question and reframe their developing identity. This is also supported in Nias (1989) and this influence or impact is also examined in section 2.4.4 in relation to the ST's development.

**2. that identity is formed in *relationships* and involves *emotions*;**

Identity is also concerned with emotion which is involved in its formation (Nias, 1989: 187; Britzman, 1993: 252; Hargreaves, 2001: 1057, Zembylas, 2003: 213; Sleegers and Kelchtermans, 1999: 579) while it also involves issues of teacher identity and emotion as they 'inform each other and construct interpretations of each other both on a conceptual and on a personal level' (Zembylas, 2003: 214). Emotion is seen as 'a process in which the personal identity undergoes transformation' (Woods & Carlyle, 2002: 169). There are also emotions involved in connecting with knowledge and with students (Woods & Jeffrey, 1996).

Hargreaves (2001: 1057) notes that all teaching is 'inextricably emotional - by design or by default' while Britzman notes the friction caused by institutional structures and expectations of how teachers should behave and the actual 'structures of feelings' they currently have due to the lives they live, and importantly that a 'word such as *teacher* is already overpopulated with other contexts; with other people; with competing forms of knowledge; and with desires, pleasures, and fears' (italics in original, 2003:252). Rodgers and Scott claim that with the complex interrelationships between all the stakeholders involved, it is no surprise that emotion is provoked (2008: 735) while Hargreaves echoes this claiming school teaching is 'full of spurious emotion' (2001: 1060) and 'as emotional practitioners, teachers can make classrooms exciting or dull' (2000: 812).

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Hargreaves introduces 'emotional geographies' to identify the threats and supports that arise from the closeness or distance in 'people's interactions or relationships' (2001: 1061). From a sociocultural stance in today's ever changing society indicates that distance is increased as teachers, coming from different communities, are not aware of the physical, social and cultural backgrounds their students are coming from, and thus, leads to blanket stereotyping and stigmatization (2001: 1062-3; 1065) which leads to increased obstacles rather than opportunities (2001: 1066).

This is also supported by Nias (1989, 1996) who states that teachers invest their own personal identity in their work removing potential boundaries that exist between their personal and their professional teacher lives, often to the determent of their own health. She goes further to say that the changing times with the radical social, economic and legislative changes create a sense of loss that makes teachers feel 'sudden bereavement and the pressure of multiple commitments' (1996: 295). This sense of loss is related to the emotion of caring that teachers feel about children expressed in loving children, protecting their self-esteem, teaching well, and accepting the need for self-improvement. Nias contends that to be a primary school teacher (in reference to England) means to live and work within a paradox since the teachers must be both egocentric and selfless, valuing themselves and caring for children. As a result, the identification of being a [primary] teacher can often appear to develop slowly and takes years (1989: 41) and that teachers invest their *selves* in their work, their values and so they closely merge their sense of personal and professional identity.

Zembylas, focusing on the application of Raymond William's 1961 'structures of feelings' concept and specifically on the notion of 'emotional rules' to the school culture in teachers' work, positions the concept into separate areas such as 'emotional labor,' 'emotion management,' and 'emotion work' (2002: 196). Looking at emotional labor is the ultimate outcome derived from the

others which is formed from the demand of professionalism as the skill to react emotionally to colleagues and students in a specific way.

In summary, there are unavoidable interrelationships between professional and personal identities which teachers have to deal with on a daily basis which is dependent on the cultural, institutional and expectation factors and naturally, their personal lives, which all influence the identity of a teacher.

### 3. that identity is *shifting*, *unstable*, and *multiple*,

Identity shifts over time, has multiple facets, and is dependent on the environment which it is in (Rodgers & Scott, 2008: 736). Teacher identity is complex and dynamic as they undergo adaptations and adjustments to themselves and 'can be seen as an answer to the recurrent question: 'Who am I at this moment?' (Beijaard et al., 2004: 108) or 'Who am I as a teacher?' (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011: 6). Søreide (2006) notes that teachers position themselves with the identities that the wish to promote while Gee (2001: 99) states that the type of person one is recognized at 'a given time or place' is dependent on the interaction from different moments and can 'change from context to context' thus making it 'ambiguous or unstable.'

When talking about identity shifting, it is important to refer to the concept of '*teacher agency'* which Coldron and Smith (1999) state teachers are actively pursuing professional development and argue that learning takes place through the activity of the learner. Zembylas views the connection between emotion and teacher identity as *teacher agency* which 'is usually defined as the capacity for intentional acts or reflexive mediation' (2003: 224) while at the same time developing an awareness 'to try and think differently' and to resist the normative forces of school (2003: 229). Following on from Foucault (1980), Zembylas states that 'teacher identity and emotion discourses are formed within specific school political arrangements, in relation to certain

expectations and requirements, ones that presume a teacher should conform to particular rules' (2003: 226). Teachers must present themselves 'in terms of familiar identity or they risk being seen as eccentric, if not outrageous' and that they should leave their emotions at the door if they wish to be 'objective and professional in their job' (2003: 226).

**4. that that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over time**

From a narrative perspective, 'the practice of teaching as constructed when teachers tell and live out particular stories' (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002: 403). There is evidence that the process of writing and telling stories about the profession does enable a powerful tool in developing a teacher's professional growth (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; 1998). Rodgers and Scott (2008: 736) state that stories and the 'practice of narrative' is 'the most widely embraced way of making sense' of changing identities. Since this is a continuous process, it requires the candidates to reflect and the interpretation of their lived experiences is significant (Beiijaard et al., 2000). Connelly and Clandinin understand a teacher's identity as 'a unique embodiment of his/her stories to live by, stories shaped by the landscapes past and present in which s/he lives and works' and more saliently these 'storied landscapes' are in flux with 'multiple, evolving, shifting, and contradictory' stories over the course of a teacher's life (2005: 44).

The next sub-section will focus specifically narrow on the identity of STs as they are the participants in this thesis.

### 2.3.4   The identity of STs

This sub-section will examine the literature surrounding the identity of STs and how they have multiple identities and tensions while undergoing a 'changing sense of who they are as professionals' (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011: 6).

Britzman notes that the decision to become teachers comes long before it is realized as it is influenced by 'one of the most familiar professions in this culture' and become an educator thinking we know 'what a teacher is and does' (2003: 26-27). Insight into tensions experienced by initial teachers concern conflicts between what they desire and what is possible in reality (Day, et al., 2006; Mayer 2011; Pillen et al., 2013a; 2013b; 2013c). Carter and Doyle state that from a biological framework, becoming a teacher 'means (a) transforming an identity, (b) adapting personal understandings and ideals to institutional realities, and (c) deciding how to express one's self in classroom activity' (1996: 139). This is also in line with Riopel (2006).

There are some challenges for STs, most notably after their induction process when they assume their teaching duties in school. Such concepts as 'reality or practice shock' (Veenman, 1984), 'the mortification of the teacherly self' (McShane, 2006), 'praxis-shock' (Kelchtermans, 2009), 'post coursal depression' (Van den Branden, 2006), 'shattered images' (Cole & Knowles, 1993), and 'unrealistic optimism' (Correa et al., 2015) are some of the prevailing terms stemming from the literature used to demonstrate the challenges faced when teachers have completed their studies and brought in front of their own classrooms, confronted with the 'harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life' (Veenman, 1984: 143), leading to dropouts (Grant, 2006; Yost, 2006). Once where they are 'expected to be fully responsible for their job performance; however, in contrast to their more experienced colleagues, novice teachers cannot draw on their own experiences as teachers' (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014: 192). However, since the STs in this thesis are in their SP and in their teacher education program in parallel, the literature applying to 'after their induction process' is also consist with them when in their PD.

Ulvik and Langørgen refer to some teachers going into 'survival mode' as a way of addressing this shock (2012: 43) in order to push through the challenges that they face while in their teacher education. Johnson (2007) refers to this world as *volatile*, *uncertain*, *complex* and *ambiguous* (VUCA) which is exacerbated further when new teachers 'enter school with little knowledge of organizations and the politics of school life' (Achinstein, 2006:123). Moving from a relatively safe environment and community to one where 'multiple tensions as adaptations and adjustments to identity are necessitated or provoked' emphasizes the challenges faced when entering schools (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011: 6). Others note the reality of the situation – teachers have two jobs – carrying out the job they are employed for and learning how to do that job (Wildman et al., 1989), and at the same time the desire to be aware of 'the many ways in which student learning can unfold in the contexts of development, learning differences, language and cultural influences, and individual temperaments, interests and approaches to learning' (Darling-Hammond, 2006b: 301).

There is sometimes little support from experienced teachers believing that new entrants have nothing to offer them (Ulvik & Langørgen, 2012) so a challenge of trying to acclimatize oneself into a school community can be a significant 'rite of passage' for each newly qualified teacher (NQT). There is also the question whether the ITE program offers a period of clinical experience earlier on so that they can gain both valuable experience of what it is like to be a teacher in the field, while at the same time, allow them to encounter some of the challenges so that they can attempt to make more sense of it when they try to construct the theories in class later on (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007: 398). This functions as an enabler for some STs. Studies have found that good experiences at the beginning of their learning and teaching career does develop resilience, make them more open minded, and encouraged to continue (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The effect of disciplinary experts on the identity of a ST does also have a positive impact on the development of what being a teacher is.

Even the manner in which people decide to become teachers and enter the profession can be various depending on their 'personal characteristics, desires and motivations' and are the first step in acquiring their teacher identity, which can be influenced by their socio-economic and past experiences (Deacon, 2012: 3). These experiences, be it from their schooling, upbringing, previous professional background, and family all influence the extent to which one decides to enter the profession, and how they believe one should behave in the profession (Brookfields, 2006). This process is a deeply personal one and is formed and altered through encounters and relationships with the environment, and with colleagues and students (Beijaard et al., 2004: 113; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011: 6).

Once a ST begins their training, they are dependent on various kinds of information, knowledge and skills which transition over the course of their training and allow them to potentially develop into NQTs. However, there are numerous factors which can affect this development such as; subject material, physical location and classroom layout, colleague theories and learning practices, experimentation of techniques and 'tricks of the trade', advice from colleagues and co-operating teachers, artefacts, school culture, parental involvement, mentors and supervisors (or Placement Tutors), availability of resources, and their own daily life. These factors highlight the extensive range of experiences that need to be approached and dealt with if the ST will survive their training. Sociocultural theories state that learning does not only take place in the individual's mind but is dependent on the context or sub-context in which that individual is set (Nias, 1996), notably in a community of practice (Putnam & Borko, 2000; 5; Wenger, 1998) or on developing collegiality (Shuh, 2012) which can provide assistance for beginning teachers (Little, 1990). For a beginning teacher, these factors could have a strong effect on them, particularly if unsuccessful. As was stated earlier in this chapter by Cove, McAdam and McGonigal (2008: 197), 'breakthroughs in teaching rarely take place in isolation' but within social contexts, which partly reflects Lave and Wenger's (1998) **Community of Practice** theory (although theirs was focused on sales personnel and not teachers) and a Vygotakian perspective. An individual's construction of themselves as a teacher with a particular identity is also closely connected to techniques and

situations through and in which some manage others and, at the same time, teach these others to manage themselves (Foucault 1984: 370). Therefore, the impact needs to be investigated of the aforementioned external factors affect each participant as they transform in their learning. Do any of these factors offer a challenge to each of the student teacher, and if so, how do they attempt to overcome this challenge?

Ulvik, Smith and Helleve (2009: 835) call on a space to exist between ITE and working as teachers which allows them to reflect, not only to act. This idea is similar to what Samuda and Bygate (2008) refer to as *pedagogic spaces* where students, under the guidance of their teachers, attempt to comprehend and internalize new knowledge that is put forth to them. It stands to reason that such a space should exist for student teachers as they attempt to grapple with the 'reality' of teaching and all that encompasses it on a day-to-day basis. In addition to that, it is desirable that teacher education programs incorporate such a space into their syllabus.

### 2.3.5 Linking PD to Teacher Identity

Since the teaching profession in Ireland is held in such 'high esteem' and deeply rooted in history (Hyland, 2012: 8), a ST's sense of identity within the PD must be a factor as they enter the profession with notions of what teaching is from their own experiences as children. In relation to teacher identity, Lana and Kelchtermans note that teacher education programs play a part in teacher education where STs are able to 'construct a sense of themselves as teachers,' but also that 'existing normative ideas' are already in place within society which influence their development of how they should behave as teachers, and that the word 'teacher is not an empty category for STs to fill for themselves as they learn about their future work' (2015: 22). This train of thought can be elucidated further by Kelchtermans (2007) and Lortie (1975) who found that 'student teachers who enter the teacher education program are not passive receptors of normative processes, but rather active agents who interpret and learn from their experiences' (Lana &

Kelchtermans, 2015: 23). However, as Caspersen and Raaen (2014) note, STs lack being able to draw on their own experiences as teachers (although they can as students, naturally in Lortie's study). Therefore, as this is being developed in their SP, this linking of identity, cognition and experience further influences the development of a ST in their PD.

Having said that, Jones and Stammers (1997: 79-80) note that newly qualified teachers from a four-year initial training course often experienced isolation and need to share their experiences which often can be very diverse to assist them to cope with the demands of primary school teaching. They note that even less 'could have been achieved on a one-year PGCE programme.' Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) refer to 'praxis shock' which they define as 'teachers' confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being a classroom teacher that puts their beliefs and ideas about teaching to the test, challenges some of them, and confirms others' (2002: 105). As a result of this, more patience is needed in order to ensure that the ST can effectively process the newly acquired knowledge in practice and to reflect on this practice for further development. This refers to Lindvall and Ryve (2019: 140) five aspects of PD, namely collective participation, duration, and coherence demonstrating the interconnectedness of these aspects as a means to combatting the factors which inhibit the development of a ST.

The next section will present the literature on Transformative Learning before moving on to Threshold Concepts (2.5).

## 2.4   Threshold Concepts

This section will explore Threshold Concepts (TCs) as an integrated framework which enables the identification of aspects over the duration of the pre-service teacher education program, specifically those areas where challenges are encountered by the two cohorts of students (PDE and PME) throughout this period of study.

The primary motivation to include TCs into this thesis is to provide a consistent methodological framework which enables the identification of the challenges experienced by the participants in their consecutive ITE program. After the previous sections of this chapter exhibited components that are essential to the PD of a pre-service teacher, a methodology framework is imperative in order for this thesis to understand how the interrelated components interact with each other within the cognition of the ST. In summary, by utilizing the TCF as the methodological framework, this study can provide a coherent, interconnected link between teacher development and identity.

Firstly, a general introduction to TC, a definition, its foundation, and characteristics will be presented in the following sub-section.

### 2.4.1   Introduction

TCs emerged from a UK nation research project, '*Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses*,' and focusing on undergraduate economics; Reimann, Land and Meyer discovered that certain concepts were 'held by economics to be central to the mastery of their subject' while having 'certain features in common' (Cousin, 2006: 4, ETL Project Final Report, 2005: 3). The project explored 'the idea of constructive alignment as a way of working with departmental colleagues' to improve the learning environment and to 'enhance engagement, motivation, learning processes and outcomes, and levels of achievement' (Final Report, 2005: 3). Probably the most well-known and definite definition stemming from the literature of a **threshold concept** is:

> 'A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. Such a transformed view or landscape may represent how people 'think' in a

particular discipline, or how they perceive, apprehend, or experience particular phenomena within that discipline (or more generally).' (Meyer & Land, 2003b: 1).

This framework allows for the identification of concepts that students consider as troublesome and difficult to their understanding of a subject and offer significant potential for educators in their course planning and teaching. The Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF) is characterized as having five main traits: *transformative*, *irreversible*, *integrative*, *bounded* and being *troublesome* (Cousin, 2006, 2010; Meyer & Land, 2003; Timmermans, 2014; Land, 2016) with Meyer and Land (2003) dividing these characteristics into primary and secondary as shown in the table below (adapted from Reeping et al., 2017):

| | **Characteristic** | **Description** |
|---|---|---|
| **Primary** | Transformative | Must involve a cognitive shift and potentially a shift in identity. |
| | Troublesome | Must be a concept which students are attempting to understand. |
| | Integrative | Must "tie" ideas together in students' mental models. |
| **Secondary** | Discursive | May enhance the students' ability to communicate precise language. |
| | Bounded | May only apply to one discipline. |
| | Reconstitutive | May shift connections in the student's mental models. |
| | Irreversible | Highly unlikely to be forgotten. |

*Table 2.1 – Summary of TCs qualities*

Recently, there have been some additions to the original five characteristics. Land and Meyer (2005; Meyer, Land and Davies, 2006: 202) included *discursive* and *reconstitutive* (added into the table above) with the former referring to the extensive and internalizing specific language within that field. The latter refers to a shift in learner subjectivity which involves a degree of oscillation and also entails 'messy journeys back, forth and across conceptual terrain' (Cousin, 2006: 2). This also leads to a change in the conceptual understanding - the identity of the student as they attempt to unpack the concept in question (Meyer & Land, 2003) and attempt to fit into a

community to affirm their identity (Reeping et al., 2017). These aspects of conceptual understanding provide a cohesive link to relevant theories in the literature, for example, the community of practice theory (Lave and Wenger, 1998) in section 2.3.4.2, ontological and epistemological theories in teacher development (Samarji & Hooley, 2015; Huang, 2016) in section 2.4.4.2, and Mezirow's TL theory ('distorting dilemma' in Mezirow, 1981: 7). in section 2.4.7.

TCs are described as 'core concepts' that would be a conceptual block to assist understanding of that subject but would not 'necessarily lead to a qualitatively different view on the subject matter' (Meyer and Land, 2003a: 4). They have also been referred to as 'key', 'core', 'central', 'very important' and 'ah-ha moments' but they do not necessarily need to be these or 'alter the way you think'. However, they do point the way forward and help us past the door (Atherton, 2011) or through a *portal* (Land et al., 2016). Atherton notes that TCs change 'the way in which you think about a subject' (2011) while Shopkow states that 'affective issues' such as 'maintaining emotional distance' and 'dealing with ambiguity' are constant issues or 'bottlenecks' which students encounter when approaching subject matter (2010: 328). This affective or emotional dimension in a facet brought up by researchers in an attempt to bridge the gap between their students and the subject matter itself closer together. This brings up the 'transformational state' of liminality (Meyer and Land, 2005: 380) which will be explored in more detail shortly.

Nevertheless, the identification of TCs and their integration by students into their cognitive learning systems can be problematic. Students can trick educators into believing that they have indeed acquired or learned the concepts in their courses only to be found out when subsequent concepts are questioned via the attempt to integrate new concepts or assessment. These are referred to as mimicry and quazi-plagiarism (Meyer and Land, 2006; Lucas and Mladenovic, 2007; Cousin, 2010; Iyer-O'Sullivan, 2012; White et al., 2015).

Next, this chapter will examine the troublesome and transformative characteristics as they are required to occur in the data collection process to constitute what a TC is. Following from this literature review, this thesis will predominately utilize these two traits in identifying the TCs experienced in this study.

## 2.4.2   Troublesome Knowledge

TCs are most likely to involve troublesome knowledge, that is, a concept which is deemed problematic for learners in their understanding of their subject matter. **Troublesome knowledge** is defined as 'knowledge that is 'alien', or counter-intuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value' (Meyer & Land, 2003b: 2). Atherton (2011) states, that it may be difficult for educators to identify what the TC in a particular discipline is and have challenges for the educator in uncovering it. The term 'troublesome' was coined by Perkins (1999) who also suggests various reasons why knowledge might be troublesome such as ritual, inert, conceptually difficult knowledge and troublesome language (Meyer & Land, 2003b: 6-9). Reeping et al. (2017) provides an apt example of the process:

> 'The trouble can stem from the fact the knowledge is from an unfamiliar perspective (called alien knowledge), not explicitly taught (tacit), learned without a context (inert), applied on blind faith (ritual), and/or is counter-intuitive (conceptual)'
> (Reeping et al., 2017: https://www.asee.org/public/conferences/78/papers/20552/view).

As a result of its importance, troublesome is a core trait which indicates to the teacher the area which their students have difficulty with. Thus, it is seen as the starting point for the TC identification process which the researcher can ascertain via data collection (assessment, questionnaires, interviews, etc.) from their students. The following sub-section will examine another primary characteristic of a TC – its transformative nature.

### 2.4.3 Transformative

The transformative characteristic of the TCF is significant as it indicates a period where students are grappling with the concept (i.e. alien knowledge or troublesome knowledge) and attempting to overcome it to a degree. During this time, the students may be within an area which is referred to as the 'liminal state' (presented in section 2.5.3) as a shift in their ontological knowledge occurs. This space has the potential for growth and development for the students in their learning and, thus, liminality is referred to as a 'transformational state' (Meyer & Land, 2005: 308). This is similar to what Samuda and Bygate (2008) refer to as 'pedagogical spaces,' a sphere in language teacher classrooms which allows the students to interact with the newly acquired knowledge to enable this shift in knowing to transpire with the assistance and guidance of their teacher. However, this transformative characteristic assumes that the students do indeed desire to integrate this new knowledge into their existing cognition and belief system which may not initially be the case. Some students may not recognize the fact that this new 'alien' knowledge needs to be assimilated into their existing knowledge system before they can acquire further knowledge in the subject domain.

After troublesome knowledge, transformative is the second most important characteristic within the framework (cf. table 2.1) and in an attempt to visualize and integrate the concept, students will, quite naturally, attempt to employ the concept without fully understanding it (Cousin, 2010: 4). This is also supported by Male and Baillie (2014) who view the transformative aspect of the framework as being the most prominent while Timmermans states transformative as being the 'most non-negotiable feature of a threshold concept' (2014: 4). They strive to comprehend it by grappling with their rupture in knowing as they come in direct contact with the concept and in some cases, may give up or feel defeated since the gap may be too great for them to overcome, or they may not see the purpose of overcoming this gap and do not wish to change their existing belief or knowledge systems. As aforementioned in the introduction (2.5.1), this form of

attempting to understand a concept is referred to as *mimicry* and represents a stage where students are endeavoring to comprehend the concept, both cognitively and affectively in the liminal state (Meyer and Land, 2006: 16; White et al., 2015). There are also salient parallels in teacher education with mimicry where NQTs focus more on their 'self' and their actions in the classroom from Fuller (1969) and Nias (1989) (cf. section 2.4.5 and 2.4.6).

However, there are times when educators can be deceived by this quazi-plagiarism believing learners to have grasped absorbed the concept; that they have achieved mastery in this topic and can, thus, further advance in their subject matter. Nevertheless, at times, students provide 'explanations that are far from coherent and quite difficult to understand containing inconsistencies and misunderstandings' (Lucas and Mladenovic, 2007: 241). This leads to further confusion in the literature over the concept of transformative and when it is ingrained and understood by the students, and, as a way to combat this confusion, incorporating Mezirow's theory of TL (cf. section 2.4.7) does enable this thesis to accurately identify if transformation has occurred within the participants' learning and classroom practice. This will be examined further in the following section.

Nevertheless, once the concept is understood then it will potentially have great effect on student learning, behavior and in some cases, a transformation of personal identity. There is an ontological and conceptual shift in the learner's perception of the subject and may also lead to a shift in values, feelings or attitudes (cf. affective component from Gee, 2011 and section 2.4.4).

### 2.4.4 Liminality

'Learning involves the occupation of a liminal space during the process of mastery of a threshold concept' (Cousin, 2010: 3). This period is not just a cognitive shift but also involves 'a strong emotional dimension concerning the student's identification with both the subject and his

perceived capabilities.' Referring back to Meyer and Land's (2003) TC description from section 2.5.1, grasping with the concepts in the liminal space is the result of being challenged by unfamiliar knowledge, which is not tacit or easy understood, cannot be acquired by existing cognitive schema, and can be counter-intuitive. Therefore, the duration spent in the liminal state per learner is unknown and difficult to determine which does affect their identity as they attempt to feel like a 'certain type of person' (Gee, 2001).

Students sometimes endeavor to overcome this state of liminality by 'quasi plagiarism, plagiarism or mimicry' while others may abandon and discontinue (Cousin, 2010: 4; Baillie, 2012:14). One reason why a student might result to this form of quasi plagiarism may be the feeling of being inadequate or uncomfortable while being in the liminal state attempting to grasp the concept: what Reeping et al. (2017) refer to as 'a space of discomfort' and may 'flounder.' Additionally, they may want to be belong to a community of practice with their fellow peers, and, therefore, disregard their misgivings and misunderstandings on the concept.

Nevertheless, for those who grapple with the acquisition of new concepts, there is a strong connection between the development of alien knowledge and the sense of understanding oneself when being in this liminal state. Being in this liminal state 'entails an envisaging (and ultimately accepting) of an alternative version of self, contemplated through the threshold space' (Land, 2016:18). This also links liminality to teacher development (cf. 2.4).

Land (2011: 2) refers to the liminal state as a 'recognition that their [the learners] existing view is no longer adequate, and that they have to let go of it.' Students are trained to look for answers and are rewarded for being right (Felten, 2015: 5). In 2015, Felten posed the question 'Why risk liminality in the classroom when certainty feels both personally and academically safer?' (2015: 5) as it may be contrary to what school is all about with 'teaching to satisfaction ratings' (Land, 2015: 12) or students' confusion as 'their prior educational experiences have taught them to value being correct and concrete' (Felten, 2016: 6). Meyer and Land call liminality a 'transformational

state' (Meyer and Land, 2005: 380) along with Schwartzmann (2010) who links this to the process of learning and the reformulation of meaning for the learner.

At the Fifth Biennial Threshold Concepts International Conference at Trinity College in 2012, Land proposed that 'if the liminal state was seen as something which is transformative and does help students, then perhaps what it should do is oblige the learner to countenance something new and try to integrate it' (2014: 2). He also mentions that the liminal state might be characterized as the acquiring and usage of new written and spoken discourse which also supports Etienne Wenger's Community of Practice theory. In addition, the learners require '*threshold confidence*' where they feel comfortable with that new knowledge and attempt to integrate it and achieve mastery of that concept (Felten, 2016: 6). This shift that the learner undergoes is referred to as ontological space, shift or transformation where the perspective of the learner is altered dramatically in terms of their view of themselves as well as their view on their learning (Meyer and Land, 2005: 386; Land, 2011: 9; Devitt et al., 2012: 129; Timmermans, 2014: 4; Land et al., 2015: xiv; Land, 2016: 18). However, if deep personal change or transformation is not undertaken by the learners, liminality becomes a liability (Atherton, 2012).

### 2.4.5   Criticisms of Threshold Concepts

While Reeping et al. (2017) state that the 'threshold concept literature does little to articulate the ties to identity despite being a unique feature of this dimension,' the primary focus of criticism has been projected on the identification of TCs themselves. As a result, this section will focus predominately on this aspect.

O'Donnell, discussing TCs and their relevance to economics and specifically the concept of opportunity cost, argued that the hypothesis has serious definitional problems and that constructing a concept like opportunity cost as a TC is problematic (2009: 190). O'Donnell also

criticizes the characteristics outlined by Meyer and Land, questioning if 'all five attributes' need to be present for a qualified concept or is only a certain number of them are required? He also questions the language involved asking if this type of language is used then how can all the occurrences of a characteristic be identified? He argues that the 'purpose of a theoretical definition is to be definitive rather than conditional' (ibid). Prendergast notes that 'there is a lack of clarity as to how to identify them empirically' (2017: 157).

This question was also approached by Barradell (2013) who agrees that their identification is not an easy process and that a common interpretation is needed among teachers, students and academics. She also states that academics while often being experts in their field may not necessarily have been taught to teach with the 'disparity between the novice teacher and the discipline expert can be an unsettling experience' (2013: 268). There are also questions why there is much time spent on identifying TCs and not what is done afterwards (Barradell and Kennedy-Jones, 2014a: 3; Prendergast, 2017: 157) while Felten argues that TCs need more cross-disciplinary so that concepts can be expanded for greater students' comprehension (2016: 7).

O'Donnell also tackles the idea of troublesomeness, which he notes is an 'extremely important attribute' but has opposite statements that 'muddy the waters' with troublesomeness being present in some cases but not in others and even when it is present it may vary in degree and what is troublesome for some learners may not be for others (2009: 191). This element is also taken up by Rowbottom who also states that what is a threshold for one student does not necessary constitute a threshold for another (2007, cited in Davey, 2012: 140) which does lead to Barradell's (2013, 2014a) call for having more agreement between various parties involved. This has been partly dealt with in the Decoding the Disciplines manner of identifying TCs (section above). Both Rowbottom (2007: 266) and O'Donnell (2009: 191) note that the language used by Meyer and Land (2003) for setting out the characteristics of TCs by Land and Meyer by the use of 'likely to be,' 'probably irreversible,' 'potentially troublesome,' and 'possibly bounded' is misleading and

unclear. This ambiguous language does little to strengthen the skeptical academics and researches who consider TCs to be too fuzzy.

In recent times, Timmermans (2014) has attempted to tackle the question if all the characteristics need to be included to constitute a TC in any field, noting that the transformative feature is 'non-negotiable' due to the ontological effect the learners go through. Barradell and Peseta (2014: 10-11) noted that within their study it was challenging for their participants to have a shared position that could lead to an agreement on TC identification and that greater clarity is needed to distinguish which characteristics are required for a TC to be identified. Cousins (2008) states that she does 'not want to encourage a purist view in which all of these characteristics must be present in equal measure in any threshold concept' but advocates looking at the subject through a different lens among all involved. This she terms as 'transactional curriculum inquiry' and involves all the key players – 'academics, students, educationalists' exploring the 'difficulty of the subject' together, which Irvine and Carmichael also noting that TCs facilitated for all participants in their study to 'providing a point of focus for discussion' (2009: 113). Barradell (2014a: 2) argues that 'identifying threshold concepts alone is not sufficient' and that studying them in isolation is a disadvantage as 'additional influences' are often involved, especially in regard to her field – physiotherapy.

## 2.5    Summary

Teacher education has more of an impact on teachers' learning and development if that learning is focused on their beliefs and identity as well (Weinstein, 1990; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Borg, 2003: 81; Borg, 2011: 370).

As there is some overlap between Mezirow's TL and the TCF, due to the transformative nature from both theories and since TL was originally designed with adults in mind, this chapter made

connections between the two. It is a difficult task to discuss TCs without mentioning transformation and its impact first as their potential for cognitive growth is profound. What one learner experiences as transformation may not coincide to what another person experiences and as such, it may be a challenge for educators to bring forth TCs that are uniform across a group or class of students in the same subject, let alone, across disciplinary boundaries. As Freeman et al. stress that 'preservice teachers are unprepared to work with diverse populations' (2012, p.1) again highlighting that developing a uniform ITE system that does not take into account the diverse teacher knowledge development of the individual or of their future students. In regard to this thesis, this strengthens the desire for HEI providers to develop 'adaptive expertise' (Hatano & Oura, 2003) for quick decision-making processes and classroom planning which can enable increased diversity for both teachers and their students as they strive to achieve 'lifelong learning' (The Teaching Council, 2016).

The following chapter will present the methodological approach that this study undertook, along with the data collection methods, and how the collected data was coded. Ethical considerations and limitations for this study are also presented.

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter presented the background on the formation of teacher development and teacher identity, this chapter will examine the theoretical underpinnings which this study undertook and the methods used to both generate and analyze data obtained from the two cohorts (PDE and PME), specifically a multiple-nested case study approach. It will also present the ethics involved in the study.

### 3.1.1 Overview of Chapter

Section 3.2 sets out a general overview of research design, while sections 3.3 presents the data collection methods (email interviews and face-to-face interviews) which this study employs, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of each from the literature. The data collection process is presented in 3.4, along with a timeline for this study. The ethical considerations of the study are presented in section 3.5, along with Data analysis in Section 3.6, presenting the thematic analysis which the data underwent. A short overview of the collected data and specifically the category coding is presented in section 3.7. Reliability, validity, and the limitations of this study are presented in 3.8. To conclude the section, the summary to the chapter is presented in section 3.9.

## 3.2 Research Design

Ary et al. (2010: 19) define educational research as the manner in which 'people acquire dependable and useful information about the educative process' and this, no method has a universal and general claim to authoritative knowledge (Richardson, 1997: 121). Still researchers

'engage in the practical activities of generating and interpreting data to answer questions about the meaning of what their participants know and do' (James and Busher, 2009: 7). Various methods are utilized to achieve this based on the epistemological stance that researchers' practice which provides the grounding for the possible knowledge that is adequate and legitimate (Maynard, 1994: 10). Essentially, researchers are attempting to investigate '*first hand* what people do and say in particular contexts' (Hammersley, 2006: 4) while maintaining their own personal view Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

### 3.2.1   Interpretive Research

Maynard (1994: 10) notes 'Whereas method refers to techniques for gathering research material, methodology provides both theory and analysis of the research process.' Interpretive research is an action-based paradigm that focuses on the individual, to understand the phenomena from within – 'the subjective world of human experience' and this field of research leans more towards the anti-positivist side (Cohen et al., 2007: 21-22).

Cohen et al., state that the main strength of interpretive approaches is that the researcher can observe and analyze the routines found in classrooms and schools naturally at a much smaller pace or degree than the more traditional approaches that we have just discussed (2007: 25). Johnson and Christensen (2000: 209) state that the validity of interpretive research refers to 'the degree to which the participants' viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood and portrayed' with Ary et al. (2010: 500) referring to *member checks* and *low-inference descriptors* as primary strategies to enhance validity.

There is, however, some criticisms of interpretive approaches. Some argue that 'anti-positivist have gone too far in abandoning scientific procedures of verification and in giving us hope of discovering useful generalizations about behaviour' (Cohen et al., 2007: 25). This can lead to

more subjective reports which can be inaccurate, and misleading based on the researchers' interpretation of the social framework or context that the data was obtained.

### 3.2.2    Ontological and Epistemological assumptions

As noted in Chapter 2 the impact of ontological and epistemological theories on the development of a teacher are profound, but these assumptions also hold sway in regard to methodology and research. Allison and Pomeroy (2000: 93) note that epistemology and ontology are 'intrinsically linked to values' which would lead to researchers 'being divided into camps, each with their own set of beliefs, interests, and concerns.' In the field of social science, two views hold sway – the subjectivist and the objectivist (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, as ontological assumptions concern the essence of an individual which is analyzed along the 'nominalism-realism' spectrum, epistemology focuses on how knowledge is acquired and is positioned along the 'anti-positivism – positivism' spectrum (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). As Cohen et al., state this requires the 'view that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible will demand of researchers an observer role' suggests that epistemology subscribes to a positivist role (2007: 7).

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) refer to 'ontological authenticity' where research should contribute a deeper understanding of the given situation, while Mason (2002: 35) argues that data must be ontologically and epistemologically consistent, where different data sets must be produced in a coherent manner. Huang (2016) supports this view noting that a holistic and interdependent approach is required, along with a social perspective on these concepts in order to fully obtain a great understanding of the teacher's development. From a constructivism perspective, ontology is viewed as displaying a constructed view on reality which is multiple and designed depending on the meaning which is made from their surroundings, while epistemology creates findings which are viewed as significant when the individual has different accounts on their reality converging (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000: 94, adapted from Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In relation to TC, the concepts of ontological and epistemological are prevalent, due to the consequences of the learner proceeding through the liminal state (cf. section 2.5). Barradell (2016) notes that the real value of a TC is that they have the potential to be both ontological and epistemological, while refers to the developmental potential (Timmermans, 2014).

### 3.2.3  Case Studies

Case studies (CS) are widely used in organizational studies and across the social sciences with indications that their methodology is increasingly being utilized, and with growing confidence as a rigorous research strategy in its own right (Hartley, 1994; 2004; Kohlbacher, 2006; Cresswell, 2013; Thomas, 2011a, 2011b; Thomas and Meyer, 2015). Creswell notes that 'a hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case' (2013: 98). George and Bennet (2005: 17) state that CS have 'particular advantages in answering certain kinds of questions' demonstrating their diversity for the investigator, while Stake (2005: 443) states that they 'are a common way to do qualitative inquiry' but 'not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied.' Wieviorka claims that a case's significance is sociologically defined only if it is referred to as 'a precise, coherent theory or method' (1992: 163). Patton supports this noting that CS 'constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data' (2002: 447). Thus, Creswell views them as a methodology – 'a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry' and that the investigator 'explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information' (2013: 97).

A significant advantage of CS allows the researcher to focus on the perspective of individuals (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995: 317) where 'a large number of intervening variables' that can be

observed in detail (George and Bennett, 2005: 21). Creswell notes that one of the challenges in that the researcher is required to identity the case and that it may be too broad or narrow in scope (2013:101) and that identifying boundaries may not always be straightforward. In contrast, if conducted correctly, Yin (2009) and Thomas (2011) note the CS' completeness from looking at many different perspectives and argues that it is the 'essence of good science' (Thomas, 2011: 23).

However, there are some challenges notable practitioners continuing to 'ply their trade but have difficulty articulating what it is that they are doing, methodologically speaking. The case study survives in a curious methodologically limbo.' (Gerring, 2004: 341). However, George and Bennett (2005: 22) note that poor implementation can lead to misinterpretation which can lead to 'indeterminacy and lack of independence of cases' what they refer to as selection bias. Flyvbjerg (2006: 219) adds to this with 'conventional wisdom' often discouraging researchers from conducting case studies. This stems from the lack of generalizing that case studies offer particularly when mixing historical and sociological approaches (Wieviorka, 1992: 164). Thomas states that CSs are about 'the particular rather than the general. You cannot generalise from a case study' (2016: 3). However, 'If you want to talk about a 'case,' you also need the means of interpreting it or placing it in a context' (Wieviorka, 1992: 160).

This study adopts Thomas' definition for CS:

> 'analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the *subject* of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame — an *object* — within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates'
>
> (2011a: 23).

Wieviorka (1992: 159-160) states that CS must contain the 'practical, historical unity' (i.e. the subject) and the 'analytical frame' (i.e. the object). Additionally, distinction is made between the 'subject' – the practical, historical component and the 'object'- the analytical or theoretical

framework of a case study (Thomas, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Thomas and Meyers, 2015; Thomas, 2015). While Stake (2005: 437-438) identifies three types of CS—*intrinsic*, *instrumental*, and *collective*— Creswell notes that intrinsic case studies focus on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation (2013: 99). In this study, each of the ST are both the object and product of the inquiry utilizing Thomas' (2011) CS framework:
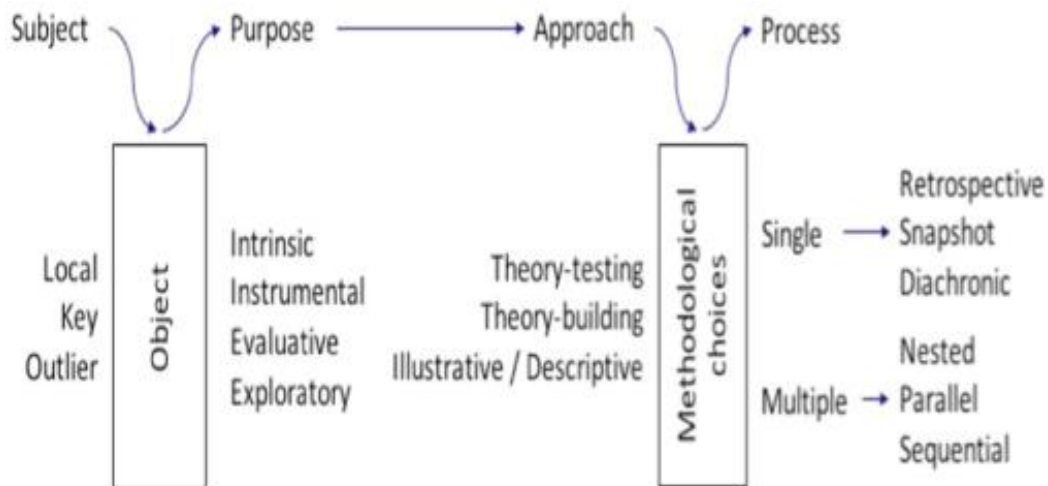


*Figure 3.1 – A typology of case study (Thomas, 2011: 518)*

Thomas refers to nested case studies as individual elements within the principle unit of analysis and is 'distinct from a straightforwardly multiple study in that it gains its integrity, its wholeness, from the wider case' and the 'elements are nested only in the sense that they form an integral part of a broader picture' (2011: 517). Essentially, CSs allow researchers to 'drill down further', and 'create a three-dimensional picture – or what Foucault called a 'polyhedron of intelligibility' (Thomas, 2016: 4). This is the approach that this study has adopted.

### 3.2.4 Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is:

**To examine the professional development of pre-service modern language teachers from a consecutive program of study in terms of both knowledge and identity underpinned conceptually by the Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF)**

Using the TCF, this case study (CS) will identify those primary challenges experienced by modern language STs in both the development of their teacher knowledge and teacher identity, and how they attempted to overcome these challenges both in their study and in their language classrooms. Therefore, this will be explored by means of the following research questions:

1. What is the experience of student language teachers on a consecutive ITE program in terms of:

   a. Knowledge development

   b. Identity development

2. What helps of hinders this development?

3. Do aspects of this development constitute a Threshold Concept?

In order to examine each ST and to be able to identify aspects which influenced their development, this study adopts a multiple nested CS (Thomas, 2011) as its methodological framework within the scope of the interpretative educational research paradigm where each ST represents a single enclosed CS which also can be compared to other STs and their experiences.

Given its robustness and flexibility, the CS approach was viewed as the most effective method to allow for data validity and for comparison of the data collected. Each CS is viewed as diachronic (as opposed to 'longitudinal' in Thomas and Meyer, 2015: 63) in its approach as it enables this study to investigate transformation that the STs experienced over a specific period of time, within the multiple-case study framework.

The manner in which a researcher approaches a specified research situation reflects who the researcher is, as a person, and how they view and approach the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Setting personal reasons aside, Yin notes: 'the desired result is for the investigator to create a rich dialogue with the evidence' (2009: 73) while Holliday states 'the outcome needs to be a *thick description*, which is a narrative of what has been found and shows the full complexity and depth of what is going on' (2010: 99).

Research was conducted with two cohorts of modern language STs (PDE and PME) over two separate time periods (2013-4 and 2016-7), and, therefore, developing a 'thick description' for each participant allows the TCs to be analyzed and, thus, the challenges experienced to be identified via a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis would also assist in analyzing across cases and also in each individual case.

## 3.3    Research Methods

The data collected in this study is required to examine experience from 'an intensive exploration with a participant' (Polkinghorne, 2005: 138) that 'accurately captures and communicates the meaning of the lived experience for the informants being studied' (Cohen, Kahn and Steeves, 2000: 72). This section will review and discuss the data collection methods utilized in this study – email interviews and face-to-face interviews.

### 3.3.1    Face-to-face Interviews

A research interview is defined as 'a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation' (Cannell and Kahn, 1968 in Cohen et al., 2007: 351). It can be used to test or develop a hypothesis or to gather sample opinions (Cohen et al., 2007: 351, Ary et al., 2010: 438). However, it is important to note that the consumption of time, inconvenience for respondents and/or fatigue, interviewee

bias, and lack of anonymity can be issues when conducting interviews (Cooper, 2009: 349-350), as well as interviewer bias (Ary et al., 2010: 380), and staying on topic (Patton, 2002: 341).

Kvale (1996: 11) notes that the 'the use of the interview in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somewhat external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations.' There is also the element of genuine emotion which is conveyed by spontaneous answers (Cooper, 2009: 252) but this is viewed as a strength as it allows for greater depth (Patton, 2002) and flexibility (Ary et al., 2010: 380) over other research methods, for example a survey or observation.

Utilizing 'The Interview Guide' framework (Patton, 2002), semi-structured interviews were employed as a core collection instrument for this CS as it allows for a rich amount of data to be collected in a relatively short space of time, using a standard set of questions (Table 3.3 below) for both case studies (2014 and 2017). They also allow the researcher to seek in-depth information of a sensitive nature (Johnson, 2002). This is also following the framework utilized in the ETL Project for the identification of TCs and TL by Mezirow and others investigating TL (Lytle, 1989; Vogselsang, 1993; Cesar, 2003).

The semi-structured interview questions are presented with appropriate language usage (Patton, 2002) and with Kvale's seven stages for designing and implementing interviews (1996:88):

1. Can you provide me with some background about yourself?
2. Who are you teaching?
3. What is your reason for taking this program? Did the course align with your career goals?
4. What did you expect to get from this course? Did it meet your expectations?
5. Do you think you have become a better teacher now? Why?
6. Did you get much support from your peers/co-teachers/tutors?
7. How did you study?

8. What type of learner are you?

9. What were the main challenges that you faced in your learning over the school year?

10. How did you face/overcome those challenges?

11. What were the main challenges that you faced in your teaching over the school year?

12. Did what you were taught match what you were supposed to learn?

13. Is what you were taught help you directly in your teaching? How?

14. What were the key learning points in your course?

15. Do you consider yourself a teacher now?

*Table 3.2 – Interview Questions*

These questions structured the interview and were the foundation for determining the STs' beliefs in line with Merriam (2009) and Ary et al. (2010: 438). Participants were recorded and permission was sought both beforehand and afterwards. The recordings were transcribed and emailed to the participants seeking clarification of their opinion in line with verifying that the data is trustworthy and collaborated with (Kvale, 1996: 88).

### 3.3.2 Email Interviews / E-interview

Since the STs and I were in different countries, "email interviews" were seen as a core data collection method. Email interviews offer 'exciting possibilities to explore and understand human experiences by taking conventional research designs and methods and adapting them for the virtual environment' (James & Busher, 2009: 6). Bampton and Cowton coined the term *e-interview* or *e-interviewing* (2002) while others prefer *electronic interviews* or *email interviews* (Stacey and Vincent, 2011). Twenty years ago, Selwyn and Robson (1998: 2) noted a lack of evidence in regard to email as a data collection but in recent years, it has grown and been utilized across various fields – health research (Bunting, Russell & Gergen, 1998), social work (McAuliffe, 2003), travel and tourism (Lean, 2013), verbal communication impairment (Ison, 2009), and genetic counseling service (Cohen et al., 2016). As Hammersley (2006: 8) states

'Electronic virtuality is now embedded within actuality in a more dispersed and active way than ever before.'

There are some advantages of conducting email interviews from the literature. Lean notes that they offer 'a number of potential timesavers over face-to-face interviews' such as conducting interviews in person and also the added benefit of not having to transcribe respondents' data (2013: 103). The time delays between emails also allows for the researcher to reformulate questions and identity developing themes that emerge. The same is also true for the respondent who has time to formulate their answer (McAuliffe, 2003; Lean, 2003; James, 2016). There is also 'considerable time savings in future stages of the research' (Lean, 2013: 104), presumably when compiling and studying data.

Apart from the lack of nonverbal communication which convey over 90% of the emotional meaning of the message being expressed, emails do present some limitations when conducting interviews (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2008). McAuliffe (2003: 60) notes the 'Lack of interpersonal cues, technological glitches, and possibilities for deceit' as potential problems, while Cooper (2009: 252) notes the lack of spontaneous answers from the respondents. Another limitation includes access to computers and email facilities within a private and secure space. In addition to that, respondents need sufficient time to reply back to the questions, especially if they are of a reflective nature. An over-eager or impatient researcher may have the opposite effect on pressuring their respondents thus reducing data being obtained.

There is also additional time required by the researcher in terms of maintaining the response or email chain with the respondents and whether these needs to be maintained on a face-to-face basic or in a group main. Bryman (2008) notes the virtue of sending the email interview questions in one email or in each email. This may leave the respondents ignoring certain questions which they feel uninterested in or not able to contribute adequately. If the questions are put forth in a

relatively direct manner, this could have the effect of reducing respondents 'trailing off on tangents, as is common in face-to-face interviews' (Lean, 2013: 105; McAuliffe, 2003).

However, it must be stated that the strength of this form of data collection is intermingling it with technology in such that it offers a vastly different dimension and space in which 'familiar research methods can be used to allow researchers to write about who their participants are, and what they know' (James & Busher, 2009: 6). The possibility to conduct research without having to meet the respondents initially and formulate questions anywhere with Internet access proves the versatility of carrying out email interviews as a viable tool. In addition to that, due to the longitudinal nature of the study in question, obtaining data on respondents' experiences and challenges in both their learning and teaching practice, email interviews are an effective methodological tool to overcome restrictions related to timesaving, data privacy and collection.

Since the data collection procedures for this study has been presented, the next section will present the data analysis process (3.5).

## 3.4 Data Collection

This chapter will now turn to the data that was collected by the STs by briefly presenting the data collection process, starting off with the timeframe before presenting both of the data collection methods and finally providing an overview of the complied data.

### 3.4.1 Timeframe

The following table outlines the procedure that this study undertook in terms of the data collection process and consisted of two distinct phases:

| Phase | Time Frame | Details |
|---|---|---|
| **Phase I** | Nov. 2013 | Initial Contact - Requested participation from STs (PDE program). |
| | Nov. 2013 – May 2014 | Email interviews – data collection obtained from bi-weekly emails. |
| | April 2014 | Interview - Individual interviews with 3 STs related to their email responses to the challenges they faced throughout the school term. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. This concludes the first round of data collection. |
| | May – July 2014 | Transcribing interviews, categorizing email responses into themes via a thematic analysis and identifying TCs. |
| **Phase II** | Oct. 2016 | Initial Contact - Requesting participation from STs (PME program). |
| | Oct. 2016 – May 2017 | Email interviews – data collection obtained from bi-weekly emails. |
| | April 2017 | Interview - Individual interviews with 2 STs related to their email responses to the challenges they faced throughout the school term. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. This concludes the second round of data collection. |
| | August – September 2017 | Transcribing interviews, categorizing email responses into themes and identifying TCs.<br><br>Data collection of all participants from both phases are compared and collated via an inductive thematic analysis. |

*Table 3.3 – Procedure for this study*

The procedure for both cohorts was identical to increase the CS's validity and reliability, in line with Cohen et al. (2003) and Thomas (2011).

### 3.4.2 Email Interviews

Email interviews were conducted with both cohorts, collected over a period of 9 months (November to June inclusive) amounting to 25,047 words:

| Respondent | Number of Emails Received | Word Count |
|---|---|---|
| T1 | 14 | 6604 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| T2 | 2 | 698 |
| T3 | 11 | 4103 |
| T4 | 7 | 5311 |
| T5 | 7 | 4668 |
| T6 | 7 | 2323 |
| T7 | 2 | 1340 |
| **Total** | **50** | **25047** |

*Table 3.4 – Overview of Email Interview Data*

The STs were involved from an early stage (November) and after my initial email, they replied by providing information about themselves, any background teaching experience, and reasons for becoming a teacher. This was the beginning of the email interview process. In addition to that, the email requested that they describe any challenges that they were experiencing in both their classrooms, at work, or learning so far, and if they had overcome the challenge. Unfortunately, after two emails, T2 and T7 did not reply further. Later T2 did conduct a face-to-face interview and stated that the time and study/work pressure was too great to reply to the emails earlier on in the semester and she apologized for this. T6 was sick at the time of the face-to-face interviews and did not commit to a Skype call. However, the other five respondents were extremely forthcoming in sharing information and thus assisted this research to obtain rich data.

Before the face-to-face interviews were held, STs emails were compiled and a thematic analysis was conducted to uncover common threads for discussion in the interviews. Since each ST was unique and had different challenges at different times, it was important to be able to keep those challenges in mind when conducting the interviews. In addition, how they have transformed over the year and an ontological shift that they experienced. In some cases, there were some unanswered questions which needed to be addressed and notes were taken for each participant.

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### 3.4.3   Interviews

Held in April 2014, and 2017, interviews proved to be a beneficial data collection tool as they allowed face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and respondents. After schedule planning, five STs agreed to come into TCD/Dublin where we would go a quiet café of their choice to conduct the interview in. They also agreed to be recorded which allowed the interviewer to focus directly on the respondent and not on note taking. A brief overview of the email data is provided in the below:

| Respondent | Length of Interview | Word Count |
|---|---|---|
| T1 | 50' | 8230 |
| T2 | 39' | 6337 |
| T3 | 68' | 11652 |
| T4 | 66' | 14545 |
| T5 | 54' | 8700 |
| **Total** | **277'** | **49464** |

*Table 3.5 – Overview of Interview Data*

Interviews ranged from 39 to 68 minutes in length and took the format of a semi-structured interview (see section 3.4) which allowed for points in the email interviews to be clarified. It was important to ensure if the same challenges that they faced mentioned in their emails were still evident or not.

STs often referred to what they had written in the emails mostly to describe what had occurred at a particular point in time or to compare how they felt in the interview from before (in terms of developmental changes). Therefore, collecting the email interviews and bringing them into the face-to-face interviews was an extremely important and beneficial aspect for the STs which made the process more cohesive, allowing for increased clarity and depth in the answers received.

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and returned for the STs for verification. With the software package, MAXQDA, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify the challenges that occurred. A brief overview of this data is presented next.

## 3.5    Access, Ethics, and Consent

This study was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of the School of Education in Trinity College which details the ethical principles that the school are dedicated to, such as the protection and safety of participants, to respect the wishes of the participants, a responsibility to conduct rigorous academic research, and to disseminate the results in an honest and truthful manner [Online: https://www.tcd.ie/Education/ethics/]. The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity was also adhered to in terms of being honest with the participants as the research goals were presented openly and duty of care for the participants who could opt out at any stage of the study.

In line with this, a *Level 1* Application for Ethical Approval was approved by the department as the research to the participants was deemed *no risk to relatively low risk* which establishes the procedure for recruiting the STs and specifying the location of data collection.

Honesty of data collection was ensured with the intentions of the study made explicit to the participants before and during the data collection process. This also allows for replication of the study which can lead future researchers to conduct the same study which can lead to the same results. Stanovich and Stanovich note that replicable findings become 'part of the converging evidence that forms the basis of a research-based conclusion about educational practice' (2003: 9).

### 3.5.1   Data Privacy

Holliday notes that at 'the most basic level the integrity and privacy of the people taking part in the research must be preserved at all costs' (2010: 105). Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their identity in the analysis. All names of participating teachers or other members of the School of Education staff referred to in the data (email interviews and face-to-face interviews) are pseudonyms and any student names referred to in the research have also been changed to numbers to protect their anonymity. Data privacy and protection was ensured with data kept under password protection on a private computer without access to external drives or online storage.

### 3.5.2   Consent and contact with participants

Consent for this study was sought from the STs who were unknown to me prior to the study. Consent Forms were sent out to the Postgraduate School of Education Modern Language students (Appendix B) in which participants were asked to commit to email interviews with a face-to-face interview to be held at the end of the school year. Ranging in ages from 24 to 54, all seven respondents were modern language teachers who had less than one year of language teaching experience in their chosen subject.

The participants received the knowledge that they could withdraw at any stage from the research without notice or explanation. The initial email sent to the participants is presented in the table below:

I would like to ask you to identify your key challenge(s) and key learning point(s) in your course and school so far so that I can get an idea of what sort of problems you are encountering / have encountered. I am particularly interested in how you overcame these challenges (if you have, if not then I can offer some advice) and what tools or techniques you have used to do this. I will comment on these directly every week and try to offer you some advice to aid your teaching and learning.

In addition, since this is the first email, I would like to know a little about yourself, teaching background, education, etc. so that I can understand where you are coming from better.

Looking forward to hearing from you and please let me know if you have any questions.

Regards,

David Moroney

*Table 3.6 – Initial Email to participants*

After the participants replied to the initial email, the 'email interview' process began which resulted in rounds of emails focusing on a particular issue or challenge that the participants brought up, such as classroom management, link between theory and practice, time management, and so forth. Attempts were made to delve deeper into the topic to gather more information and this often resulted in deeper understanding of the topic in terms of influence and boundary settings. The initial question was reiterated during the interviews as well to isolate key challenges that were faced and to offer triangulation of the data obtained. However, a couple of respondents did not respond fully to the emails or dropped out over time, whereas others provided a rich amount of data which will be presented in the next chapter.

## 3.6   Data Analysis

Patton (2002: 450) notes that a 'case study should be sufficiently detailed and comprehensive to illuminate the focus of inquiry within becoming boring and laden with trivia.' Therefore, a CS should employ a systematic analysis approach to identify themes and categories from the data

generated corresponding to the challenges in both learning and teaching experienced by the STs and tracking these as they develop over the length of time.

### 3.6.1   Thematic Analysis

While Ary et al. (2010: 481) emphasize the importance of familiarizing and organizing data – '[T]he researcher must be immersed in the data', Boyatzis (1998: 7) notes the competency of *pattern recognition*. This is of importance regarding *thematic analysis*, which Clarke and Braun (2013) note is 'essentially a method for identifying and analyzing patterns in qualitative data' and differs from a methodology indicating the flexible nature of utilizing this approach with qualitative data. Ely et al. (1997) note that analysis is not a linear process and develops over time.

Therefore, considering the research questions and the data that was generated, a thematic analysis was undertaken to identify and categorize the underlining themes that occur throughout both phases. Namey et al. (2008: 138) state that, 'thematic moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas.' Therefore, thematic analysis allows the researcher to precisely determine the relationship between concepts and compares them with the data itself.

Corbin and Strauss (2008: 63-72) detail the analytic strategies or thinking techniques in developing codes such as asking questions about the data, grouping concepts around categories, naming that category and developing that category in terms of its properties which are 'attributes or characteristics of a phenomena' (2008: 70). Vaismoradi et al. (2016: 101) and Bradley et al. (2007) refer to themes acquiring a common point of reference and generality which unifies a common strand or subject of inquiry. This allows thematic analysis to narrate and explore the story of the data 'the searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range or texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 86) while at

the same time identifying and categorizing keywords and phrases that relate to a theme. Conducting a thematic analysis also allows for the consideration of priori theorizing which Snelgrove (2014) believes may affect the researcher's ability to innovatively develop themes. This flexibility highlights another characteristic of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which does allow this systemic analysis to be 'realist or descriptive' which critics misunderstand (Braun & Clarke, 2014: 1).

Utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006: 86-98) *Phases of Thematic Analysis* framework, along with Vaismoradi et al. (2016) *Phases and stages of theme development*, this study's procedure with an inductive approach to identified categories and themes that stemmed from the face-to-face and email interview data. The data was then rectified and redefined in collaboration among the STs (Reviewing themes – Braun and Clarke, 2006) to identify common themes among them (Developing the story line – Vaismoradi et al., 2016: 103) so that a report could be written for the findings in next chapter.

### 3.6.2   I-poems

Within thematic analysis, I-poems are a creative, qualitative methodology which emphasizes the voice of the research participants in interviews, 'requiring the researcher to embrace an ontological shift, re-positioning themselves to stand alongside the participant' (Weller, 2012: 127). I-poems are utilized to systematic analyze the STs' use of 'I' regarding their identity. Since they are 'time-consuming,' they are 'best used with a small or sub-sample' (Edwards and Weller, 2012: 215) which is desirable for the relatively small number of participants in this thesis and allows their voice to be heard, particularly when historically researchers were focused predominately on the male perspective (Brown and Gilligan, 1991).

**The Listening Guide** developed by Gilligan et al. (2003) examines how an individual speaks or does not speak in each context (Brown and Gilligan, 1991; 1992; 1993; Gilligan et al., 2003). Weller (2012: 127) notes that this framework encourages researchers to focus on how the respondents understand themselves 'by listening for the different voices or subjectivities with which they speak.' Balan (2005) provides a detailed step-by-step approach to her data with three main voices – '*voice of silence*', '*awakened voice*', and '*dissonant voice*' from her study indicating that various stages are identifiable when attempting to examine how a person transforms over a period of time. These are presented in the next sub-section (Constructing an I-poem).

Nevertheless, an individual's voice may be contradictory and complex when attempting to understand situations (Brown and Gilligan, 1993), which may lead to researchers to believe that participants can be reflexive about their own positioning, leading to epistemological concerns (Edwards and Weller, 2012: 215). However, a series of stories does constitute a trajectory as the participants become a certain kind of individual (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) due to the thematic nature of the process itself. As each ST attempts to position themselves within a particular social environment (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) this narrative perspective allows for their data to be analyzed via their view in their learning and teaching in line with Edwards and Weller (2012: 204-205).

**Constructing an I-poem**

To construct an I-poem, the first-person statements are extracted from the data and 'arranged sequentially into stanzas based on changes in topics, thereby forming a poem' (Weller, 2012: 127). Listening how an interviewee talks about themselves can also 'create a space between the interviewee's own self-perception and the analyst's perception of them, in essence 'how she speaks of herself before we speak of her' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992: 27-8). This voice is codified into stanzas and tracked over their course of learning and classroom practice. Investigating ITE's

voice is also in line with literature on teacher education (Rodgers & Scott, 2003; Kennedy, 1999) and does present a unique perspective into the lives of the participants.

I-poems are divided into three categories: '*Novice Voice*', '*Awakened Voice*,' and '*Transformed Voice*' which are presented thematically and are in a chronological order. This approach was adopted for this study in the classification of the respondents' I-statements. Each statement / stanza is color-coded in the table for increased visibility.

**The Novice Voice**

The 'Novice Voice' represents an unknown / uncertain voice where the respondent is unsure about a particular aspect of their learning or teaching. This also includes preconceptions regarding the participants' schooling about teaching or having a when starting the program. Having 'unrealistic optimism' (Correa et al., 2015) from previous experiences does negatively influence the participant belief about what teaching should entail. Aspects of the novice voice corresponds to 'a disorienting dilemma' in Mezirow's Transformative Learning Model (1981: 7) or being stuck in the liminal state (cf. 2.4.4). Participants also displayed instances of Lortie's 'apprenticeship of observation' (1975) as well as concepts from the literature such as 'praxis-shock' (Kelchtermans, 2009) and 'reality or practice shock' (Veenman, 1984).

**The Awakened Voice**

The 'Awakened Voice' is where there is an attempt to bridge the gap between the unknown to known in some form of the participant's identity as a teacher / student. In this situation, the respondent is attempting to comprehend and overcome the troublesome knowledge that they are faced with in either their learning or CP which impacts on their identity. Participants have displayed occurrences of this as they adjust to their new role and experiment to refine their practices (Grossman et al., 2008). There is a strong desire to confront the challenge in their 'liminal space' (Cousin, 2010) but there are also attempts in mimicry which may be unsuccessful

(Baille, 2012) and, thus, may result in a backward turn to 'Novice.' In the 'Awakened Voice,' there is recognition from the respondent that their existing view of the concept 'is no longer adequate' (Land, 2011) but 'if deep personal change or transformation is not undertaken by the learners, liminality becomes a liability' (Atherton, 2012).

**The Transformed Voice**

Finally, the 'Transformed Voice' is when that gap in knowledge has been transformed successfully which corresponds to the final stage of the participant's development in this study (in line with Fuller's *teacher concerns*, 1969). The transformed voice indicates the absence of being in the liminal state where once alien knowledge is now fully understood and incorporated into the ST's existing teacher knowledge and teacher identity. Concepts such as 'life-longer learners' (The Teaching Council, 2011a) and 'adaptive experts' (Hammerness et al., 2007: 358-360), indicate that the respondent is along the correct path, transitioning from a novice to an expert teacher. Subsequently, the sense of belonging to a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998) or 'reference group' (Nias, 1989) is indicative of the participants' shift from an outsider to an insider in their school. This relationship-forming with other disciplinary experts leads to the participants' being seen as teachers by either their peers (Discourse Identity) or by themselves (Affinity Identity) thus shifting or strengthening their teacher identity (Gee, 2001).

In addition to the different voices, the I-poems will present the reasons why each participant desired to become a teacher, obtained from both the email interviews and supported via the semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This also supports Lortie's (1975) 'apprenticeship of observation' and Borg's (2006: 283) LTC model, indicating that personal history and childhood classroom experience 'define preconceptions of education' and teachers' constructed identity of who 'they hope to become' (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011: 6).

## 3.7    Overview of the collected data

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006: 86-98) *Phases of Thematic Analysis* framework, along with Vaismoradi et al.'s (2016) *Phases and stages of theme development*, the collected data was compiled via a software program, MAXQDA, where codification could be carried out.

Analyzing each segment such as a paragraph, sentence, or phrases were labelled under four different categories: *Teacher Cognition*, *Teacher Identity*, *Teacher Development*. In each of those four categories, sub-categories were listed which stem from Borg's LTC model, the characteristics of TCs, entry into the teaching industry, adaptive experts, and Brookfield's impostership, for instance.

As a result of this procedure, a total of 1145 coding instances were recorded across 19 categories which are presented below:

| Category | Sub-category | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher Cognition | Schooling | 45 |
| Teacher Cognition | Classroom Practice | 162 |
| Teacher Cognition | Prof Coursework / External Factors | 111 |
| Teacher Identity | Entry | 19 |
| Teacher Identity | Impostership | 11 |
| Teacher Identity | Belief | 113 |
| Teacher Identity | Adaptive Experts | 12 |
| Teacher Development | Classmates / Colleagues / Co-workers | 57 |
| Teacher Development | Co-operating Ts | 46 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher Development | Disharmony between theory and practice | 62 |
| Teacher Development | Inspections | 67 |
| Teacher Development | Rite of Passage | 80 |
| Threshold Concepts | Transformative | 129 |
| Threshold Concepts | Reconstitutive | 0 |
| Threshold Concepts | Troublesome | 203 |
| Threshold Concepts | Irreversible | 8 |
| Threshold Concepts | Integrative | 12 |
| Threshold Concepts | Bounded | 8 |
| Threshold Concepts | Discursive | 0 |
| **Total** | **19 categories** | **1145** |

*Table 3.7 – Coding System overview*

Of these, the categories which recorded the greatest number of instances are *Threshold Concepts – Troublesome* (203), *Teacher Cognition – Classroom Practice* (162), *Threshold Concepts – Transformative* (129), *Teacher Identity – Belief* (113), and *Teacher Cognition – Prof Course / External Factors* (111) among the respondents in this study. Further explanation and definitions along with a corresponding literature review of each category is presented in Appendix A.

This sub-section will now present how the categories were coded and the identification of a TC.

### 3.7.1 Category Coding

To understand the complexity of coding categories, an example is provided from T2:

| | Ya the teaching is great. I must say that I am very happy with the school I am in. There's |
| T. Dev - Colleagues | |

Ya the teaching is great. I must say that I am very happy with the school I am in. There's a lovely atmosphere among the staff, the students. It's just a nice school and a relatively small school. There's less than 300 students – very small and it's an all-girls school. So I guess it is quite similar that it is a [name of] school and my primary school is [name of school] so there is a similar atmosphere, you know that I would be familiar with. So in terms of the school I am teaching in its lovely and I am very happy there and the teaching it's been great I must say. It's been tough and definitely has its ups and its downs. Even from day to day I can come out feeling fantastic, you know I've done a really good class and the students have responded really well and another day what am I doing with this…I'm not getting anywhere with the students that kind of thing so it does have its ups and downs but overall the majority of the time I'm happy with the progress I am making.

Coding category labels (left margin):
- T. Dev - Colleagues
- T. Development - Classroom Practice
- T. Cog - Schooling
- Teacher ID - Belief
- TC - Troublesome
- Teacher ID - Belief

*Figure 3.8 – Coding Category Sample*

In this sample, T2 explains how her teaching is progressing and about her school. This section is labelled as *Teacher Cognition – Classroom Practice* (in blue) as she is referring to classroom experience. This can also be sub-categorized into *Teacher Cognition – Classroom Practice – Non-Language Specific* as there is no reference made to teaching the target language. Since the 'staff' is mentioned this is coded as *Teacher Development – Colleagues* which would be an example of belonging to a community of practice. Although the atmosphere is 'lovely,' there are some aspects such as *Threshold Concept – Troublesome* (in brown) where she expresses her frustration about the teaching being 'tough' and 'not getting anywhere with the students,' but also instances of *Teacher Identity – Belief* (in black) where she feels 'happy with the progress' that she is making. In addition, this segment also has an example of *Teacher Cognition – Schooling* (in red) where T2 is comparing her primary school to her current teaching context, 'would be familiar with it'.

This procedure was adopted for each of the ST's face-to-face interviews and email interviews.

### 3.7.2   I-poems: Word Frequencies

Utilizing Gilligan et al., (2003) Listening Guide and primarily focusing on I-poems, this study conducted a word frequency on the data collected via MAXQDA. Conducting a '*Lexical Word Search'*, 'I' was the most common word that occurred at nearly 5% of the total amount of data collected (74,511 words), appearing in every interview and email interview in both phases. When this is expanded to include 'my' (in line with 'me-poems' Edwards and Weller, 2012: 207) then offering their own opinion results in nearly 6% of the total corpus of data. This is understandably so as the respondents were asked their opinion and why they thought so as follow-up questions. Upon investigating further, 'I' was strongly collated with such verbs as 'think', 'be', 'know', 'have', etc. with 'I think' totaling 0.34%, followed closely by 'I have', 'I was', 'I am', 'I don't', 'I would', and 'I had.' In result, these 'I + verb' combinations constitute 4.71% of the total data collected.

Focusing on the large number of 'I-statements' in this study, I-poems will be presented in the next section with samples from T1 to T5 in track their progress and change in identity. Unfortunately, T6 and T7 did not provide enough data to produce sufficient I-poems and so will be excluded from this part of the study.

Now this chapter will examine the reliability, validity, and limitations of this study.

### 3.8   Reliability, Validity, and Limitations

To assist with reliability, developing rapport and making the interviewee feel comfortable are seen as aspects that allow opportunities for probing, clarifying questions directly, adjusting to an appropriate speed and, therefore, can have a higher response rate than questionnaires (Cohen et

al., 2007: 352; Ary et al., 2010: 380) allowing for the supply of 'large volumes of in-depth data rather quickly' (Ary et al., 2010: 439).

According to Holliday (2010: 100-101), this depends on three principles: t*ransparency of method*, which emphasizes how the research is carried out; *submission*, which means the researcher's professional preoccupations must be sidelined to view the data from the eyes of the participants, and *making appropriate claims*, where making sense of the data to look at instances of behavior rather than broad tendencies is required.

CS' strength is observing situations in real institutional contexts and can help ascertain the cause and effect which other methodologies have difficulty to establish, effectively drawing clear borders around a case – in generating hypothesis and building theory (Hartley, 2004; Kohlbacher, 2006). George and Bennett refer to this as *conceptual validity* which required a detailed consideration of contextual factors (2005: 19).

Oppenheim (1992: 86 in Cohen et al., 2007: 354) emphasizes that standardization in interviews should refer to 'stimulus equivalence' where each interviewee fully understands the interview question being asked and more importantly, understands it in the same way as the others; that there is a consensus in what is being asked. This also leads to increased validity.

### 3.8.1 Methodological Limitations

Due to the small number of respondents who agreed to take part and the physical distances between us this was problematic in terms of logistics. In addition to that, the collection of the email interviews was an issue since I did not want to place pressure on the respondents by requesting replies to my emails. In one case, a respondent did not reply after the second email but was willing to be interviewed later, apologized for not replying due to the workload. The fact that

I was not known by the respondents may have added to this limitation and may have reduced the number of respondents who wished to take part. The small number of participants was a strong limitation to this study as it is difficult to generalize as a result.

Another methodological limitation was the length of the data collection itself since some STs may have needed more time to overcome the TC that they were encountering. As a result of this, it is not possible to state categorically that each respondent has overcome their challenges as no follow-up study was possible. The first cohorts (PDEs) were contacted about a follow-up interview, but unfortunately declined to take part.

## 3.9   Conclusion

After having viewed the approaches to educational research and the methods that will be used for this study, the theoretical framework shall be presented in this section. Due to this study exploring the transformative changes that STs experience in terms of knowledge and identity in a program of study, the methodology adopted for this exploratory multiple case study was the Threshold Concepts Framework, as outlines at the end of Chapter 2. This coupled with the data collection procedures will allow for the identification of challenges or bottlenecks that the STs encountered via an analysis of both the email interviews and the face-to-face interviews collected during their program of study. Using two case studies with the same data collection techniques does allow for triangulation and increased reliability of the data generated.

Due to the nature of the researcher living outside of Ireland and therefore, away from the PME program in Trinity College in general, it was desirable to find an alternative solution which could allow data collection in a relatively consistent and effective manner, while at the same time being able to delve a little further into that data and not skimming the surface. Reflections from the STs would not have been feasible if certain follow questions about their self-reflection were not asked, i.e. interaction with the student-teachers themselves to follow through on certain points. That

would allow for greater understanding of their challenges and issues they have encountered throughout their school year. As this study wished to look into the transformative nature of STs learning and the TCs that exist from that change, it was agreeable to conduct semi-structured email interviews as a means of obtaining data. This would allow the participants to feel that they are providing data to me in the form of reflections, being as detailed as they wished in their replies but also knowing that they were replying to a person and not a computer like some online surveys can feel like. The intention of this was to increase the levels of communication and thus, increase the level of interaction and data obtained.

Chapter 4 will outline the findings for this thesis while the discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter 5.

# 4 Findings

This study will present the findings that were gathered via the data collection instruments (i.e., semi-structured face-to-face interviews and email interviews). This will form the basis for the discussion in the next chapter (Chapter 5 – Discussion).

## 4.1 Introduction

As previously stated, the goal of this study is:

**To examine the professional development of pre-service modern language teachers from a consecutive program of study in terms of both knowledge and identity underpinned conceptually by the Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF)**

Specifically, the objectives of this thesis are:

1. What is the experience of student language teachers on a consecutive ITE program in terms of:

    a. Knowledge development

    b. Identity development

2. What helps or hinders this development?

3. Do aspects of this development constitute a Threshold Concept?

As Teaching as Relational is identified as the TC for this study, of particular interest is to measure if and how the STs transformed over the period of less than one year in both their teacher development and their teacher identity stemming from what was detected as troublesome, a primary characteristic of a TC.

Due to the nature of the study itself (i.e., a multiple-nested case study which allows each individual case to be compared, but also form an integral part of a broader picture (Thomas, 2011: 517), data was taken from each respondent's journey or case over the course of the year's progression and this chapter will explore if those challenges were overcome and in what manner they were surmounted. Allowing a diachronic approach in the multiple-nested case study enables each participant's journey to be studied, along with comparisons to be.

### 4.1.1 Overview of chapter

In order to examine the data collected in line with the goals of this study, this chapter will firstly present the TC of Teaching as Relational which connects the knowledge development and identity development of the participants (4.2), before proceeding to and finally what helps of hinders this development (4.3 and 4.4) respectively. A short summary concludes the chapter (4.5).

### 4.2 Teaching as Relational as a Threshold Concept

The underlining and interconnected TC that fulfilled the primary characteristics of *troublesome*, *transformative*, and *integrative* from the data collected in terms of teacher knowledge development and teacher identity development was **Teaching as Relational**. This concept was uncovered via examining the interrelated and connected interactions that occurred in the semi-structured email interviews and face-to-face interviews with the three primary characteristics of a TC (cf. 2.5), focusing on the attempt to grapple and overcome the concept (being stuck, both epistemologically and ontologically in the liminal state in terms of both their knowledge development and identity development), and analyzing the intersections that were categorized as troublesome in the data (i.e., TC: Troublesome / TC: Transformative).

In order to fully understand the TC of Teaching as Relational and the impact that it exerts on this group of STs in the discussion in Chapter 5, the following sub-sections will present the ST's collected data in relation to the troublesome knowledge that they experienced in relation to: **Relationships with Learners** (4.2.1), **Relationships with Disciplinary Experts** (4.2.2), and **Target Language Usage** (4.2.3). Data samples from the STs are also presented to provide a more comprehensive overview of their development in terms of teacher knowledge and teacher identity. Each sample taken is constructed as an I-Poem and labelled in accordance with Gilligan et al. (2003) Listening Guide of *Novice*, *Awakened*, and *Transformed* voices (see section 3.6.2).

### 4.2.1   Relationships with Learners

Classroom practice (CP) was the most troublesome aspect for the STs with 58 separate instances and correlating with transformative experiences 44 times, totally 102 unique instances of the concept from the data collected from T1 to T6. However, the issue of CP uncovered that the challenge of teaching in the language classroom stemmed, not only from teacher development concepts such as classroom management and practice, subject matter, discipline, PCK, and teacher planning itself, but from teacher identity concepts, for example, the lack of understanding the needs of their students, learner autonomy, belief in their decisions as teachers, and not fostering strong relationships with them.

Firstly, for some respondents, the timing or lack of it allocated to activities was a teacher developmental issue in their CP as they either ran out of time for activities in class (T1) or attempted too many activities at once thus running out of time to complete them (T6, Email_02).

I think I am managing classroom behaviour ok - there really aren't any major problems with behaviour in the school, so I am very lucky.
The worst problem I might encounter would be chattiness!
But I think a lot of that has stemmed from my lesson planning - not structuring the activities well enough to keep stronger students engaged, not setting tasks in class that are difficult enough, not modelling activities thoroughly enough before asking Ss to begin a task.          (Email)

*Table 4.1 – T1's Novice Voice on Lesson Planning (TC: Troublesome)*

For instance, in terms of teacher development, T1 felt that as she spent too much time on a task or run out of time at the end of the lesson (T1, Email_01), whereas in terms of teacher identity, she realized that she does 'tend to baby' her students or spend too much time on explaining and reexplaining the task to individual students (T1, Interview). This was also supported by her PT's suggestion that she record her own class to listen to her voice: 'I came across was really like kind of begging them like come one, instead of put the iPads away' (T1, Interviews).

T2 also had similar issues which became more problematic as the school year progressed (T2, Email_02; T2, Interview). This troublesome aspect resulted in her attempting different techniques to control her class such as employing various activities, simplifying the classroom routine, giving regular vocabulary and grammar exams, being stricter on homework and trying to get the 'hyperactive students' to focus (T2, Interview). She was stuck in the liminal state of both her teacher knowledge development and teacher identity:

Int: Does that knock you back then if the topic is – you think it is a good lesson, it's good on paper, it's going to go well. Students respond, maybe not negatively but maybe a bit bored by it – does that knock you back a bit?

T2: Absolutely ya and of course the more effort you put into something and the less effect is has on the class, that can be very disappointing and disheartening. I do try to take them as a learning curve. I try not to get too down about it but it's hard not to take things personally. It's hard not to be too frustrated when you put a lot of effort into something and you don't get the response you were hoping for. So ya I would, I think it would be I wouldn't say upsetting but it can be sort of a like pushed back a little bit.

*Table 4.2 – T2's Novice Voice on Classroom Practice: PCK, Planning and Discipline*
*(TC: Troublesome)*

Initially aspects related to teacher knowledge development, for example, behavior and discipline, dominated the email correspondence where attempting to find a balance between being relaxed and following through on discipline was also troublesome (T1, T2, and T5). T2 recalls her experiences:

> I'm not getting anywhere with the class
> I knew it was going to happen
> I knew it was a boring class
> and I should have tried to make it
> I would quickly realize that maybe the students didn't think
> I had a lot of discipline issues with them to begin with
> so I had to pare back and tried to be a little more in control
> limit the group activities that I did until I got them behaving in an acceptable way
> I was trying really, really hard to get their attention
> I tried to engage with them
> I wouldn't say upsetting but
> It's hard not to be too frustrated when you put a lot of effort into something
> I would be a soft touch when it comes to following up on discipline          (Interview)

*Table 4.3 – T2's Novice Voice on Classroom Practice: PCK (TC: Troublesome)*

T5's teacher identity was affected when she felt that students did not like her and noted that this 'can hurt my confidence definitely' (T5, Email_07):

> Discipline will always be something I struggle with. I know once you have your own classes this gets easier but I can never seem to find then balance between having a laugh with pupils and being friendly and then being able to keep them on task. I find that even if I start off strict, I'm not naturally cold and I tend to be overly strict and then they start to dislike my lessons.
>
> I can't really strike a nice balance. I find students don't like me too much and that can hurt my confidence definitely.                                        (Email)

*Table 4.4 – T5's Novice Voice on Classroom Practice: PCK (TC: Troublesome)*

To find a resolution, T5 engaged with co-operating teachers (CTs) and the Higher Education Institute (HEI) lecturers for advice (T5, Email_04) which led to mixed results (T5, Email_07). Nevertheless, she did note that being 'distracted with discipline' did distract her from teaching effectively (T5, Interview) indicating the troublesome nature of this for her.

Discipline for me has been a big thing.
I think it's the most obvious problem.
I mightn't notice if I'm not teaching something correctly,
some kid screaming at you.
You know that's a problem.
So I think that maybe I focus a little on that too much, definitely way too much.
I take it way too personally, I know that.
I think I project being too stern with the kids                    (Interview)

*Table 4.5 – T5's Novice Voice on Classroom Practice (TC: Troublesome)*

Not being able to plan effectively or focus on teacher knowledge in her Classroom Practice affected T5's identity on a personal level and the inability to confront this issue throughout the program also stems from her personal attitude of conflict avoidance:

I particularly can not, have no ability to deal with aggression or conflict.
I never deal with shouting or anything so.
if it was in my personal life I would not say anything and would completely cower back.
And I would probably apologise.
I would not in any way                    (Interview)

It's very easy to talk me into that it's my fault.
this is what we are doing and these are the rules, I find that very hard.
To be actually firm and say, no, whether you like it or not, I am in the right
So that's what I struggle with definitely.                    (Interview)

*Table 4.6 – T5's Novice Voice on Belief and Controlling Motivating Style (TC: Troublesome)*

Additionally, there were instances from the data where the STs acknowledge that not understanding their learners was problematic and where their students themselves attempted to foster relationships with the STs.

beginning of the year I tried more things with them
I need to work on is getting down to the level of the students
I think it's quite possibly partly my personality, possibly partly my background
I think I'm considered or what I find interesting or exciting
I know a lot of my students probably don't find interesting or exciting and so
I think I need to work harder at making the content more appealing to them          (Interview)

*Table 4.7 – T2's Awakened Voice on Self as Teacher and Teacher Knowledge*

The difficulties in the CP were seen as a result of what T2 reflected as not 'getting down to the level of the students' (T2, Interview) and that there was a dissonance between her expectations regarding the lesson plan and activities she had developed and the reality of the students showing disinterest in them. This did affect her teacher identity which was referred to on several occasions (T2, Email_02; Email_03; T2_Interview).

Understanding their learners was also noted by T1, T2, T3, and T6 where chatting and getting to know their learners during and before / after class proved beneficial in developing their teacher knowledge (lesson planning, PCK) and teacher identity (confidence, relationship forming, emotions). The effectiveness of building relationships with students by exchanging a few French greetings with them in the local supermarket was emphasized (T3, Interview), giving support and advice (T1, T3, and T6), while the importance of asking how they are after class was also highlighted (T1, Interview). Teacher identity was increased and transformative when the importance of the student's future was referred to:

> Like one student, one of the students with the special educational needs dad and mum had replied to say that actually he might be actually dropping French and I drafted an emailing saying, well ok, I'm very disappointed to hear that he wants to drop French. These are his options. I would be very happy for him to remain in the class even if he doesn't want to take the state exam, that kind of stuff. Then I thought more about it and I decided to consult the year head because there could be potential effects on matriculation to a university. (Interview)

*Table 4.8 – T4's Awakened Voice on Self as Teacher and Identity (TC: Transformative)*

This was also expressed by other STs as they expressed concern about their students' options and reasons for not studying a language (T1, T2).

The following sub-section will present the data related to developing relationships with disciplinary experts regarding the TC of Teaching as Relational.

## 4.2.2    Relationships with Disciplinary Experts

Disciplinary Experts influenced the STs teacher knowledge and teacher identity throughout their School Placement (SP) which also highlighted the connection of the TC of Teaching as Relational. The disciplinary experts are the co-operating teachers (CTs) who are assigned to the ST's and the Placement Tutors (PT) who grade the Teaching Practices and provide feedback to the STs. From the data, the level of involvement that CTs were willing to expend on their STs was diverse, but significant.

Firstly, some CTs were difficult to communicate with regarding lesson plans and up-to-date information on shared classes:

one teacher I can never get in contact with
I had to tell her that I was not going to be there on Monday
I was going on the field trip
I rang her,
I emailed her,
I texted her – no response.
I passed a message onto some other teachers she is friends with
It wasn't until Monday morning that she texted me back
I think she is so involved with so many things in the school
I'm assuming she's got a certain amount of work done
If only one teacher texted me back I would be fine organizing.
She is the one who is leading me on tender hooks trying to get things done.
(Interview)

*Table 4.9 – T3's Novice Voice on Disciplinary Experts (TC: Troublesome)*

However, she was unwilling to discuss this issue with other colleagues, affecting both her teacher knowledge and teacher identity: 'she is established staff and I'm a visiting PDE student' (T3, Email_10). Another ST felt that she did not receive sufficient feedback or support:

> Maybe it was my age as well.
> Maybe if I had been 21 going in they might have kinda been a bit more supportive whereas it's ah you know what you're doing, you're fine, off you go. (Interview)

*Table 4.10 – T1's Novice Voice on Disciplinary Experts (TC: Troublesome)*

Here, T1 (who is a mother of three young children) felt that more support would have been constructive and beneficial for her teaching and that being a mother does not necessarily lead to good teaching (Email; Interview).

In contrast, T4 questioned the level of trust that was placed upon her:

> So they kept saying oh you are doing a great job.
> Thanks but how do you know?
> You have no idea what I am like in the classroom.
> …
> But even the principal said you're doing really well. And I am like thanks.
> I felt like saying, thank you but you are not even engaging with me enough to know that.
> You're putting a lot of trust in me.                    (Interview)
>
> *Referring to a specific encounter with a CT:*
>
> She said you are doing such a great job of the first year girls.
> I am like oh thanks, I don't know, you know, how you know that.
> I just made a joke and she said, I trust you completely.
> I have absolute faith in what you are doing.
> I said thanks [laugh]. Like how did she know? I just think it's so funny.
>                                                          (Interview)

*Table 4.11 – T4's Novice Voice on Disciplinary Experts (TC: Troublesome)*

Additionally, in regard to teacher knowledge development, T5 felt that more support was needed with discipline which she received from her CTs: 'Often the co-operating teachers reminded me to wait for silence before explaining a task and to selectively ignore some minor behaviours' and the removal of 'some of the trouble makers out of my lessons' (T3, Email_03). In terms of planning, some CTs requesting that a particular plan be followed (T1, Emails 5-8; T1, Interview;

T3, Interview), which had both a positive or negative influence on the ST's knowledge and identity.

However, there were some positives aspects demonstrated by the CTs were troublesome students before an inspection in support (T5, Email_05) reflecting the understanding nature of the Placement Tutor Visit and offering support to the ST in their exam. The practice classroom seating assistance that T2 received from the vice-principal enabled her to reduce the 'chattiness' in class and thus, focus more on her teaching (T2, Interview). Asking lecturers at college was similarly employed by other participants (T2, Interview; T4, Email_02, Interview).

The fact that the PT also provides a reference and a grade which counts towards their overall TP score emphasizes the troublesome nature of this power dynamic which the respondents noted (T1, Interview; T3, Interview; T5, Interview). Upon consultation with her PT, T3 started to document everything 'in case anything is said' (T3, Email_11) and at the end of the data collection process, T3 stated that communication with the CT had not improved (T3, Interview). In addition to that, although T3 realized that she needed to become more organized (T3, Email_05) and wanted to plan her courses a couple of weeks in advance, the reaction from her co-teachers 'teachers were always like stop being so organized, you are making up feel like we are not' (T3, Interview). These indicate that the troublesome nature of how to confront her co-teachers is still a factor for T3 and were unresolved throughout her year of teaching.

In the case of T5, the PT noticed that she was always blaming herself and 'my apparent poor teaching skills' (T5, Email_03). T5 also compared herself to the other fully qualified teachers and the PME teachers and that 'I know this is not a healthy mindset' and admitting that she is 'very influenced by my inspectors [Placement Tutor]' (T5, Email_04). Another factor that was troublesome for her was keeping the TP evaluation sheets in her roll book in class and 'read and read them slightly obsessively' to focus on what needs improvement (T5, Email_06).

### 4.2.3   Target Language Usage

Another challenge that the STs encountered in terms of their knowledge and identity development which was the aspect of Teaching as Relational as a TC was **target language usage,** predominately French in this study. There were 67 instances *Language Specific* that were recorded as in the data collected with 14 marked as troublesome and 12 as transformative.

Teacher knowledge development occurred in relation to lesson planning. When T1 was planning her lessons, she pictured her strongest and weakest students and aimed that both can 'get something from the lesson' (T1, Email_12) and, thus, her PT suggested that her lessons should be more challenging, directly influencing both her knowledge and identity. From her second PT Visit, her use of the target language was noted as being positive (T1, Email_06).

T1 contrasted this with an Ordinary Level French class of 6th Year students who 'don't even know the basics of French and who are set to fail' (T1, Email_07). This resulted in her going back to the 'beginning with them – alphabet, numbers, je m'appelle, etc.' (T1, Email_07) and via discussions of utilizing authentic texts in class from her classmates in college she discovered:

> The first time, I gave them an article from Paris Match and a list of 10 questions.
> They did so well in it. Afterwards I told them it where the article was from, that it
> was for French-speakers and they were really impressed with themselves.

*Table 4.12 – T1's Novice Voice on Target Language Usage (TC: Troublesome)*

From this experience, her teacher identity developed as she became increasingly aware of her learner's 'difficulties and strengths' and, coupled with forging relationships with her learners, understood their needs better (T1, Email_ 09).

Additionally, T2 stated that she tried to make the material 'more accessible for the weaker student and then maybe that was not always very challenging for the higher, ah more able students'

(Interview). The turning point in her knowledge development was when she realized that other students were both bored and scoring 100% in the exams that she set for them (T2, Interview):

> Int: Was it a case of a certain amount of students kept getting 100% and you thought this was too easy for them or they seemed bored?
>
> T2: It was a combination of that and then they kinda seemed bored in class and say after Christmas I was doing describe your local area and you house and things. Then I asked them if they had already done it in Junior Cert. and I knew they had, they were kinda like oh ya we think so we did a little but so I went ahead and did that topic. But there was new stuff you teach them but I knew that from my questioning in class some of the girls already knew most of the vocabulary and stuff. (Interview)

*Table 4.13 – T2's Awakened Voice on Target Language Usage (TC: Transformative)*

For T4, she experienced some challenges in Target Language Usage after a PT Visit:

> While my inspector was nice and fair she did say that I had made various errors when speaking French (which I had, mostly due to nerves) and suggested that I take an evening course in French to improve my language. This was really demoralising for me as I had just finished my degree in French before starting the PME course and I knew I didn't have the money to take another course.
> (Email)

*Table 4.14 – T4's Novice Voice on Target Language Usage (TC: Troublesome)*

After experiencing a poor first inspection in which she made several mistakes in French, due to nerves, T4 focused more on her assignments in college to relieve that stress as a way to 'keep my head above water' and to 'attach less importance to the inspections and just get on with my teaching and not worry so much' (T4, Email_05; T4, Email_06). Her teacher knowledge and teacher identity were influenced by this PT visit. She argued that she had to be at 90% of the target language in class but that it was not always possible, partly due to the Special Educational Needs students and admitted that she would use more French when they were absent from class (T4, Interview). Other STs also mentioned the reduced amount of Target Language Usage with disruptive students and classroom management (T5, Interview; Emails) or to comedic effect (T3, Interview).

For T3, the use of the target language was troublesome in terms of her teacher knowledge development as she switched between French and English in her CP to aid the learners' understanding (T3, Email_01; T3, Email_02). In the same way as T2, from pedagogy classes in college and from her own experience in learning and having a deaf student in one class, T3 attempted to incorporate more movement in her teaching to make the connection between the action and the word more rememberable (T3, Interview). She noticed that while the 1st years were keen to follow the new techniques, there was apprehension from 4th and 5th years but that there was increased uptake (T3, Email_03). In terms of teaching grammar and developing her teacher knowledge, some advice from an inspection also prompted her to utilize discovery-based learning where her students 'figure out the rule for themselves' (T3, Email_09). This has made her more reflective of her teaching where using trial and error she would attempt a technique in different classes to see if it made any difference to different groups of students (T3, Interview). This incident impacted on both her teacher knowledge and teacher identity development.

T5 also felt in a similar manner with her French and noted that she was so concreted on her own French that she did not think about teaching French and due to this, realized that there is a 'lot more social work to the job that I anticipated' (T5, Interview) indicating an increase in awareness in regard to her identity. One of her reasons for deciding to become a teacher was due to the 'theatrical element of teaching' and being the 'youngest of a family, a certain amount of attention works' for her (T5, interview). For T5 being the first teacher that the 1st years encountered that they could adapt well to the 'constant target language use' while other years 'contradict those of my predecessor or co-operating teacher who constantly translates' (T5, Email_06) or teachers who claim to teach in the 'target language but actually didn't' (T5, Email_07). This resistance meant that middle-year students often struggled to follow the class and tended to switch off, promoting reassurance from T5 to her classes (T5, Email_07). Her frustration was noted earlier in 4.2.1.

As the interconnected aspects related to the TC of Teaching as Relational have been presented, the next sub-section will present the catalysts and barriers to change in the STs knowledge and identity development.

## 4.3    Catalysts for change

An ontological or epistemological shift occurred as STs grappled with the concept in the liminal state and these aspects assisted them to experience a transformative shift in their language teacher knowledge and/or with their teacher identity, for the most part. Firstly, this section will examine the data collected from the perspective of the influence exerted by the Community of Practice (4.3.1), Placement Tutor Visits (4.3.2), Reflections (4.3.3), and the Positive Effect of Emotion (4.3.4) on the respondents in this thesis, before, secondly turning to the barriers to change in the following sub-section (4.4).

### 4.3.1    Community of Practice

Overall, STs in this study where respondents felt a sense of belonging to a school. The assistance that T2 and T3 received in classroom discipline and lesson planning respectively strengthened their belonging to a reference group, while T5 was able to seek advice on classroom behaviour from disciplinary experts in the staffroom by asking 'How did you do that?' (T5, Interview).

In terms of belonging to a community at university, T4 noted that, although some of the HEI courses held little practical relevance for her teaching, she would turn up to class as it was seen 'as a good way reconnect with my classmates' (Email_04). This contrasted with T5 who connected more with her studies and classmates, than her CTs at school (Interview).

However, there is an element of 'noninterference' (Little, 1990; Nias, 1989) which can hinder the development if the STs are left to figure out teaching and the school environment by themselves. This was the case for T1 as her age resulted in noninterference from her colleagues as they viewed her as being capable to teaching simply because she had three young children. While increasing T1's community of practice and sense of belonging to the school, her teacher belief was partly delayed due to this.

Being involved more in school events and activities also leads to a greater sense of belonging in that group. For example, T2 conducting mock oral exams, T3's involvement with a class trip and T4 teaching remedial after-school courses and library duty did increase their sense of belonging in that school and thus impacted positively on their teacher identity in that socially-constructed environment.

### 4.3.2   Placement Tutor Visits

Apart from one participant that was interviewed in this thesis, each ST highlighted how challenging and stressful the inspection process was and how they were 'dreading' their PT visit.

Nevertheless, the degree to which the PT visit affected the participants was profound and transformative concerning classroom practice, teacher belief, and teacher identity. On the whole, the feedback was seen as constructive and helpful from the STs. For instance, T1 noted that her PT highlighted that she was not visible to the entire class when she bent down to explain the activity to some students, T5 was advised that she should become more conscious of their students in class, while T4 and T1 were informed that they will become great teachers and found this encouraging (T1, Interview; T4, Interview).

However, some STs felt that their PTs should be more explicit in their feedback. Some felt that should be told what they have done wrong and how they should improve, noting that reflecting directly after a visit was not helpful as they were emotionally drained or that they did not want to pick out their errors: 'I don't want to mention a mistake that you (the Placement Tutor) didn't pick up on. But I don't want to show that I haven't picked up on my mistakes. You need to show a certain level of self-reflection' (T5, Interview). In addition, there are also links between the inspection process and emotions where adverse emotional effects on the ST was experienced. For instance, T4 referred to this over the course of her PT Visits: from 'she [PT] was a little harsh,' and could have 'been a bit more positive' to acceptance: 'you can't teach every single lesson at the high standard that the inspector demands of you every single time' (Interview). This resulted in some being upset and crying at home (T2, Interview; T4, Email).

Other had encouragingly positive experiences, for instance, T1, who utilized the inspections as a means for her to focus her teaching skills (i.e., teacher knowledge and PCK) on certain aspects in the classroom. Although apprehensive at first, T1 viewed the inspections with importance and looked forward to developing more in the next inspection (T1, Interview). This was also indicated by T4 who experienced a challenging feedback session with the inspector and felt demotivated by it (T4, Interview). However, the feedback did assist her in improving, concentrating more on her teaching and placed less importance on her inspection as a result urged on by her PT who encouraged her not to see her 'inspections as there are not something to be checked off. It's a part of your initial, this is part of your training for life' (T4, Email_05; T4, Interview). She agreed that the PTs had to indicate aspects that needed improvement and identified certain aspects such as knowing the students' names and being able to recall them directly in class.

### 4.3.3   Reflections

Although the apprenticeship of observation did have an effect on the participants, particularly when then started their classroom practice, there was little evidence of this in the later stages of their first-year teacher education program. This was due to the participants increasing the amount of self-reflection in their teaching and attempting to understand their students' different needs more.

While some participants did specifically mention how reflection had aided them to become more aware of their environment and allowed them to overcome obstacles (T1 and T4), others had difficulty to identity what the specific classroom issues were (T2) or chose not to fully accept the issues that needed to be overcome (T3 and T5). Still the process of self-reflection did enable certain areas such as teacher belief and identity to become predominant in the eyes of the teachers.

T1 did note that her classroom teaching is a process and that through time and reflection she will become better at lesson planning and time management, 'It allows me to analyse what has gone wrong and find ways to improve on my teaching' (T1, Email_02). This resulted in better classroom behavior and although the Placement Tutor Visit was the main impetus for change (4.3.2), the drive to reflection on her teaching facilitated this development. T4's focus on her health via reflection enabled her to consider the importance of prioritizing herself instead of overly worrying about giving her students a perfect lesson every week (T4, Interview). This led to her believing and feeling more like a teacher stating that she would be unable to teach her students if she is constantly absent (T4, Interview). In addition to that, T2 and T5 reflecting more on the course materials and theory enabled them to focus more on aspects of the program that strengthened their identity as students which could be applied to their classroom practice (T2, Interview) or be 'strategic' and gain better grades (T5, Interview). In these aspects, self-reflection acted as a catalyst for change and teacher development.

### 4.3.4   Positive Effect of Emotion

Stemming from the literature on self-efficacy and emotion (cf. 2.4.4.4.3), there is a strong connection between emotion and the formation of identity (Nias, 1989; Brizman, 1993; Sleegers and Kelchtermans, 1999; Hargreaves, 2001; Zembylas, 2003) from the participants in this thesis. There was also a link between emotions and forming relationships where most of the respondents noted that they have to understand their learner's needs more precisely, and to view classroom disruption as the impetus to change for unchallenged students who act out of boredom, and not to 'take it personally' as some did initially (T1, Interview; T2, Interview; T5, Interview). These 'emotional geographies' (Hargreaves, 2001: 1061) are seen as 'threats and supports' interaction is increased with colleagues, students and parents in different communities (Gee, 2001; Wenger, 1998) and does affect their new ways of thinking and learning in their shifting identity. There were examples of threats in relationships taking place among the participants in this study, most noticeably between CTs (T1 and T2) and between students (T5), but also of positive relationship forming among CTs (T2 and T3) and students (T1 and T3). These positive relationships were cultivated over time and proved to be a catalyst for change for the participants involved.

For some, this positive emotion motivates them to integrate new insights into their teaching. T2 is a fundamental example of this as she attempts to understand her students and incorporates new techniques and activities to become more familiar with them, both on a personal and on an academic level. This is echoed in the literature (Crooks and Arakaki, 1999) as teachers often find their feet by practicing more and attempting to understand what is effective in their classroom. This aspect of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is further presented in section 4.5 under the ST's respective I-poems.

The next sub-section will present the barriers to change which acted as an inhibitor to the participants developing as teachers and restricting the transformative shift in their belief and identity.

## 4.4    Barriers to change

From the data collected, there were also barriers to change which inhibited the STs in their professional teacher development and inhibited a transformative shift in their epistemological and ontological identity. This sub-section will examine the most prominent from the data collected: System Level Barriers (4.4.1), Theory-Practice Divide (4.4.2), Negative Effect of Emotion (4.4.3), and the Lack of Self-Reflection (4.4.4) which impacted negatively on their transformative learning as they grappled with incorporating the TC of Teaching as Relational into their existing system of knowledge and belief.

### 4.4.1    System Level Barriers

This section will examine both the restrictions placed on participants by their respective post-graduate teacher education program, including the use of technology and the effect of the state exams as a barrier to change.

There was at times a disconnect between theory and practice in this study which resulted in the participants displaying distinct opposing views when it came to the theory and practice divide. Highlighting her love for teaching, T3 focused more on preparing for class than worrying about her college assignments (T3, Email_05; T3, Interview). Similar thoughts were expressed by other participants as they embraced their role and transformed from novice to expert teachers in their classroom practice. However, for some, their open dislike and at times apathy for theory was strongly stated throughout the data collection process. T1 sometimes felt a mismatch between her

coursework and her teaching and debated whether the theory in her college was beneficial to her development or not (T1, Email_01; T1, Interview).

This divide between being a student and student-teacher in teacher's college, and then a teacher in secondary school with the various roles it entails does indicate a greater understanding and appreciation by the participant concerning teacher identity and what it entails. This is also an element of teacher transformation and adaptivity. Initially, presenting itself as a barrier to change in T6 does refer to the teaching itself as 'solitary' with each teacher able to close the door to their classroom and be in their own 'domain.' Although he admits that while it is 'physically demanding' and teaching is what he 'always wanted to do,' there is still the question of being able to fulfill the different requirements and roles within the different socially constructed environments that are asked of him 'wearing three hats' (peer, student, and teacher) with the third hat 'you have hands on experience and can start to wear that hat soon enough when you are confident' (T6, Emails).

**Use of Technology**

This was also shown by the struggle that some participants experienced in utilizing technology in class and this stemmed from both the Professional Coursework and Classroom Practice in which students were given tablets and the teachers encouraged to use them in class. Issues arose when some participants felt that they had to incorporate more technology in their teaching and spent a significant amount of time on searching for vocabulary images (T1, Interview). T4's inspection had technological issues in which her attempt to make light of the situation in English was commented on in her feedback (T4, Interview). The impact of their teacher education program in which the use of technology in the classroom was encouraged did create a barrier to learning for some of them as they noted they are not good with technology (T5, Interview).

**State Exams**

State exams and the preparation for them, generally, did not lend themselves to creative and conducive learning in the language classroom in this thesis. While some respondents understood the importance of exams, often in terms of assisting their students to pass or to increase the school's or CT's reputation, there was a barrier to change for one of the participants as she failed to understand the importance of the exam on her students. T3 wished to increase her students' enjoyment of French, stating that being too exam-focused was inhibiting their learning (T3, Interview). In this case, it could be argued, from a social perspective that T3 is attempting to get her exam-oriented class to enjoy the language more and that it will assist with their learning and development in the long term, beyond the confounds of exams and for their greater appreciation of the subject matter.

On the other hand, one could argue, from a more pedagogic teaching perspective that if the class is overly exam focused then this motivation should be used to allow students to do well in their state exams – exams that are required to enter university in Ireland. This could indicate that there remains a gap in T3's knowledge when it comes to the level of importance the exam enforces on some of the students and compelling them to 'enjoy' class over intensification on their exam in her teaching style might have negative repercussions, a sort of teacherly imperialism where her style or way of teaching is imposed on the class. This has the consequence of influencing her teacher cognition and belief as well, limiting them to perceptions that she believes will assist all her students, regardless of their examination requirements. This combination of 'apprenticeship of observation' and 'socio-economical' (Deacon, 2012) and the personal traits that can be formed within classroom practice influences the degree to which a teacher may be influenced to think or behave in a certain pedagogic manner. Ulvik, Smith, and Helleve (2009) suggest a space between pre-service education and teaching which allows the teachers to reflect on their newly acquired knowledge and practices. In T3's case, the extra allocation of time and space for her to reflect would be beneficial to realize the importance of the exam on the students and harness that agency in her students' learning.

### 4.4.2    Theory-Practice Divide

There was also a barrier to change for the STs in reference to some of the courses in their teacher education program provided by the Higher Education Institute (HEI). There was a disconnection with the relevance of these courses not easily uncovered over the duration of their studies and, thus, did negatively impact on their understanding of Teaching as Relational. For instance, a substantial focus on self was displayed by STs, for example, T1 and T4 appealing for a more practical masters with activities that could be used directly in their own teaching and where specific topics such as behavioral management, bullying, and Special Needs Education could be concentrated on (T1, Interview; T4, Interview; T7, Email_01).

Concerning this topic, strong opinions were revealed: 'I must be honest. I don't have a lot of praise for the course' which stemmed from the distribution of the workload, irrelevant modules, and the timing of the assignments (T4, Email_01). The fees and length of the program was also criticized: 'they should have made is an 18 months course,' the schedule between work and study, and the lack of payment 'two years without pay is exploitation' (T7, Email_01). While these comments may be seen as predominantly relevant to the overall running of the ITE program in both a local and Irish context, focusing on these place the corresponding STs presently in the liminal state as they are unable to view the importance of the program in assisting them to develop relations with their colleagues or their students.

Furthermore, for the respondents, factors such as Classroom Practice and Schooling had a strong influence on their Coursework and resulted in increased dissonance between what and how they taught in their classrooms and what the ITE program entailed: 'to be honest quite abstract from the teaching' (T2, Interview) with little to no relevance to their teaching (T1, Interview; T3, Interview; T4, Email_01-04; T5, Interview). In addition to that, both T3 and T5 expressed that not enough was covered on discipline even though it is the 'main problem with everyone' (T5,

Interview), 'what a lot of us have agreed we're in need of, we're just not getting' (T3, Email_08), with 'a lot of miscommunication and things overlooked' and that some assignments were 'scrapped' (T5, Email_02). Focusing on upcoming curriculum development, T6 expressed concerns about the changes occurring in the new Junior Certificate system and how the profession will cope 'after years of narrow 'JC/LC exams' focus / rote learning' (T6, Email_05).

Additionally, there was also sympathy for some of the courses that were offered among the participants, noting that there were certain courses that were dictated by The Teaching Council where attendance was mandatory (T4, Interview), and that some classmates would enjoy those courses (T1, Interview). However, there were indications that some STs who enjoyed the courses (T2, Interview) and found comfort and safety in the ITE program (T5, Interview). In particular, T5 was strategic in focusing on her studies to increase her overall teacher education grade. As will be mentioned, (T5's Identity in 4.5.8.3) focusing deliberately on the teacher education programs did alleviate her stress from classroom teaching, as she considered herself 'rather studious and academic,' but did not increase her overall teacher cognition and belief. Again, more space and time in the liminal state is required for her to reflect on her learning and teacher development.

### 4.4.3   Negative Effect of Emotion

Another significant barrier to change was the negative effect of emotion that the participants experienced in their learning but predominately in their teaching practice. A mixture of negative emotions occurred throughout the program such as 'unsettling and darker emotions in teaching such as guilt, shame, anger, jealousy, frustration, and fear' (Fineman, 1993) (in Hargreaves, 2001: 1057) which inhibited their learning. Anxiety was prevalent in line with the literature at the start of the program (Britman, 2003; Conway et al., 2012; Kennedy, 1999; Nias, 1989).

The negative effect of emotion influenced one aspect of classroom practice and thus, their teaching identity and that was the amount of controlling motivating style (Reeves, 2009) that was enforced in class. Attempting to manage and control their students in a particular manner was predominately *pressure from above*, in terms conforming to departmental and school standards, and *pressure from within*, which arose from the participants' own personality disposition. This was influenced via their emotional response in an attempt to reduce the among of 'chattiness' and 'shouting' in class. T4's pressure from within occurred via placing a substantial amount of pressure on herself when teaching and this negatively impact on her health. It took considerable time for her to accept that 'you can't teach every single lesson at the high standard' (T4, Interview). This study did not find sufficient evidence for *pressure from below* and this may be partly due to the participants' focus on themselves and their tasks in their teaching, although T3 was an exception to this as she reacted to the students due to their extensive focus on their upcoming state exams, stating that 'it's hindering their learning' (T3, Interview). Some participants felt that students' lack of interest or misbehaving in class was chiefly their fault and not that of the students (T1, Interview; T2, Interview) which enforced this negativity.

In addition to that, not being able to control the level of stress that stemmed from the workload in the program also placed a heavy negative influence on the participants emotion. T5's example does support the concept that emotion and values are also considered central factors in the cognitive process as a mental response to an event that included physiological, experiential and cognitive aspects Mayer et al. (2001: 235) and, therefore, did impact on teaching and learning.

This negative influence also affects the amount of adaptive expertise that a participant can undergo as socioemotional changes (such as in interest, values, and identity) are intertwined in developing problem-solving techniques (Hatano & Oura, 2003: 26) and encountering new ways of approaching a challenge. Therefore, the negative effect of emotion on the ST cannot be understated with Jeffrey and Woods noting that teaching 'is a strongly emotional business' (1996:

326). If negative emotions are not understood and disciplined then not only do they have a detrimental authority over the teacher, but that also stems over the students and their learning.

### 4.4.4   Lack of Self-Reflection

While respondents did note the positive effect of self-reflection on their teaching and learning (5.3.3), there were some who had difficulty to reflect on themselves which led to confusion and an increased gap in their knowledge which widened over the course of the teacher education program. The ability to reflect critically on oneself is not an easy endeavor and that students need to be trained in how to reflect (Ash & Clayton, 2004: 142). This was indicated when participants were able to identify the issue in question or how to overcome it. An example here would be T2 and T5 in terms of classroom discipline. Whereas, through increased reflection, T2 was able to understand what was required of her, T5 was confounded and therefore, remained in the liminal state.

Rodgers and Scott, (2008), Beiijaard et al., (2000), and Connelly and Clandinin, (1990) note that the interpretation of teachers' lived experiences requires reflection which is involved in constructing the teacher's identity. At times the participants were unable to effectively reflect on their 'lived experiences' thus limiting their teacher development. It is imperative that sufficient time is given for the STs to come to terms with their challenges and their shifting identity. T5 was unable to achieve this due to her lack of self-reflection although she was aware of some aspects in her teaching practice as being different, 'So I wasn't aware of the fact that that second group are getting a much more pleasant teacher' (T5, Interview).

### 4.5   Aspects which constitute a TC in this study

Within this study, there were aspects which were classified according to the characteristics of TCF and were noted throughout the data collection process in both the development of teacher knowledge and teacher identity. However, these were not the only aspects prevalent from the data.

Following the TCF model's characteristics (defined in Appendix A), the data analysis procedure investigated each ST's I-poem in terms of the primary characteristics of a TC and to examine the interrelatedness of those characteristics. Did they exert any influence over each other?

Due to the data received and the time constraints of this study, only *troublesome* and *transformative* could be concretely examined for the TC of Teaching as Relational in order to understand the development in teacher knowledge and teacher identity that these STs experienced. Troublesome and transformative are also the primary characteristics of a TC when students enter the liminal space as set out in the literature (section 2.5) and produced the largest number of instances from the data collected.

Categorizing each I-poem (section 3.7.1), the total number of coding for troublesome was 203 as can be seen below:

| Respondent | Email Interviews | Interviews | Troublesome Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | 22 | 22 | 44 |
| T2 | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| T3 | 9 | 19 | 28 |
| T4 | 24 | 28 | 50 |
| T5 | 27 | 26 | 53 |
| T6 | 10 | - | 10 |
| T7 | 6 | - | 6 |
| **Total** | **100** | **103** | **203** |

*Table 4.15 – Total instances of troublesome*

While transformative, a characteristic which requires more time, recorded 129 instances:

| Respondent | Email Interiews | Interviews | Total |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| T1 | 23 | 12 | 35 |
| T2 | 1 | 13 | 14 |
| T3 | 14 | 13 | 27 |
| T4 | 10 | 18 | 28 |
| T5 | 10 | 8 | 18 |
| T6 | 5 | - | 5 |
| T7 | 2 | - | 2 |
| **Total** | **65** | **64** | **129** |

*Table 4.16 – Total instances of transformative*

There was a high degree of connections discovered from the data between troublesome and the

different subcategories:

| Category | Sub-category | Total |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Teacher Development | Classroom Practice – Non-Language Specific | 58 |
| Teacher Identity | Belief | 50 |
| Threshold Concepts | Transformative | 38 |
| Teacher Development | Disharmony between theory and practice | 35 |
| Teacher Development | Inspections | 34 |
| Teacher Development | Co-operating Ts | 24 |
| Teacher Development | Classmates / Colleagues / Co-workers | 23 |
| Teacher Development | Rite of Passage | 22 |
| Teacher Development | Classroom Practice – Language Specific | 14 |
| **Total** | | **298** |

*Table 4.17 – Interconnections with Troublesome*

Similarly, intersections with the TC characteristic Transformative are highlighted below:

| Category | Sub-category | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher Development | Classroom Practice – Non-Language Specific | 44 |
| Teacher Identity | Belief | 41 |
| Threshold Concepts | Troublesome | 38 |
| Teacher Development | Rite of Passage | 37 |
| Teacher Development | Inspections | 27 |
| Teacher Development | Classmates / Colleagues / Co-workers | 17 |
| Teacher Development | Co-operating Ts | 13 |
| Teacher Development | Disharmony between theory and practice | 12 |
| Teacher Cognition | Classroom Practice – Language Specific | 12 |
| **Total** | | **241** |

*Table 4.18 – Interconnections with Transformative*

Both of these tables indicate the relationship between the sub-categories and some salient aspects that were indicated in sections 4.2 – 4.4. The most troublesome and transformative aspect was *Teacher Development: Classroom Practice – Non-language Specific*. This indicates the difficulty that STs had in their classrooms which were not related to teaching the target language. For example, some STs expressed challenges in managing the behavior of their students (T1, T2, and T5), connecting their lesson planning to the needs of their students (T1 and T2), physically arranging the seating to reduce 'chattiness' (T1, T2, and T4), removing students from their class (T5), adjusting their own position in front of the students so that they could be seen (T1 and T3), increasing their awareness of timing for their activities (T1, T2, T4, and T5). These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Each of the troublesome aspects were further classified into 'Early' or 'Late' for each ST indicating when they experienced difficulty and were stuck in the liminal space:

| Respondent | Early | Late | Total |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | 13 | 31 | 44 |
| T2 | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| T3 | 3 | 25 | 28 |
| T4 | - | 28 | 50 |
| T5 | 7 | 19 | 53 |
| T6 | 3 | 6 | 10 |
| T7 | 6 | - | 6 |
| **Total** | **100** | **103** | **203** |

*Table 4.19 – Early and Late instances of Troublesome*

Likewise, with transformative, although it was experienced less by the STs:

| **Respondent** | **Early** | **Late** | **Transformative**<br><br>**Total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | 12 | 23 | 35 |
| T2 | 1 | 13 | 14 |
| T3 | 6 | 21 | 27 |
| T4 | 1 | 27 | 28 |
| T5 | - | 18 | 18 |
| T6 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| T7 | 2 | - | 2 |
| **Total** | | | **129** |

*Table 4.20 – Early and Late instances of Transformative*

The 'Late' occurrences appeared in the data after Christmas and in the face-to-face interview when some of the participants stated that they still had difficulty with a concept in their teaching or learning in terms of their teacher knowledge and teacher identity. For example, during her interview, T4 felt that she needed more support from her CTs in terms of lesson planning and the stress of her coursework, as well as planning her wedding, aggravated her anxiety and mental health, which directly influenced her ability to develop both her knowledge and identity to feel as a teacher (Emails, Interview). However, she did note in her interview that she realizes that it

is not possible to 'you can't be perfect and you can't teach every single lesson at the high standard that the inspector demands of you every single time' and that 'Like, I just said, it's not worth having a break down. It's not worth having a month of perfect lessons only to burnout so soon' (T4, Interview). This indicated a transformative aspect where focusing more on herself and maintaining a balance in her life has led to a better understanding of her teaching demands and, which some aspects are still troublesome, there is a strong indication of transformative taking place in both her teacher knowledge and teacher identity regarding the TC of Teaching as Relational.

Overall, these *Early and Late* tables highlight the recurrence of troublesome themes, for example, teacher belief for T1, T2, T4, and T5, which required more time for the ST to understand and to overcome. As a result, some of the STs still remained in the **liminal space** at the end of the data collection procedure, for example, T5 on teacher knowledge and teacher identity:

---

I'm on guard with those students because they are so tough with me,
whereas these kids seem to like me so I'm much nicer.
So I wasn't aware of the fact that that second group are getting a much more pleasant teacher experience. They seem to like French more than the other kids

*Referring to how different classes are:*

For me it depends on who I'm teaching.
I teach a first year group at the minute and
I've never had one problem at all.
I've never have to double check. For some reason, it just works perfectly.
I feel I am in complete control and they seem to love it.
So whatever I am doing right there, it's working

They say things like, if one girl teaches all girls, they say things like my girls.
I never had that sense of a motherly figure.
I don't know.
I haven't fully accomplished that just yet.

*Referring to returning to teaching:*

I'm a little concerning about the fact that
I am not…looking forward to going back to school.
Not out that I am tired or anything lazy.
Just not looking forward to it at all.                                          (Interview)

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*Table 4.21 – T5's Liminal Space on Classroom Practice and Identity*

The example above highlights the still troublesome aspect of T5's teacher knowledge and identity as she displays a lack in confidence in her teaching but does not actively pursuing avenues to overcome this barrier, highlighting a lack of reflection or communication with her peers. Unlike T4, who began to accept that she needs to focus on herself more in order to become a better teacher for her students, above, T5 remains stuck in the liminal space indicating the relevant of the TC in her teaching and learning.

Lastly, in sharp contrast to this, T1 initially exhibited a sense of 'impostership' at several stages in her teaching and learning which exerted a negative influence on her belief, noticeably at the beginning of her teacher education program when she returned to study:

| |
|---|
| I suppose I lost my confidence being at home for so long<br>my application form looked terrible and<br>my CV looked dreadful [laugh].<br>I didn't think anyone would want me.<br>So totally lost my confidence.<br>Didn't think I would get the interview.<br>Didn't think I would get in. Got in.<br>And then suddenly found myself you know in front of a class in August of 25 little faces looking at me and ya<br>but then I absolutely loved it once I started.                                    (Interview) |

*Table 4.22 – T1's Troublesome on Impostership*

This aspect of teacher identity was also compounded by the troublesome aspect of confronting the classroom management where she placed the blame on herself:

| |
|---|
| The worst problem I might encounter would be chattiness!<br>I run through a check list of learning objectives at the end of class<br>but I don't feel like I can really assess their learning this<br>I didn't model one of the tasks properly<br>I was annoyed with myself, because I have worked hard over the last few        (Email) |

*Table 4.23 – T1's Troublesome on Classroom Practice*

This stemmed from the lack of confidence in her teacher belief and identity when displaying frustration:

| |
|---|
| I am finding it hard to remember<br>I am just a student teacher<br>and that I am not expected to set the world<br>I am probably making more of a deal about it than I should be.        (Email) |

*Table 4.24 – T1's Troublesome on Teacher Belief*

Again, T1 is attempting to find fault with herself and her abilities. One aspect of her personality placed a reluctance to seek advice from her peers in classroom issues. Finding fault in herself was a recurring theme in T1's exploration of teacher identity as she did not see the impact of fostering relationships with her learners and to understand their needs. In addition to that, she grappled with her teacher knowledge in making her lessons more accessible for all levels in her class and felt 'overwhelmed' at times, as indicated as troublesome at a late stage:

| |
| --- |
| I need to make it more challenging<br>I think I am scared of alienating the SEN (Special Needs Education) students<br>told in my last inspection that I was teaching to an overall low level<br>I seriously need to work on this before my last inspection<br>I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed with some of my 1st Year classes<br>I have had a rough couple of weeks to be honest.        (Email) |

*Table 4.25 – T1's Troublesome on Classroom Practice*

Using the PT visit ('inspection') as a catalyst for change, T1 stressed the need to focus more on unpacking her teaching and understanding her student's needs. However, with this catalyst and focusing on her next PT, there are elements that T1's teacher knowledge and teacher identity is developing from that of a novice to an expert teacher:

| |
| --- |
| Ah teaching ya I feel like, I feel like, I kinda turned the corner<br>When I'm planning a class I now try to think about how I can<br>I won't underestimate them any more<br>I have been throwing more homework and harder classwork at them    (Interview) |

*Table 4.26 – T1's Transformative on Teacher Identity*

This stanza, taken from the final data collection process, is indicative of the transformation that T1 undergoes over the course of the program and how her confidence and teacher belief became more apparent. However, the stanza above highlights the issue of emotion and identity that T1 is undergoing: A multi-facet identity which she sees as 'student, teacher and parent' (T1, Email_02), thus indicating a shift in her ontological perspective.


In these three cases the transformative and troublesome characteristics of a TC are met, although they are at different stages of their professional development process (T5 was the only ST in this study who appeared to still be stuck in both teacher knowledge and teacher identity at the end of the data collection process, whereas others displayed strong indications of overcoming their 'stuckness' in the liminal state). However, there are connections made between teacher belief,

classroom practice, understanding the needs of their learners, and their identity as a teacher which indicate the presence of a TC. Additionally, a TC needs to be learnable and somewhat tangible for students and HEIs to grasp the concept. While Teaching as Relational may not be easy for new STs to comprehend, due to its 'interconnectedness' with different concepts, various aspects that connect with it, as indicated in section 4.2 are, for example developing relationships with learners or focusing on their target language usage in their classroom practice.

## 4.6    Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study in distinct but inter-related sections: the identification of Teaching as Relational as a TC with its characteristics of being troublesome and transformative, the utilizing I-poems with their subsequent support or hinderance being clarified as the STs attempted to understand and overcome the barrier to their learning and teaching in terms of their teacher knowledge and identity, and which aspects of this study constituted a TC.

The beneficial aspects of using I-poems allowed for the recognition of respondents' identity to be tracked as it transformed over the duration of the program. There were some clear distinctions made between each participant in how they were affected by the classroom environment, their learning, and the community of practice which they were placed in. This highlights the personal journey which each participant experienced in their education and that each 'case' is unique and intimate.

There were examples of support and assistance that aided the participants along their teacher identity path. The importance of self-reflection and the influence of PT Visits emphasized the significance of critically reflecting on CP and how disciplinary experts in the field can offer constructive advice and counsel which, in turn, can encourage and guide STs in their goal of

transitioning from a novice teacher throughout their ITE program. The influence of belonging to a community of practice did have a strong impact on the STs.

Nevertheless, there were instances which were obstacles to the participants' identity. Not only system level barriers and a theory-practice divide but, also, there were aspects of 'noninterference' from disciplinary experts which hindered the development of the novice teachers. In addition to that, the belief that they were 'only a student-teacher' at times indicated the role that impostership and mimicry can play in their teacher development and how a lack of self-reflection can lead to being stuck as a novice teacher. This can hinder the development of a teacher if they remain in the liminal state and are unable to deconstruct their preconceptions about teaching or their 'apprenticeship of observation.'

For some, their identity did transform resulting in a shift from novice to expert teacher. However, there are examples where transformation took place after the participants encountered dissonance and struggled with the TCs. The use of the TCF model did allow for the identification of certain aspects in each participant and, in some cases, indicates how emotions and personal values are important, as well as reflecting and reliving their experiences, particularly on their own teacher knowledge development and teacher identity development. The following chapter will examine these aspects in greater detail.

# 5 Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings by merging the Literature Review in Chapter 2 with the Findings in Chapter 4 to draw conclusions on the results of this thesis regarding the ST's professional development in terms of their identity and teacher belief stemming from the identification of the TC and the transformative shift of identity tracked in the I-poems, in conjunction with the data collected from the ST's I-poems.

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to tightly align the data and findings with the research questions. i.e., the examination of the ST's experiences in terms of their knowledge and identity on a consecutive ITE program underpinned conceptually by the TCF. The resulting consequences of learning from the data collection allowed for the importance of 'being stuck' in the liminal state to be uncovered (i.e., the process of attempting to understand the TC of Teaching as Relational itself) and how they attempted to overcome this challenge (the catalysts or barriers to these changes). The chapter will also discuss the aspects of this development which constitute a TC following on from the data collected in the previous chapter on the primary characteristics.

### 5.1.1 Overview of chapter

Section 5.2 will present the aspect of Liminality / Liminal State and its importance for the STs and their development. Section 5.3 discusses teacher development with related aspects that contribute to its development within this study, for example PCK, self as learner, target language usage, lesson planning, and forming relationships with their learners and disciplinary experts. Following on from that, section 5.4 examines the ST's development of teacher identity, consisting

of such aspects as emotion, impostership, TL and teacher belief. Section 5.5 will return to the conceptual framework which underpinned this study to ascertain the effectiveness of the TCF.

Firstly, this chapter will turn to liminality and the importance of being in the liminal state in terms for teacher development.

## 5.2    Liminality / Liminal State

Kagan noted that preservice teachers must 'experience dissonance' in order to 'modify, adapt, and reconstruct their images of self as teacher' to acquire knowledge (1992: 147). In order to master the *TC of Teaching as Relational* that was being experienced throughout their teaching and learning, and as a shift in identity occurred, the STs were temporally fastened into a liminal state where they experienced dissonance and confusion when faced with troublesome knowledge in their learning and teaching. This sub-section will discuss the importance of being in this liminality space.

These spaces have been viewed as part of the 'messy journeys back, forth and across conceptual terrain' (Cousin, 2006: 2) where there is a conscious attempt to understand and unpack the concept in question (Meyer & Land, 2003). This conscious attempt is imperative for the ST to release themselves from being stuck in the liminal state, as it takes both time and effort to achieve. For example, T3's previous experiences as someone who has to move when she learns and saw it as 'something that is linked to me so I am someone who definitely needs to move' (Email_02) assisted her in understanding the different needs of some of her learners. However, she encountered a barrier when students failed to follow her 'different' and physical approach to lessons, noting 'They're very boring. They are extremely exam oriented. So much so that it's hindering their learning. And I am bored with the class as well' (T3_Email). In an attempt to overcome this barrier to both her teacher knowledge and identity, she sought assistance from her

CT, who was her former teacher and decided to incorporate classroom language into her lesson so that her learners could express themselves and actively use the language, even if it was slightly off-topic. Later on, during the face-to-face interview she noted that 'I decided that with each of my classes, no matter the class, no matter the year, I would do a classroom language class' indicating an increased connection in both knowledge and identity. Additionally, the emphasis that T3 placed on incorporating different learning styles in her classroom indicates her transition out of the liminal state in terms of her teacher knowledge and teacher identity.

As the liminal space indicates the existence of a gap in knowledge where the 'existing view is no longer adequate' (Land, 2011: 2), sometimes 'quasi plagiarism, plagiarism, or mimicry' are utilized in an attempt to mask this disparity in knowledge (Cousin, 2010: 4; Baillie, 2012: 14) or a deliberate self-conscious attempt to hide their perceived lack of knowledge in front of students or disciplinary experts. This was evident among the participants in this study where some attempted to hide their gap in knowledge (T5) or were perceived from their peers and capable and knowledgeable in teaching (T1 and T4) which ensured that they remined stuck for a longer period of time.

### 5.2.1 Teacher identity in the Liminal State

As was discussed in the literature review, teacher identity is not something that one has but that is being developed throughout one's life (Beijaard et al., 2004: 107). This was also the case for the STs of this study where their identity was shifting, unstable and multiple (Rodgers and Scott, 2008) throughout the duration of the data collection procedure as they become increasingly emotionally involved in both the context of their own learning in the ITE classroom and in their School Placement. While they had their own opinions and previous experiences on how students learn and how teachers should teach, as some STs came from a teaching family, this was in stark contrast to the reality of the language classroom. Thus, as they underwent transformative learning,

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their teacher identity shifted accordingly over time and, sequentially, their knowledge of the subject matter and PCK. A substantial amount of the literature connects identify and emotion in its formation (Nias, 1989; Britzman, 1993; Hargreaves, 2001, Zembylas, 2003; Sleegers and Kelchtermans, 1999; Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Woods & Carlyle, 2002) and this study also makes the connection between the teacher being in the liminal state and the formation of teacher identity itself.

For instance, T1's journey in an attempt to understand and then overcoming the challenges in her Classroom Practice does highlight being 'stuck' in the liminal state for some months, being continuously confronted by it, and that via investigation, pursues a solution to prevail over her challenges. Her surprise at being accepted into the HEI program does indicate her lack of teacher identity and confidence at the beginning. She reflected on this in her interview, 'I suppose I lost my confidence being at home for so long. My application form looked terrible and my CV looked dreadful' (Interview). Initially, she got stuck in the liminal space when she incorrectly identified that the classroom chattiness stems from not structuring activities appropriately to actively engage the stronger students and not modelling activities for students effectively. This abides by Clark and Yinger (1979) reasons for 'lesson planning' – to build confidence and security about the lesson. Thus this experience led to an increased lack of confidence in T1's overall teaching ability: 'juggling of three jobs – student, teacher and parent – and finding enough hours in the day to do each to the best of my ability!' (T1, Email_02).

Initially, to confront this, T1 positioned her students at different desks and moved the weaker students closer to the front of the classroom (T1, Email_04) and offered treats (T1, Email_05; Email_08) which can be seen in line with Newby's (1991: 198) controlling strategy that beginning teachers use. In addition to that, her 'unrealistic expectations' and 'noninterference' (Nias, 1987; Little, 1990) from disciplinary experts in her school practice resulted in decreased belief in her ability to overcome these troublesome aspects and to become a fully qualified

teacher. This element of noninterference is also noted as being 'difficult for newcomers' (Ingersoll, 2016: 47) where the STs must become acutely aware of this in their teacher education.

Via her PT visits and critical self-reflection, acting as the catalysts to change in her epistemological and ontological perspective, T1 began to comprehend that Classroom Practice entails deeper understanding of her student's needs, developing relationships with them, and not focusing solely her own teacher knowledge of classroom management. This journey over 'conceptional terrain' (Cousin, 2006: 2) was not a linear one, but often involved a cyclical criterion which attempted to incorporate newly attained knowledge into both her Classroom Practice and knowledge of how her students acquire knowledge and learn in her existing frames of reference and previous experiences about teaching. As a result of this development in her identity, there was also a pronounced transformation in her teacher belief and identity. There were similar patterns with some of the other respondents, but none as profound as T1 as she reflected on her first time in her Classroom Practice, 'I kinda felt like I was winging it, just going in there pretending I was a teacher' (Interview).

However, this was not the case for everyone, and while T3's lack of understanding in relation to the system-level barrier of state-exams is in conflict with her personality, another ST's struggle is more apparent and revealing, indicating opposing views to The Teaching Council's goal of 'lifelong learning,' noting that the first year of a beginning teacher's career constitutes 'a critical period' (2011b: 16) and that ITE programs should 'ensure that tomorrow's teachers are competent to meet the challenges that will face and are prepared to be lifelong learners, continually adapting over the course of their careers to enable them to support their students in achieving their full potential' (2011b: 9). However, there was some disparity from the respondents in this study, which indicates the gap in knowledge between their classroom practice and the program objectives.

Perhaps the most arrant contrast to The Teaching Council's objectives comes from one ST, T5. Her endeavored journey in Classroom Practice indicates that she remains static and not in the liminal state as she fails to come to terms in understanding what her challenges entails and how to overcome the TC of Teaching as Relational. Nonplussed, she instead focuses on the students who appreciate and 'like' her and neglects those who are troublesome in her class without understanding the reason why (T5, Interview). This indicates that she had not encountered the liminal state as of yet and this does have a negative consequence on her learning and identity as she remains at the novice stage of her learning, able to see the gap between the different classes that she teaches but unable to decipher why this is the case, instead emphasizing that when she has her own classes, it will be different and 'it will come with experience' (T5, Interview).

Consequently, until T5 can recognize the gap in her teaching in this specific area, she will remain in this liminal state, where being 'too snappy and a bit too sarcastic' (T5, Email_03) is used as the coping mechanism for behavior issues in her class, in effect 'quasi-plagiarism' as a teacher. This is in line with teaching been seen as 'inextricably emotional – by design or default' (Hargreaves, 2001: 1057). This also affects her identity as T5 positions herself as the outsider, in order to gain distance and separation, distinguishing how the students behaved differently with various teachers and absorbing it personally, highlights the negative effect of emotion on her identity as a teacher, where she would 'rarely be myself in the class' (T5, Interview). There is not enough evidence in this study to indicate, in line with Meyer and Land (2003) that T5 will make a conscious and deliberate effort to understand and unpack this concept as she remains in a liminal state. Therefore, due to the emotional influence on both her teacher knowledge and teacher identity, there was a lack of transformative learning in regard to understanding the importance of fostering relationships with her students and understanding their needs. Until T5 is made aware of this, and actively attempts to overcome it, she will remain in the liminal state.

Other participants in the study (T2 and T4 for example) also displayed a willingness to interpret students' needs attempting to promote a more student-centered approach in their classrooms,

mediating the TC, and progressing outward of the liminal state. These in turn, result in a positive impact on both their teacher knowledge and teacher identity. The relevance of 'threshold confidence' (Felten, 2016: 6) is equally imperative in being released out of the liminal state and highlights the influence of both cognition on a teacher's emotional dimension concerning their identity and on their belief. Being able to overcome their initial confusion related to Classroom Practice, some respondents integrate this knowledge focusing on their learner's needs which is one of the aspects that is responsible for making them act and feel like a teacher. Therefore, for the respondents in this study, there is a correlation between liminality and teacher identity as being able to exit the former does have a positive influence on the latter. The next sub-section will examine the importance of the liminal state for STs and its prominence in teacher education.

## 5.2.2   The Importance of the Liminal state

Being stuck in the liminal state indicates the 'uniqueness' and 'personal nature' of the TC itself as they can adversely affect each ST distinctly but can only be surmounted if the participant is willing to critically and constructively reflect on their learning and identity when being confronted with troublesome knowledge. This is no easy feat for any novice teacher as it affects existing preconceptions that exist and that are challenged: in essence it confronts their identity. As was discussed in the previous sub-section, STs must display a strong inherit desire to overcome the challenge facing them, confronting the stressful situation they are in as teachers whose personal identity undergoes transformation (Woods & Carlyle, 2002: 169). Essentially, as previous studies have shown in other fields (Chapter 2), identifying the TC is also not sufficient for teacher educators and HEI providers; there must be a conscious and deliberate attempt to confront that challenge using various means at their disposal, for example, experimenting in their classes, discussing and seeking advice from their lecturers and disciplinary experts in their Classroom Practice, becoming familiar and fostering relationships with their students, listening and following the advice given by the PTs, and so forth. From this study, it was seen that seeking

assistance does not come naturally as one can feel open to criticism which further prolongs the stay in the liminal state. The effect of what was seen as 'negative' instead of constructive criticism by some of the STs (T1, T2, T4, and T5) from their PT visits compounded this as well. The transition for each ST was, and is, deeply personal and does affect the cognitive processes of an individual's PCK and teacher knowledge and their sense of self-worth and identity as a teacher.

If classroom management is considered one of the most important aspects for novice teachers (Huberman, 1993) and that it is a prerequisite to teaching content (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016), then the PT visits (or "inspections" as they were referred to as in data collected by the STs) must be considered the most stressful aspects of the ITE program in this thesis. Apart from one participant that was interviewed in this thesis, each ST highlighted how challenging and stressful the inspection process was and how they were 'dreading' the PT visit.

What HEIs can ensure, in assisting the development of their ITE candidates when confronted with liminality, is to enable procedures or mechanisms that purposefully recognize the importance of grappling with a concept; of being 'stuck,' while at the same time, becoming increasingly accustomed to the participants' own identity as they reconstruct their sense of self as a teacher. Being stuck in the liminal state does create embarrassment, distress, and unease for the participants and thus, openly discussing this would facilitate constructive feedback from the disciplinary experts and self-reflection from the participants themselves. This is in line with recognizing the 'developmental potential' of the TCs (Timmermans, 2010; 2014) and that they are epistemological, ontological and transformational in nature where the extent of the participants' newly acquired knowledge is integrated into their existing knowledge system.

Prendergast notes that the TCF offers a 'framework which is quintessentially integrative, setting a number of key theories in relation to each other which facilitate the generation of insights for the field of professional learning' (2017: 158). Therefore, there is a significant demand for TCs to include the self and the reconstruction of the self if they are seen as relevant and can be

successfully applied to the real world in ITE, specifically in classroom practice, an area which many novice teachers find challenging and where their beliefs are seen as developmental (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016; Berger et al., 2018).

The next sub-section will examine the development of teacher knowledge among the data collected from the STs in this study, in collaboration with the TC that was identified in the previous chapter.

## 5.3    Teacher Knowledge Development

As set out in the research goals for this study, the chapter will now turn to presenting and discussing the aspects of teacher knowledge experienced by the STs in their ITE program of studies and how this developed over the course of the year. From the data collected, the aspects of teacher knowledge development that were the most prevalent were Pedagogical Content Knowledge and forming relationships with their learners and disciplinary experts. The sub-section will conclude with a discussion of the importance of time and why it should be considered for the development of teacher knowledge. In each section Lindvall & Ryve's five features of Professional Development (PD) (2019) (see section 2.2.1) will be utilized to provide a stronger link between the STs and their development.

### 5.3.1    Pedagogical Content Knowledge

PCK is of great importance as it places the content and pedagogy under the same umbrella, allowing for instruction that can be adapted due to the needs of the learners in relation to the subject matter (Shulman, 1987: 8; Fernandez; 2014). In this study, this refers to the *content focus* where there is a focus on subject knowledge and content (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019: 140). Therefore, in terms of teacher knowledge development, there is a strong link between the PCK

and the knowledge that the STs developed, particularly in their Classroom Practice which developed over with more experience throughout the program. At times, their CT assisted in this process. As noted from the findings, the teachers themselves play a crucial role in the change process (Feiman-Nemser, 2012) as implementers of reformed curricula in the language classroom with assessment practices which fail to match the new approach (Brown, 2007).

As stemming from the literature review, Shulman noted classroom practice as, 'perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species ever invented' (2004: 504) and this was felt distinctively by some of the STs (mostly by T1, T2, T4, and T5). Not only was classroom management an issue but also the use of the target language was experienced in this study. For example, in connection with the subject matter, German in her case, T4 felt that target language usage was an on-going challenge which was compounded by the fact that she viewed her CT as an 'expect' mostly due to the fact that she is 'very good at using the target language' and that 'She spoke French all the time, so immediately I thought that was really, really good' (T4, Interview). Therefore, T4 noticed a gap in her knowledge and stated that more 'independent study' was needed towards 'reaching more fluency' and working on German grammar to improve her confidence noting 'I worry about teaching German at a higher level' (T4, Email_06). This gap in in her PCK pushed T4 to take extra courses in order to develop her teacher knowledge within her classroom in line with uncertainty seen as a problem to be rectified (Barradell and Kennedy-Jones, 2015).

Additionally, as preservice teachers often adopt the practices of their former teachers (Lortie, 1975; Feiman-Nemser, 2001), Fives and Buehl (2016) note that PD needs to assist teachers in aligning beliefs. As from the literature, this study also discovered that the STs experienced their most troublesome and transformative aspects of their identity when they were examining and reflecting on their Classroom Practice. This was also a similar process for T1, 'I suppose this year is a process and I have become much better at lesson planning and time management through practice and through reflection' (Interview). In her case, increased classroom practice increased

her understanding of the student's needs, lesson planning, and time management indicating the profound effect of the PCK on her teacher development.

The challenge that the STs experienced highlights, initially, their predominant and understandable focus on self, how they behave in the classroom, and how they are seen by others. Examining this further in terms of their knowledge, it was acutely focused on aspects of their Classroom Practice, for example, timing of tasks, discipling disruptive students, the classroom routine, and not developing relationships or understanding their student's needs. For some respondents, their lack of target language usage in the class or their own personal vulnerability and ability of speaking the target language in class indicated that they misunderstood the importance of the subject matter, and how the target language can be utilized to foster stronger relationships among their students.

Via discussions with their PT, disciplinary experts such as CTs and school principals, self-reflections and research, the development of the respondents' own classroom experience throughout their teaching practice did enable them to develop their PCK and, as a result of this, to integrate new aspects into their preexisting schema of what teaching entails, thus enabling them to develop further and consider themselves as teachers. This was in line with the literature where increased understanding of the subject matter did enable the teachers to believe that they were more effective in teaching that material to students (Shulman, 1987; Ball & Bass, 2000; Ma, 1999). For instance, T3 highlights this in utilizing various techniques to assist the learners in storing the new vocabulary in their memory through the usage of gesturers and actions indicating that she is forming her own theories for teaching in line with Kumaradivelu (2001). For T3, this aspect of teacher knowledge development was aided by her CT again indicating the importance that CTs have other a STs development (Young & MacPhail, 2015: 223; Young & MacPhail, 2016: 222; Conway et al., 2012; Dunning et al., 2011) although assistance from CT was not always the case as indicated in Conway et al. (2012).

## 5.3.2   Forming Relationships

This aspect refers to *collective participation* where teachers work together with their colleagues (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019: 140). However, due to the discovery of Teaching as Relational as a TC, this thesis extends this further to include all relationships within the ST's School Practice and Professional Coursework.

The desire to gain knowledge about their learners and characteristics (Shulman, 1987) started to feature prominently in the data when the ST's realized the importance of forging relationships and investigated different techniques to increase their students' engagement with the target language. In line with Fuller (1969), the STs did initially focus on themselves and their own teaching style and management in their classroom practice, but due to the Catalysts for Change (cf. 4.3), this focus shifted towards a more learner-centered one, where the relational aspect of teaching became more prominent (Leeferink et al., 2015). For example, T4 attempts to understand her students' pop culture or integrate some French footballers into her lesson, although she does not follow football indicates her desire to foster stronger relationships with her students (T4, Interview), while T1 questions how students are doing after class to determine their emotions and to reduce the barrier between teacher and student in the classroom itself (T1, Interview). These indicate the importance of understanding their learners is in line with Tarone and Allwright (2005) and this focus was increased over time. T2's realization is particularly salient as, in the beginning of her teaching practice, what she thought was interesting for her students was not in fact, and this continued, renewed focus on getting to understand her language learners and their needs highlighted her motivation to make the content, French, applicable to her students. This emphasizes the importance of content knowledge and pedagogy merging, along with the disposition of the teacher in including PCK as a core skill in their teacher development (Howard

& Aleman, 2008), cementing them to a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998), and allowing novices to see the bigger picture in their teaching (Goodlad, 1990).

### 5.3.3 The Necessity of Time

Increased awareness on the part of teacher educators or disciplinary experts to the gap in teacher knowledge that STs might experience can lead to effective assist of STs who realize that their development and teacher identity may take longer than others. Referring to this early on in their program may decrease students' angst to the unknown as they remain in the liminal state for a longer period than their classmates. Throughout their program, some STs noted their lack of development compared to their fellow classmates and STs and this caused increased anxiety, placing considerable strain on their identity and agency as a teacher, but, additionally, on the development of their teacher knowledge.

The literature indicates that STs often do not see the link between theory and practice (Nias, 1989; Darling-Hammond et. al., 2007) and that this poses significant challenges for STs as that attempt to grapple with applying the knowledge from their ITE into practical usage in their SP. This aptly coined 'phase of disenchantment' (Mitter, 1985) leads to confusion and disillusionment among STs which can have a determinantal impact on their learning and thus, belief as a teacher.

Korthagen (2017: 529) notes that 'attempts to improve teacher education became linked to the issue of teacher learning' and in this study it would seem that as the STs increased their practical knowledge of classroom teaching, for instance as their PCK increased, their education also became more effective with stronger links forged between their sense of identity a teacher and the development of their teacher cognition. However, this epistemology and ontological shift was only made possible after deliberate and constructive reflection for the majority of the participants,

which was prompted via PT visits and discussions with fellow disciplinary experts. Therefore, it is imperative that time be considered when ITE participants are placed in the liminal state.

Referring to the actualization of the reification of different procedural aspects within their new school environment (that is to say, timetables, lesson planning, reports, field trips, staff meetings, school rules, and parent-teaching meetings) and the participation of figuring out how they should apply themselves and in what manner, time is required to ensure that opportunities for meaning making and identity building occurs (Hall et al., 2012: 104). It also allowed for the STs to gain a more holistic understanding of their learners and their needs, for instance, the limitations of dropping French and its repercussions for a learner wishing to go to college in the future as T4 experienced (T4, Interview).

The sense of purpose and being purposeful connects the participants' professional development and life goals, making an impact on the world beyond satisfying themselves, and focused engagement towards realizing those goals (Nias, 1989; Bundick & Tirri, 2014: 4) which can also lead to fostering life purpose among pupils (Tirri, 2014; Tirri & Ubani, 2013), and is also in line with the goals of an effective teacher (The Teaching Council, 2016). Focusing on this would assist in maintaining the high status of the teaching profession in Ireland to attract new teachers (Sahlberg at al., 2012; Harford, 2010; O'Doherty & Harford, 2018).

Therefore, in line with Ulvik, Smith, and Helleve (2009), a space between pre-service education and teaching which allows the teachers to critically reflect and to confront their emotions is both desirable and intensely required, and this thesis affirms this requirement. Thus, sufficient time in the liminal state is required for teachers to understand themselves as educators before they can approach understanding their learners' needs. Therefore, the challenges that the STs encountered also required more time and effort. While the theory-practice divide is widely echoed in the literature with Veenman (1984), Cole and Knowles (1993) Johnson (2007), Kelchtermans (2009), and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) indicating the challenges that educators face in applying

theory to ITE students, patience on the HEI's part is also necessary to assist the STs in their ontological and epistemological shift as they grapple with the realities of the classroom and school practice. Therefore, due to the importance in this thesis on reflection, teacher education programs need to factor in this time and space to allow STs to reflect on themselves and the new alien knowledge that they are acquiring throughout their program.

The next section will discuss the development of teacher identity and highlight how this was brought about within this study.

## 5.4   Teacher Identity Development

As noted from Chapter 2, shifts in identity are an acknowledged part and seen as central to the development of a teacher (Nias, 1989; Kennedy, 1999; Hammerness, et. al., 2005), the evidence on these shifts is not always so apparent in ITE programs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Additionally, while identity shifts are expected and the allowance for reflecting on one's identity is not as explicit as it should be warranted in such programs. The data collected from a handful of student teachers in this study indicates the discrepancy within the ITE program itself as the challenges experienced as the STs make their way from novice to expert and through the program were unique and deeply personal.

The development of teacher identity was a challenge for the STs in this study as there were a significant number of factors affecting it so distinguishing between each of them was one of the main objectives. This was in line with Olsen who notes: 'teacher identity is hard to articulate, easily misunderstood and open to interpretation' (2008: 4) while Kress states that 'teacher identity is not simply who teachers think they are' (2011: 8). These indicate the fractious nature of identity, however, in line with Gee, this study discovered that 'the kind of person' one wishes to be or sees themselves as being can 'change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change

from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable' (2001: 99). Due to the multiple and shifting nature of identity highlighted among the participants in this study as evidenced via the I-poems, not only is there cultural or societal conceptions of how a teacher should behave within their ITE program, school or classroom and expectations resulting from this, but the participant's own sense of purpose or agency is also deemed necessary to actively construct or modify their teacher identity.

As a means to structure the discussion on the development of teacher identity, this sub-section will focus on the STs displaying different roles ('Wearing three hats') throughout the program, impostership and its impact. Afterwards, this section will discuss how the STs teacher identity was developed by considering the importance of emotion, transformation and teacher belief, and the role of the gate keepers.

## 5.4.1 'Wearing three hats'

The ability of novice teachers to cope with the troublesome aspects of their teaching and learning as they arise, as well as the factors that affected this ability, was representative of an important research topic in the literature (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Hamilton & Clandinin, 2011). A ST must be able to multitask and cope with a myriad of dilemmas that take place in the classroom with all students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). While these catalysts for change and barriers to change were presented in sections 4.3 and 4.4, respectively, one result stemming from this study was the diverse but distinctive roles that each ST undertook over the course of this program. This is aptly referred to as 'tugging in different directions' (Grossman et al., 1999: 5) as the ST attempts to understand their new socially constructed environment and the roles that are demanded of them as a teacher, student-teacher, and student within different but interconnected communities of practice. Due to the nature of identity in this sub-section, this would refer to different features of PD: *collective participations* as the STs develop relationships with their peers and students, *active*

*learning* as these tasks are conducted predominantly in the classroom and school practice, *duration* as they confront existing preconceptions from a different perspective and require time, and, therefore, *coherence* as they position these new teaching beliefs into known and agreed policy standards (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019: 140). But, not all STs are so keenly aware of these shifts in their identity.

For example, in his email interview, T6 (Email_03) became aware of these dimensions and referred to this multiple identity for the ST as 'wearing three hats,' demonstrating that these exist simultaneously within the ITE program, the School Practice and the Classroom Practice. Another ST was also aware of this, but in a negative manner, admitting that she behaved differently in separate first year classes depending on how the students behaved previously to her (T5, Interview). This highlights that there is some conscious awareness by the participants themselves that they behave differently within the socially-constructed environment they are situated in, although they may not completely understand why they do so at the time (STs complaints about the theory-practice divide for instance highlights their misunderstandings in this domain). This multidimensional aspect of 'wearing hats' also influences their identity leading to them 'positioning themselves within the identities they wish to promote' (Søreide, 2006) to students and staff, and, as a result of such positioning, this can positively or negatively affect their teacher identity development.

Another aspect to consider is the attempt by the student teachers to revert back to an identity that they feel a stronger affinity with, for example as a student with good grades. Since their ITE program consists of teaching in a school and learning in their HEI in parallel every week after their second month in the program, the majority of the STs started to focus more on their CP, admitting that they spent less and less time on their studies as they immersed themselves with increased teaching responsibilities (T1, T3, and T4). This indicates a stronger desire to develop their teacher identity and to remove themselves from the former student identity that they began their program with. However, this was not the case for every participant.

As already stated from her I-poem in the Findings chapter, T5 considered herself rather studious and academic and was accustomed to doing well in the school environment. She did not want her college results to suffer, particularly in her second year and thus, focused less on her teaching practice which gave her more time to study for her college exams. She knew that it was deliberate and strategic (T5, Interview). This indicates that T5 is attempting not to overcome this troublesome aspect of her teaching and focusing more on her learning with the focus remaining on 'self' (Turner, 1969). In this case, T5 will require more assistance and time to engage with her students as she wears a different hat.

As Freeman et al. (2012: 1) note that 'preservice teachers are unprepared to work with diverse populations,' then more must be done to increase a connection to practice (Barone et al., 1996; Darling-Hammond et al, 2008; Ingersoll, 2016). As a consequence, due to teaching seen in Ireland as 'a high status profession' (Sahlberg at al., 2012), increased awareness by the stakeholders (HEI providers, PTs, disciplinary experts, and the STs themselves) involved in the teacher education process of STs 'wearing different hats' is required to greatly understand the complex procedure that each ST undergoes within their ITE program. Additionally, the STs themselves need to be aware of these multiple but also interrelated roles that play a part in their teacher knowledge and teacher identity.

### 5.4.2 Impostership

This aspect refers to the *active learning*, *collective participation*, and *coherence* features of PD (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019: 140) where the ST experiences imposter-like traits when teaching or within the program. This thesis found that a lack of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Boz & Boz, 2010; Jamil et al., 2012) and a lack of PCK also lead to impostership. The notion of impostership (Brookfields, 1995; 2006) was an important element that featured within this study as a boundary

or area where the STs got stuck (i.e., liminality) in terms of their teacher identity when they attempted to overcome the TC. In this study, there was also evidence of mimicry and quazi-plagiarism among the STs which can also inhibit or delay the incorporation of a TC (Meyer and Land, 2006; Lucas and Mladenovic, 2007; Cousin, 2010; Iyer-O'Sullivan, 2012; White et al., 2015). This would also in turn affect their identity and belief in themselves as teachers. Although some participants experienced this liminal state (T1, T2, T3, and T4), the extent to which it was encountered varied profoundly regarding feeling as though they were an imposter or did not belong. For instance, T4 recognized that while she should accept a compliment from her disciplinary experts and, on face value, appreciate it by not questioning the reasoning behind it, she also realizing that her CTs and principal should be 'checking' her work and that there should be increased 'accountability' due to the responsibility she, as a new ST, has over her students: 'Someone should be checking this. I'm a student-teacher' (T4, Interview). This highlights the connection made to *coherence* where teacher's beliefs are not aligned with policy or standards and, thus, have the effect of negatively influencing the ST. In T4's case above, the concept of complete trust in their new colleague by the disciplinary experts does not correspond to making T4 feel more secure, but, in fact the opposite. This indicates tensions while undergoing a 'changing sense of who they are as professionals' (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011: 6) and also highlights the need to promote stronger relationships with her CTs (Conway, 2012; Meegan et al., 2013; Young & MacPhail, 2015; Hall et al., 2018), especially when they have experience and influence (Keay, 2009) to reduce the feeling of being an imposter (Brookfields, 1995; 2006).

For some STs, impostership featured considerably on their journey in becoming a teacher and how they view themselves and is, therefore, concerned an important facet of the development of their teacher identity. Initially, T1 perceived that she did not belong in the program or as a teacher and suffered from praxis-shock (Kelehermans, 2002) where she suddenly found herself in front of a class of students, after first believing that she would fail in her initial application, and after losing her confidence (T1, Interview). An element of noninterference (Nias, 1987; 1989; Little, 1990) from her disciplinary experts also compounded this. Having the impression of being an

imposter placed a barrier on T1's identity as a teacher and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981) and it was not until her PT offered practical advice in incremental steps related to her classroom practice and lesson planning, did T1 being to feel more like a teacher (Email, Interview). However, this process was developmental, and it took several months for her to overcome this sense of impostership. As a result, HEI and disciplinary experts should be more aware of the impact they exert on their ST's and how it can influence their sense of worth within their ITE program.

### 5.4.3    The Importance of Emotion

This thesis found that the development of teacher identity coupled with 'emotional geographies' (Hargreaves, 2001) emphasized the importance that emotion can play on a ST as they are confronted with the reality of the modern language classroom and not the idealized version which they entered their ITE education with (in line with the literature in Chapter 2). The notion of experiencing a dissonance when teaching for the first time is highlighted in the literature review where there are conflicts between what is desired and what is possible in reality (Britzman, 2003; Day, et al., 2006; Mayer 2011; Pillen et al., 2013a; 2013b; 2013c). As Friedman (2004: 312) refers to this dissonance of expectations versus the reality shock of classroom experience when the STs begin teaching as 'shattered dreams,' this was in line with the results of this thesis where the challenge for some of the participants was to understand their learners to a greater extent and not to 'react' with emotion to the classroom situation. If teacher identity is explicitly influenced by particular contexts in which the STs are placed in (in line with Nias, 1996; Gee, 2000; Beltman et al 2016), then their ability to 'deal with' different situations that arise in their Classroom Teaching is an integral aspect of their identity-forming self as a teacher. Therefore, the importance of emotion in the formation of their teacher identity needs to be discussed.

For some of the STs, their participation in constructing themselves in these newly constructed worlds was potentially negative as they enacted in a manner which viewed themselves as distant and as outsiders, focusing on the negative aspect of their teaching and integration into the school which results to a negative consequence of emotion when reacting to their student's learning process. This was also in line with Jamil et al. (2012: 131) who noted that STs, 'who had a greater tendency towards negative affect and anxiety felt less confident about their future success as teachers.' Thus, the emotional reactions of individual teachers to their own work are connected to how they view themselves (Nias, 1989; Nias, 1996) and can limit their development of their teacher identity. Some displayed this in relation to the workload and the lack of practical elements of the program (T1, T3, and T4) with T4 highlighting the issue of student fees and the length of the Masters while others felt akin to an outsider (T5) or imposter (T1).

However, the effect of emotion on the language learners was significantly demonstrated by the laissez-faire attitude expressed by T5 in regard to her different classes where at times, there was a low self-efficacy demonstrated via a weak commitment, a more teacher-centered classroom, and placing the finger of blame on others (Knobloch & Whittington, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Boz & Boz, 2010; Jamil et al., 2012). Elements of the controlling motivating style were indicative of 'pressure from below' and 'pressure from within' (Pelletier et al., 2002; Reeves, 2009) instead of a more autonomous learning environment which emphasizes lifelong learning (The Teaching Council, 2011). This emotional reaction to particular situations in class (namely brought about by ineffective preparation and execution of lesson plans and classroom disruption in the case of T5) may be a result of not feeling appreciated by the students (Nias, 1989; Nias, 1999) and a lack of understanding the recent paradigm shifts in education where increased attention is spend on a more student-centered approach to language learning and where understanding the student perspective is paramount to learning.

Discipline was a troublesome aspect for some of the participants, in particular at the beginning of their classroom practice with many instances of this from the data (T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5).

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which may have been exacerbated by her CT advising her to 'selectively ignore some minor behaviours' (T5, Email_03). In particular, T5 felt 'intimidated by the aggression that students display, especially from the male students' (T5, Email_02) which she found 'very upsetting' (T5, Email_03) but that her own attitude of being 'too snappy and a bit too sarcastic' did not help to deal with the situation affectively (T5, Email_03). She admitted that in her first year she did take it personally but that this year (second year), it did not affect her as much but in her colleagues viewed certain troublesome students as being out of control especially 'with pupils that have extreme behavioural issues I do sometimes have that same mind set' (T5, Email_04). She also felt that once she has her own classes that it will be easier, but it is unsure how or why T5 believes this (T5, Email_07). This was also reiterated in her interview as the 'most obvious problem' with kids screaming at her which she found difficult not to be affected by it and that the pupils were able to see her losing control (T5, Interview). There was also a difference between classes which other teachers noticed – where she was 'on guard' with one class since they are tough and not with the other as 'these kids seem to like me' (T5, Interview).

Therefore, it would seem that before T5 can achieve this, reduction of an emotional reaction to behavior in the classroom and self-criticism of her lesson planning is needed. As Nias notes, 'Teachers' emotions, though individually experienced, are a matter of collective concern: they are occasioned by circumstances which can be identified, understood and so have the potential to be changed, and their consequences affect everyone involved in the educational process' (1996: 294). Therefore, in such cases, increased support from disciplinary experts and time for reflection is required in order to assist them in understanding their emotional reaction and to confronting the stressful environments which may seem to them as having momentarily no control over.

### 5.4.4   Transformation and Teacher Belief

Reeping et al. (2017) note that identity is in question when faced with a concept that is not understood and when an attempt is made to adjust into a community to become a 'certain kind of person', similar to being able to think and feel like a teacher (Borg, 2003; 2006). STs have highlighted this in their classroom practice, for instance, T1 with time management, T2 with classroom management, and T3 with lesson planning where attempts were made to develop as a teacher. As a result, there is a shift in their identity as they construct knowledge, in line with Milner (2001) who highlights the epistemological position of teachers as they construct knowledge, while Schraw and Olafson (2008) and Samarji and Hooley (2015) also support this. The STs who began to overcome their respective obstacles felt increased belief in their teaching capacity, such as their core knowledge, skills but also more experienced in the subject matter and their PCK (Howard & Aleman, 2008) and, most importantly, in themselves as modern language teachers. However, it is essential in terms of the discussion to refer to transformation, a characteristic of the Threshold Concept Framework when linking teacher belief and its influence on the ST's shifting teacher identity in this section since due to its interconnectedness in this study.

As noted from the literature (cf. 2.4), the transformative capacity of a Threshold Concept assisted the STs as they attempted to '(re)construct the knowledge of a discipline or profession, and the modes of subjectivity and identity formation that result' from it (Barradel & Peseta, 2017: 349). This was also the case for the respondents in this thesis as they were confronted with challenges about their personal and professional dimensions, such as 'who they are now' and 'who they want to be' (in line with Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011: 6) as they grappled with the TC of Teaching as Relational.

For example, as the data collection procedure progressed over the course of their school year, some of the respondents began to increasingly perceive themselves as teachers and accepting their newly formed teaching abilities. Both T1 and T3 exhibit examples as their purposefully tailored lessons to suit their students' needs as students of different backgrounds and language

ability are included in their planning. This is highlighted by T3 incorporating elements of Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR) into her classroom teaching to aid the learners with 'learning by doing,' and also a capacity of raising awareness regarding social issues in their classroom (T3, Interview). Focusing on a more student-centered approach does create extra work for the teachers in terms of lesson planning but does highlight how their increase in teacher knowledge does contribute to their teaching and student learning, in line with the literature (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Grossman & McDonald, 2008). This in turn has an effect on their teacher belief as they gained more confidence in their own teaching abilities.

Therefore, the consequence of learning stemming from greater understanding of Teaching as Relational enabled them to transition from a novice to an expert and, thus, strengthened their teacher belief throughout their program of study as they transformed. In these cases, this increased the 'situational self' which leads to the 'real self' (Mead, 1975) as there was an increased awareness of their identity, not just in themselves but also around others. While T1 grappled with impostership and feeling inadequate as a ST in the beginning, her development into a capable and resourceful teacher led to her knowledge and identity being transformed as she 'reclaimed the authority' of her own voice (Rodgers & Scott, 2008: 773). This is also in line with Gee (2001: 100) where students transform depending on the context or 'practice' (for example the 'Affinity-identity: experiences) in the moment.

The effect of transformation and teacher belief also stems from the respondents' own personal teacher belief of what a teacher should be and behave in class. The effect of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and previous learning experiences (Johnson, 1991; Kennedy, 1999) was noticeable with some participants which had a considerable effect on their sense of being a teacher. Both T2 and T5 had a strong sense of what teaching should entail which was influenced from their family members as teachers. T2 attempted to understand her students more as a result to combat this (T2, Interview) and this assisted her in an ontological shift, while, T5 was unable to successfully incorporate her father's experience as a teacher into her classroom practice.

Some of the participants did see themselves as teachers, although they did not feel like one in the beginning of the program. This transition occurred from focusing on their teaching ability and attempting to assist their students in various aspects of their learning. This increase in their knowledge base enabled them to be more aware of both their teaching and the characteristics of their learners which is in line with Shulman (1987). There were some elements of 'disciplined improvisation' (Sawyer, 2003) as the participants adapted further as they experimented with new materials and technology in class (T1, Interview; T3, Interview; T4, Interview). The focus on the students was typical of this transformation, in line with Fuller's stages of teacher development (1969). There were times when they were hindered in achieving their goal, but receiving assistance from their peers, inspectors, lecturers, etc. allowed them to focus on overcoming the challenge and transforming into expert teachers. Although, challenges may arise in the future, they have confidence and self-belief to deal with them.

Others stated that they were teachers but did not adequately demonstrate this knowledge or skills effectively in terms of their identity, displaying mimicry and quazi-plagiarism (Meyer and Land, 2006; Lucas and Mladenovic, 2007; Cousin, 2010; Iyer-O'Sullivan, 2012; Braille, 2012; White et al., 2015). Their PCK or teacher cognition indicated that they were lacking in some core teaching skills and lesson planning, and that these skills did not develop sufficiently over the course of the year, indicating their lack of development in regard to teacher identity. For example, T5's reaction to her students not liking her, taking her students' comments 'too personally' and not caring enough (T5, Interview) highlights her lack of transformative learning. She is confronted with a 'distorting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1981: 7) and is aware that she should feel more like a teacher and does not look 'forward to going back to school' (Interview) but does not demonstrate strong self-belief in overcoming the challenge. Although she did receive assistance from their CTs (for example, in removing disruptive students from class or asking how they deal with classroom situations), this was not affective in aiding her to transition in her teacher identity.

In her case, more self-reflection and time is required to assist her ontological and epistemological shift so that she will feel like one and reduce the mimicry in her identity.

### 5.4.5 Role of the Gate Keepers

While STs are influenced by significant people in their early life (Crow, 1987), their previous classroom experience as students (Lortie, 1975; Kennedy, 1999), their understanding of the subject matter (Shulman, 1989; Nemser, 1983; Boyd et al., 2013), and their students (Nias, 1989; 1996), it stands to reason that the aspect of the 'gate keepers' (Daloz, 2012) and disciplinary experts, for example CTs and PTs is also influential in the development of their teacher identity. This study discovered that CTs and PTs were highly efficacious in the formation of the ST's identity, causing anxiety and stress, on one hand, and promoting belief and teacher identity, on the other hand.

With ITE being viewed as a complex and difficult process, but, additionally, an equally significant phase of a ST's development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; 2008; 2010; 2012; Conway et al., 2009; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; 2010), the role of the disciplinary experts is classified as an element of *collective participation* (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019: 140). As noted from the literature, 'The newcomer with the help of experienced colleagues and experts in the community is able to gain confidence and recognised expertise by participating.' (Hall et al., 2012: 115) and since the School Practice is a 'deeply meaningful professional experience' as a 'vehicle for the integration between theory and practice' (Hall et al., 2018: 12), the importance of belonging to a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and gaining confidence was profound with STs noting their involvement in parent-teaching meetings, exam-marking, library duties, and taking part in class outings. This was realized by the respective disciplinary experts in their schools who offered advice to the STs and assisted in their development (T2, Interview; T3, Interview; T4, Interview). In the case of these three participants, the fact that one of their CTs was their previous French

language teacher in their schooling was beneficial for the STs as an element of the teacher-student relationship was already formed when they were in school and could flourish to greater effect.

However, there were incidents that prevented this sense of community or inhibited the ST's teacher belief and identity by the disciplinary experts. This was particularly evident in relation to T1 where noninterference due to her age and having three young children resulted in a lack of support from her CTs. Other STs also experienced a lack of support (T3 and T4). This 'noninterference' (Nias, 1987; Little, 1990) is where assistance is lacking in some schools and staff rooms (Nias, 1989) and resulted in placing more pressure on the ST, affecting their identity further. However, the STs did not communicate their feelings for more support and feedback which may have resulted in support and cultivation from the disciplinary experts.

For practical purposes, T5, stated that having a CT was beneficial in removing 'a child out of class if they were very unruly' (T5, Email_02) while others mentioned the pressure to 'keep up' with their lesson plans while still getting advice from them (T1, Email_01; T3, Interview; T5, Interview). There was also a lack of support from their co-operating teacher due to their age, previous background and disorganized (T1, Interview; T3, Email 10; T5, Email_09) and even when making suggestions which is supported by Ulvik and Langørgen, (2012) who stated that while on clinical practice, new STs are sometimes felt that they can offer nothing in terms of experience.

Taking Daloz's reference to 'gate keepers' from the literature as mentors who stand on the boundaries of two different worlds, some of the STs felt that their PTs were not specific enough in providing advice or ask the STs to reflect immediately after their Placement Tutor visit which was ineffective due to level of emotional stress (T4, Interview; T5 Interview). This lack of specificity resulted in frustration and lack of guidance. Mostly, the PT provided a significant amount of practical advice concerning classroom practice and dealing with the cooperating teacher (T1, Interview; T2, Interview; T3; Interview). In another incident of troublesome gate

keepers, one cooperating teacher observed T1's class and noted the behavior of two of the students as 'disgraceful.' This resulted in T1 viewing herself as being 'too soft' on her students but after questioning the co-operating teacher directly, found that the same students are misbehaving in their class as well. The CT's reasoning was that their parents would complain after the next report (T1, Interview) which results in miscommunication between the ST and her gate keeper. This supports the literature where the relationship between the CT and the ST 'is at the heart of every practicum' (Graves, 2010: 15) and these findings illustrate that supporting and cultivating CTs in their classroom practice is significant and necessary rather than desirable, as is simultaneously helping schools to develop as 'learning places' through deepening their engagement with pedagogy (Conway et al., 2012; Long et al., 2012).

The next section will examine the effectiveness of the TCF that conceptually underpinned this study. Following on from that the effectiveness of the multiple-nested case study will be discussed.

## 5.5    The effectiveness of the TCF in this study

In this multiple-nested case study, the Threshold Concept of Teaching as Relational was determined as the overarching conceptual framework that interlinked the aspects of teacher knowledge and teacher identity under one precise umbrella. What the STs encountered and experienced, as some of them noted themselves, was a deeply personal and unique experience. Therefore, the degree of 'troublesomeness' encountered with that TC did depend on each individual learner (Meyer and Land, 2006) with some respondents being more adversely affected than others. As there is an overlap with the I-poems on Identity and between the challenges experienced in teaching and learning, the Threshold Concepts Framework was effective in allowing the 'interconnectedness' of the data to be identified and examined holistically, demonstrating the desire for HEI providers to develop teachers who display 'adaptive expertise'

(Hatano & Oura, 2003) for quick decision making processes and classroom planning as the desire to achieve 'lifelong learning' (The Teaching Council, 2016).

For the identification of a TC, it must exhibit the primary characteristics. Following on from Meyer and Land (2003), Davies and Mangan (2007), and Reeping et al. (2017), this study prioritizes that the **primary characteristics** of TCs are *troublesome*, *transformative*, and *integrative*. In addition, it is compulsory to remember that the TC must be a concept that is **learnable**, i.e. that students can learn the concept itself, that participants may display signs of 'threshold confidence' (Felten, 2016) as they grapple within the liminal or pedagogic space, and that the concept itself should be **named**, in line with the literature to 'articulate the TC as a meaningful phrase' (Timmermans and Meyer, 2017: 7). Consequently, the label Teaching as Relational was used in order to indicate the importance of understanding the relationship between the participants with their peers and students and to highlight the interconnectedness of both development and identity as part of the student teacher's process. With these three concepts – the primary characteristics, a concept that is learnable, and named – this sub-section will examine which aspects of the ST's learning constituted a TC.

While there was some difficulty in identifying the primary characteristic of Integrative and more time would be needed to ensure that the TC of Teaching as Relational it is noticeable / realized after their Initial Teacher Training program, under close examination, this methodology did prove that the identification of a TC among a cohort(s) of student-teachers was possible. Therefore, this framework and thesis can be replicated in line with existing literature on TC, where being 'stuck' in the liminal space is paramount to the development and transformation of teacher knowledge and teacher identity. This also strengthens Cousin's statement that, 'Threshold concept research is sited in this space, establishing a dialogue with the students about their struggles to comprehend' (2010: 3). The STs in this study did have full knowledge that their learning was a process, and some referred to this directly in the data collected stating that more time and effort was needed. Others highlighted the importance of reflection, of using the target language, of

lesson planning, and of classroom management. In terms of developing their teacher knowledge, none were surprised by this. However, in terms of their teacher identity, some did not realize how transformative their year of studies would be. A couple noted their lack of apathy and the increased workload compounded this further. Others started to realize that increased focus was needed to understand their students more.

However, they were unaware as to what extent that would influence their development. Therefore, the importance of being stuck was examined earlier in this chapter and this was an effective outcome of utilizing the TC framework.

However, although the TC of Teaching as Relational was uncovered from the data collected, the consequences of learning stemming from each respondent is therefore not generalizable, as the troublesome aspects were encountered by various degrees by the STs (as shown in the I-poem data). Due to the nature of this study not being an intervention or questioning the nature of the existing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program itself, this study is unable to expand its findings explicitly into the sphere of Initial Teacher Education, apart from the findings resulting from the formation and development of identity, and the discovery of the TC itself.

However, this study does support that the different aspects of teacher development and teacher identity are troublesome to pin down as, 'in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, belief, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined' (Verloop et al., 2001: 446). This was also a unique and concise finding of this study as the deeply, personal nature of learning came into effect, indicating how the path for each participant is distinct, unknown, and interconnected with their development and sense of identity as a teacher, affecting their way of thinking and knowing. This is in line with the literature stating that transformation is confusing and deeply personal (Cousin, 2006; Jenkins & Barnes, 2014; Land et al., 2015).

To clarify, when referring to the identification of TC, simply asking experts to classify concepts as TCs is unreliable as their evaluation may be based on previous knowledge, their 'expert blind spot' in relation to the understanding of the topic, and that an 'emotionally laden event' is often recalled inaccurately (Shinners-Kennedy, 2016). Therefore, being an outsider without any direct ownership in both the ITE program itself and the STs alleviates these identification concerns. While Baillie et al.'s (2013) framework positions TCs within a theory or learning and practice, Davis (2018: 6) highlights the 'fertility and malleability' as well as drawing attention to the remaining 'uncertain foundations' in TC.

## 5.5.1   Multiple-Nested Case Study

This study employed the use of a multiple nested case study (see 3.2 for details) where individual elements (i.e., the STs themselves) were the main unit of analysis 'distinct from a straightforwardly multiple study in that it gains its integrity, its wholeness, from the wider case' and the 'elements are nested only in the sense that they form an integral part of a broader picture' (Thomas, 2011: 517). Considering the amount of data collected (75,000 words from six subjects), a multiple nested case study was deemed the most sensible in providing an in-depth understanding of a case from different sources of data (Cresswell, 2013) and, thus, a rigorous research strategy in its own right (Hartley, 1994; 2004; Kohlbacher, 2006; Thomas, 2011a; 2011b; Thomas and Meyer, 2015). Although there were two different cohorts in question, the challenges experienced were not unique to either program as they were both grounded in ITE and the research questions focused on the development of the STs in terms of their teacher knowledge and teacher development. Thus, focusing on each 'case' was beneficial to get a more comprehensive picture of their difficulties and how they proceed to overcome those challenges. The beneficial aspect of viewing each ST's journey as their own individual case also allowed for interpretive research to be conducted where more generalizations could be established, for instance, with the discovery of the Threshold Concept of Teaching as Relational.

Therefore, in this thesis, the case study represents both the object of the study and the product of the inquiry (Creswell, 2013) as it was utilized effectively to identify the challenges that the STs experienced, and if those challenges were across different subjects, i.e., other STs, each representing their own case. A significant advantage of this CS allowed for the focus of the study to be placed on the STs and on their perspective (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995: 317) where 'a large number of intervening variables' could be observed in detail (George and Bennett, 2005: 21).

Finally, this chapter will conclude with a brief summary.

## 5.6    Summary

This chapter has presented the discussion of the findings from this study, notably examining the consequences of learning that the participants experienced in their teacher education program, focusing primarily on them being stuck in the liminal state when encountering the TC of Teaching as Relational, and the importance of being stuck in that space for STs. In addition to that, the formation of identity was presented which discovered the structural elements that impacted on the development of the ST's identity in this thesis, for example, Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), forming relationships, and the role of the gate keepers. This chapter also examined the aspects which constituted a TC from the TCF which was adapted to reflect the structural elements that influenced the transformation shift in identity throughout the year of the program.

As 'breakthroughs in teaching rarely take place in isolation' (Cove, McAdam & McGonigal, 2008: 197), there are examples within this study of when certain catalysts for change aided the respondents to understand their students' needs and to develop both their teacher knowledge and teacher identity. These catalysts instigated the occurrence of an ontological and epistemological

shift when this newly acquired knowledge was incorporated into their cognition and teacher belief. The catalysts which categorically aided the process included inspections, community of practice, reflection, PCK, and the positive effect of emotion on the participant's development. However, there were also barriers that acted as inhibiters to change which influenced the student-teacher's identity and belief as a teacher, delaying their development and transformation. These include, course program restrictions, impostership, the negative effect of emotion on their development, and the lack of self-reflection. This chapter presented each in turn as it investigated the effect of each on the STs in question.

Finally, this chapter focused on the effectiveness of employing the TCF as a methodological tool that was employed for identifying the transformative shift that the STs underwent in this study. This chapter found that the examination of the ST's perceptions about their teaching and learning and how this transformed over the course of the data collection process was successful due to the methodological framework that was utilized.

# 6  Conclusion

Summarizing the challenge for most beginners, Feiman-Nemser (2010) states that new teachers have two jobs; they have to teach, and they have to learn to teach. Taking the 'wearing of three hats' metaphor from T6 in the previous chapter, the consequences of different and shifting identities was acutely felt by the STs in this study from the data collected as they moved from a student to a teacher and back again. This study investigated how a group of modern language STs, in a post-graduate program of initial teacher education, developed in terms of both teacher knowledge and identity. It explored what was experienced as challenging by the STs in both their learning and classroom teaching and how they attempted to overcome those challenges, highlighting the barriers and catalysts to change which directly influenced how they 'know, believe, and think' like a teacher. This chapter will present the conclusion of this thesis, focusing on the primary objectives and how they were achieved in Contributions (6.1), areas for future work (6.2), and final comments to conclude the study (6.3).

## 6.1  Contributions

Before beginning this journey, this study was mindful of the impact that Lortie's theory could have on the identity of the STs participating and how their teaching identity could have been constructed or reconstructed over the course of the data collection process. This was a profound aspect experienced by the STs as the grappled within what Samuda and Bygate (2008) refer to as 'pedagogical spaces' of their learning and an aspect which I also experienced in my teaching.

In order to ensure a 'rich description' (Holliday, 2010: 99) from the data collected in addressing the research questions, this study employed email interviews and face-to-face interviews as its data collection instruments, both of which were semi-structured to allow depth for greater understanding and clarification for the interviewer and scope for the participant's answer. This also allowed for increased triangulation of the data. I was alerted to the possibility of theoretical

bias (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 238) and wanted to maintain distance from the subjects and what I was investigating. Additionally, I wanted their voice and experiences to be heard and the theoretical framework of incorporating the TCF to identify those challenges was both appealing and effective in collecting their voices over a year of their studies.

This thesis identified the interrelated challenge of Teaching as Relational demonstrating the importance of fostering relationships to fully understand the needs of the language learners. The TC was felt equally by both cohorts of ITE: PDE and PME, thereby demonstrating that their respective programs are experienced in much the same manner concerning learning and classroom practice. Being stuck in the liminal space also contributed to this with barriers (system level barriers, theory-practice divide, negative effect of emotion, and lack of self-reflection) impacting the development of the student teachers. However, when the STs succeeded in overcoming these barriers, belonging to a community of practice, visits from their PT, actively reflecting on their teaching and learning, and using emotion positively were the main factors that assisted them.

Therefore, the process of understanding the TC had a direct influence of the formation of the ST's identity and belief as a teacher. In line with the literature, the identification of the TCs allowed a 'window into seeing and understanding' the disciplinary dimensions and underlying structures that exist within a course and grasping the TCs 'within a discipline's body of knowledge and practice may help to reveal a discipline's underlying episteme' (Timmermans & Meyer, 2017: 7). This episteme can be defined 'as a system of ideas of ways of understanding that allows us to establish knowledge' (Perkins, 2006: 42), in essence the epistemological and ontological shift in identity: the manner in which the respondent's belief about acquiring knowledge and about the nature of reality (Schraw & Olafson, 2008) transformed regarding their teaching and learning. In this case, teacher beliefs can be viewed as that knowledge which is a consequence of the participants' learning that stemmed from being confronted with the Teaching as Relational TC in

unique and challenging ways that disrupted their existing or newly constructed identity as a teacher.

Finally, evidence from the data collected suggests that 'lifelong learning' and adaptive expertise is being fulfilled from the majority of STs in this thesis. This was particularly evident in the face-to-face interviews conducted at the end of the data collection process where the majority of participants displayed confidence in both their teaching abilities, classroom management, target language usage, and, decisively, their sense and purpose as a teacher. This is also in line with The Teaching Council's (2016) goal of learning seen as a lifelong endeavor for all its teachers.

### 6.1.1 Understanding transformation

It is problematic for educators to understand what 'transformation' means or what 'transformed' students look like. Berger, referring to her study and colleagues in a master's program at George Mason University poses the question: 'When we say that the experience of IET (Initiatives in Educational Transformation) will be 'transformational,' do any of us—the professors or our teacher-students—really understand what that means?' (2004: 336-7). Ambrose et al., (2010) propose that transfer is the most important objective in education as it allows the learners to take their newly acquired knowledge to various contexts while Perkins (2008) notes that the TCF allows for the design of conceptual pathways which can assist the integrative manner when thinking about a specific domain. As a result, the TCF can be beneficial in enabling teachers to prepare their students for a profession (Lucas & Mladenovic, 2007).

An important aspect of identifying transformation is that what educators determine to be more beneficial or interesting does not necessarily constitute as being equal to what learners need (Berger, 2004: 337). In a way, transformation is subjective, confusing and in many cases deeply personal (Cousin, 2006; Jenkins & Barnes, 2014; Land et al., 2015). As a result, any studies on transformation will have to consider this facet of personal learning and bring it in accordingly

into their subjects. Barradell and Peseta (2017: 366-7) advocate meaningful learning to occur though exposure to situations where students are forced to struggle with change and doubt. Again, it must be noted that students must want to change and face this alien knowledge to identity the gap in their knowing and understanding of a certain concept.

Although, the initial Enhanced Teaching-Learning Project (ETL) concentrated on students and teaching at third level education, it is still desirable to exploit that project and other similar projects (Carmichael, 2007; Irvine & Carmichael, 2009; Iyer-O'Sullivan: 2012). Therefore, this study utilized the Threshold Concepts Framework as it allows for the identification of key challenges that STs encounter in their program of study and to explore the extent that these challenges impact on their learning and teaching practice. This framework coupled with Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1978) emphasizes the importance of identifying conceptual challenges that modern language STs face in their studies and how they transform from them.

## 6.1.2   Developmental Potential

TCs have great 'developmental potential' (Timmermans, 2010; 2014: 4) and are thus 'epistemological and transformational in nature' as well as being 'profoundly ontological' (Timmermans, 2014: 4; Barradell & Kennedy-Jones, 2014: 2). The change can be so dramatically and profoundly felt by the learner that their identity is irreversibly altered thus linking them, as Irvine and Carmicheal noted to Wenger's *Communities of Practice* where 'specialized meanings, identity and membership are negotiated' (2009: 4). TCs establish a means for 'academics with little curricula expertise' to partake with greater confidence in teaching and learning meetings with others including students (Barradell & Kennedy-Jones, 2014: 3). Barradell and Peseta found that in disciplinary practices that TCs have 'operated as a trigger for an argument about a form of curriculum that engages students for ontological and professional uncertainty' (2017: 365). While

they argue that 'critical reflection is key to helping healthcare practitioners gain insights into their own practice and behaviour' (ibid: 366) the same could be applied to teachers.

However, in some cases areas of the curriculum are removed where learners encounter severe conceptual difficulty, leading TCs to 'trim the parameters of the curriculum' (Meyer and Land, 2003b: 5). Not only that but the possibility that searching for TCs gives the potential of opening discussions 'among subject specialists, students and educational researchers, creating forms of transactional curriculum inquiry between these three parties' (Cousin, 2010: 7). Barradell and Kennedy-Jones (2014:3) and Foote (2013) see TCs as a bridge between disciplinary learning and student learning experiences and 'provides a rigorous method of learning that may be unlike any learning process that they have been involved in before' (Foote, 2013: 432).

Since there has been a large influx of research into TCs since its inception, Iyer-O'Sullivan laments that although study on TCs has 'largely been within higher education, much of it has been in the area of business, economic and technology' (2012, 8). TCs allows instructors to focus on the fundamental points that are required to grasp the subject they are teaching (Cousin, 2006: 4) and due to its 'problem-based learning' (Irvine and Carmichael, 2009: 104) it can also assist teachers in dealing with the unexpected classroom needs of various students and thus be equipped for 'lifelong learning' (Hammerness et al., 2007: 358). This is supported via practice education which is 'one such component in undergraduate education where threshold concepts can be located and applied for future social sphere practitioners' (Prendergast, 2017: 157). This lends support for the examination of TCs in practice education, and in particular in ITE.

Ultimately, failing to provide STs with sufficient time to integrate new concepts enforces their existing preconceptions regarding teacher cognition and belief. This is also in line with Lindvall and Ryve (2019) aspect of 'duration' for Professional Development (PD) which further stresses the importance of providing time to STs to grapple with new concepts that are alien to their previous ways of thinking.

This chapter will now turn to future work and suggestions for further research.

## 6.2    Future Work

This thesis suggests that further research is needed to understand the associated between the liminal space and the influence being in this space and have on a pre-service teacher. Giving the limited scope of this thesis, more time and participants would have been desirable to further investigate this in greater detail. However, there are some avenues for future research.

Can this study be replicated across a larger cohort of participants so that a more apparent 'route' can be demonstrated in relation to the Threshold Concepts Framework and other models? Such a study would be beneficial to further deeper this aspect of research in linking the chosen methodology with the existing literature on Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

While the majority of participants in this study did succeed in leaving the liminal space and understanding the importance of fostering relationships, there was still one participant who required more time to discover the link between understanding her student's needs and her teaching. Therefore, investigating a larger cohort of pre-service teachers in the sphere of ITE would allow stronger generalizations to be made, not only in terms of the challenges that the STs face in their learning and teaching, but in understanding the strength of those separate challenges, for instance, how much influence does 'impostership' or the role of the 'gate keepers' exert on a student teacher's development? A replication study with a large number of participants across different Higher Education Institutes would establish a stronger link in understanding the challenges that STs in ITE in Ireland face, and to determine if a developmental pattern emerges. In addition to that, to what extent do pre-service teachers 'walk into a classroom with an established set of beliefs on how students learn' (OCED, 2014: 7) which are developed in teacher

education programs would be a worthwhile endeavor to understand how the apprenticeship of observation and preconceptions influence the development of the ST.

In addition, designing or placing the 'liminal space' into an ITE program and examining the impact it has on a cohort of STs would also be effective in investigating if 'pre-teaching' and forewarning about being stuck in the liminal space is effective in assisting STs in understanding the transformational process in more detail and not to have ill-feelings or angst towards it. Developing this further with the support of the disciplinary experts in schools in terms of teacher knowledge and teacher identity would also be worthy of investigating.

Not only do STs need time to adjust and grow accustomed to their role in the classroom, but they need to have more than 'abstract knowledge of either their students' needs or ways to address them' along with 'opportunities to try out and refine practices that embody such knowledge' (Grossman et al., 2008: 245). They must adapt to unpredictable contexts (Hargreaves, 2003) and the classroom during their PD would seem like an ideal setting to experiment under the guidance of a CT teacher, mentor, or member of staff, often the school principal or vice-principal (Feiman-Nemser, 2010, 2012). If teachers are to be effective then they must work in settings that they are familiar with in terms of students and families, acknowledge the existence and that there could be an 'over-reliance' on their 'apprenticeship of observation' or 'frames of reference' (Conway et al., 2012), work with co-teachers and have a well-grounded curriculum (Bransford et al., 2007: 4) and to come to terms with classroom practice being a 'messy problem space' (Feiman-Nemser, 2008: 697) with teacher education policy is constantly shifting over the last 100 years (Conway et al., 2009). In addition to this, there are at least three ways in which teacher education is implicated in supporting reforms. They have to learn how to work in professional collaborative communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), to develop a strong moral purpose such as self-efficacy (Cantrell et al., 2003; Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Boz & Boz, 2010), to develop a 'signature pedagogy' (Sykes et al., 2010) to understand the change process to be constructive contributors to school reform, and to engage in partnerships with other schools and districts (Bransford et al., 2007: 5).

This coordinates with developing teachers as adaptive experts, forging identity and belonging to a community of practice.

Finally, the role of the disciplinary expert needs to be examined further. While CTs and PTs need to display more than a 'bag of tricks' to their mentees they must also be able to 'talk clearly and straightforwardly about teaching' (Little and Nelson, 1990: 4) with inconsistencies leading to 'no clear expectations for CTs to observe ST on placement and vice versa' (Young and MacPhail, 2016: 287). Therefore, there is a need for more direct contact with these disciplinary experts in an open manner where the ST is encouraged to seek guidance and where the 'gate keepers' are made aware of their influence or lack of it in shaping the ST's identity. Acknowledging that we have all been through similar experiences might open a dialogue among staff and peers and, ultimately, assist new teachers in this liminal space. If so, then it might succeed in assisting such beginners as T5 who was still feeling disconnected from her responsibilities as a teacher at the end of this study.

## 6.3   Final Comments

I believe that this study was effective in identifying the challenges that the STs experienced in their ITE program in terms of teacher development and teacher identity, and that the interconnected aspect of the TC of Teaching as Relational is an effective TC which highlights the importance of fostering relationships with students, fellow student-teachers, and disciplinary experts in both HEI and schools. This was ascertained via data collected from email interviews and face-to-face interviews, and via a thematic analysis, determined what the challenges the STs experienced.

The stories that were produced in the data collected offered a unique and personal insight into the lives of a group of beginning teachers, starting out their career as lifelong learners. My attempt to understand their world view constituted an investigation into what each of them experienced as they shift their identity from student to teacher and the factors that directly impact on their development. Some of these aspects were also personally experienced and encountered when I started my journey in teaching in 2003 and this study has lead me to reflect that while we have gained a better understanding in the last couple of decades in terms of what a teacher is meant to do and the expected outcome, we still are not sure how exactly they get there and how exactly we can support any student teacher who is embarking on this journey. Until we do, this journey will continue.

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# Appendix A

This table provides a brief description of each category from the data collected.

| Category | Sub-category | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher Development | Schooling | Use this when the ST mentions their previous schooling or personal history which indicate preconceptions of education (i.e. teachers and teaching). Adapted from Borg, 2006; Lortie, 1975 |
| Teacher Development | Classroom Practice | Use this when the ST mentions an aspect of classroom practice (including teaching practice) or contextual factors which influences their cognition unconsciously or through conscious reflection. Adapted from Borg, 2006; Nias, 1989 |
| Teacher Development | Prof Coursework / External Factors | Use this when the ST mentions the impact of coursework on their leaning and teaching which could indicate their existing cognition. Also includes Shulman's PCK. Adapted from Borg, 2006; Shulman, 1987 |
| Teacher Identity | Entry | Use this when the ST mentions their reasoning why they have tried to become a teacher. May overlap with elements of Teacher Cognition. Adapted from Lana & Kelchtermans, 2015 |
| Teacher Identity | Impostership | Use this when the ST mentions that they do not feel like a teacher, feel out of place, shouldn't be there, others are more qualified and better than I, etc. Adapted from Brookfields, 2006 |
| Teacher Identity | Belief | Use this when the ST mentions that they feel like a teacher now or are moving in that direction. Adapted from Rodgers and Scott, 2008 |
| Teacher Identity | Adaptive Experts | Use this when the ST mentions that they identify as being able to adapt to the working conditions. Adapted from Hammerness et al., 2007; Hatano & Oura, 2003 |
| Teacher Development | Classmates / Colleagues / Co-workers | Use this when the ST mentions an aspect from either their classmates in college, or their colleagues at work which assists them in a positive or negative way. Do NOT include co-operating teachers. |
| Teacher Development | Co-operating Ts | Use this when the ST mentions an aspect of the co-operating teacher whether it is positive or negative. Adapted from Young & MacPhail, 2015, The Teaching Council, 2011a |

| Teacher Development | Disharmony between theory and practice | Use this when the ST mentions the impact of theory from their studies on their classroom practice, especially if there is a gap. Also includes any mention of a gap between the course and reality. Adapted from Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Kelchtermans, 2002; Van den Brandon, 2006 |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher Development | Inspections | Use this when the ST mentions an aspect of inspections whether they are positive or negative. The inspection is conducted by the HEI Placement Tutor. Adapted from The Teaching Council, 2011a |
| Teacher Development | Rite of Passage | Use this when the ST mentions an aspect which needs to be done to move onto the next aspect, even if they do not fully understand the reasoning behind it. Adapted from Turner, 1964 (preliminal, liminal and postliminal). Adapted from Fuller, 1969 (focus on self, tasks, and impact). |
| Threshold Concepts | Transformative | Use this code when the ST mentions transforming, changing, difference made between past and now, etc. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003; Mezirow, 1981 |
| Threshold Concepts | Reconstitutive | Use this when the ST mentions an area where integration on the liminal scale has begun (ontological and epistemic shift has taken place). This means that a pervious held concept or idea has been let go, often as a result of new knowledge being introduced. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003 |
| Threshold Concepts | Troublesome | Use this when the ST mentions an area that they found difficult in either their learning or teaching. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003 |
| Threshold Concepts | Irreversible | Use this when the ST mentions that something they have learned and integrated into their leaning or teaching, and probably will not be unlearned. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003 |
| Threshold Concepts | Integrative | Use this when the ST mentions an area that they have learned or integrated into their learning or teaching. Connections to other areas may be mentioned as well. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003 |
| Threshold Concepts | Bounded | Use this when the ST mentions an aspect which they have learned or realized that it is fenced or bounded as a unit. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003 |
| Threshold Concepts | Discursive | Use this when the ST mentions the specific language or lack of it in either their studies or classroom teaching. Adapted from Meyer & Land, 2003 |

# Appendix B

# School of Education

## Research Participant Information and Consent form

*[Exploring Threshold Concepts in Language Teaching Education*
*David Moroney, School of Education, PhD Candidate.  Supervisor: Dr. Ann Devitt.]*

**You are invited to participate in this research project which is being carried out by David Moroney, in collaboration with his PhD supervisor, Ann Devitt. Your participation is voluntary. Even if you agree to participate now, you can withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind.**

The study is designed to investigate the essential concepts and practices that pre-service teachers in modern languages encounter during their initial teacher education course (PDE).  In particular, we will focus on the concepts and practices which pre-service language teachers find problematic or troublesome and the conditions and contexts that support teachers to tackle and overcome these.  In previous work with in-career teachers, *meaningful and authentic language use* has been identified as a very important aspect of the modern language classroom.  This project aims to explore how practices to support meaningful language, for example developing and implementing tasks (Task-Based Language Teaching) use in the classroom can be fostered and supported during initial language teacher education.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a professional learning team, together with your peers, focusing on meaningful and authentic language use in the modern language classroom.  I will convene this group and provide support for planning, task development and implementation, and reflection. These will take the form of:

- Weekly discussion on Blackboard focused on your learning, the difficulties you encountered and how you overcome (or plan to overcome) those challenges
- Weekly reflections that you do for Ann – I would like access to these to see your development over the course of the year
- Group meeting – next year in person
- Two, 60-minute long interviews, one at the mid-point and one after completing the course

Any information or data which we obtain from you during this research which can be identified with you will be treated confidentially. We will do this by excluding your name from any recorded data and instead identifying you by using an alias. Only Dr. Devitt and David Moroney will have access to this data.

Portions of the recording may be played during conference presentations, and written transcriptions will be made of all recordings for analysis in the thesis.  The original recording and all copies will be available only to the present investigators or to investigators in other academic

institutions engaged in similar work.  The recordings will be kept in a secure location in the School which will be locked when the researchers are not present.  If copies are made available to researchers elsewhere, similar conditions regarding the storage and use of recordings will apply.

You will benefit in being a member of a specific focus group where you can discuss the challenges you face in how meaningful and authentic language can be used in your classroom. I have been a language teaching with international experience (South Korea and Germany) for the last 10 years and can easily share my wide range of classroom knowhow to assist you in becoming a more focused teacher. As well as that, Task-Based Language Teaching was the topic for my MA dissertation so I can offer some real and practical advice when you apply tasks in your classroom. At the end of this study, it is hoped that you will be a very adaptive teacher who can help students to use language in a more natural and realistic environment.

My research may benefit the field of language teaching, the TBLT methodology, the field of teacher transformation and Threshold Concepts in education.

If you have any questions about this research or to seek further clarification and information you can contact me, David Moroney, at *moroned@tcd.ie* or Ann Devitt at *ann.devitt@tcd.ie*.

**Signature of research participant**

I understand what is involved in this research and I agree to participate in the study.  I have been given a copy of this form.

---------------------------------------           ---------------
Signature of participant                   Date

*Signature of researcher*
I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher                  Date