Is it what you know, who you know, or just 'luck'?

What are the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators having recently qualified from a university accredited post graduate teaching qualification in Further Education?

Lisa Ann McIntyre

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the MEd in Adult and Community Education

Department of Adult and Community Education

Maynooth University

2018

Supervisor: Dr Camilla Fitzsimons

Acknowledgements:

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the participants of this research. Without your help, it would not have been possible. Your patience, time, interest and honesty is truly appreciated and will not be forgotten.

To my supervisor, Camilla, a sincere thank you for your guidance, support, knowledge and encouragement. Particularly for the times I doubted myself, but you noticed something worth following up and invigorated me to persevere. Your enthusiasm and passion in the topic made it a pleasant journey to take.

To my colleagues on the MED, your support, encouragement and friendship is valued more than you will know. Thank you for helping me through the good times and the bad during the year.

To my partner Aidan, thank you for your constant support, the countless cups of tea at 2 a.m. as well as the distractions to go for a walk with the dog, they were underappreciated at the time, but so beneficial. A huge thank you to my family, particularly my sister Orla for all your help, care and support.

Abstract:

This thesis is an inquiry into the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators (AEs) having recently qualified from a university accredited post-graduate teaching qualification in Further Education. It seeks to question the challenges faced by Newly Qualified Adult Educators (NQAEs) and look at their journey at the beginning of their careers. The language that surrounds the Adult/Further Education (AE/FE) sector is perplexing. To avoid uncertainty in this thesis, I will use the term Newly Qualified Adult Educator (NQAE) or Adult Educator (AE) when talking about my research population and topic (language will be discussed on p.14).

The adult and further education (AE/FE) sector in Ireland has undergone a series of changes in recent years. The findings reveal a link towards austerity and the neo-liberal society we live in which contributes to the instability and precarious nature that comprises the AE/FE sector. This research will explore the policies surrounding the sector, those of which along with neo-liberalism, played a role in the professionalisation and quantifiable nature of adult education where outcomes and employability precede learners needs and wants. This thesis argues that both the socio-economic and policy context mentioned above contributed to the lack of permanent contracts, but abundance of short-term, zero-hour contracts, pay cuts, increased pressure on measuring outcomes and lack of job security to name a few.

The framework for this thesis is based on the theories of Mezirow/Illeris and Noddings. Mezirow/Illeris allow the research to investigate transformative learning through the identity of an AE. This looks at where the individual fits into the collective and how a questioning of identity may arise in the beginning of the NQAEs career, where new

experiences do not fit with the AEs beliefs and may cause a change of such beliefs. The findings show both an allowance for self-identity but a conformity to policy, where 'ticking the boxes' overrides the learners needs. This has a clear impact on AEs who strive to meet the learners needs. Noddings brings in the element of care that AEs feel for their learners. Care clearly underpins the work of AEs, where they want to make a difference in the lives of their learners. This research took a qualitative approach and is grounded in social constructivism with elements of autoethnography using vignettes to depict my own experiences beginning my career as a NQAE. The vignettes are conversations either in my own head or with others. The fieldwork was based on focus groups, semi-structured face-to-face, telephone and email interviews.

The research shows that the beginning of a NQAEs career is a scary, unpredictable and unstable process which brings many challenges, but it also brings pleasure and enjoyment to anyone who truly cares about the learners of adult education. The dedication and challenging work of the participants and all educators shows testament to the wonders of becoming an AE, despite the intense precarity and countless challenges associated with it.

"I'm supposed to be covering sick leave, I can't be sick"

"Shit, that looks like a lot" I thought in my head as the tutor tried to explain the timetable that had scribbles, highlighter and marker strewn across it. I got home that evening with the curriculum for each module in one hand and the book in the other. I started to look at the curriculum..learning outcomes…assessments…case studies….breathe…"Okay, so I'll get started on somethin..feck..where do I start?"... The next day was a mash of interviewing potential students for the course, explaining the course (which I had no experience of), picking potential students (a near impossible task for a 'newbie' when the numbers needed to be high to allow the course to run), getting information from the tutor who taught the course to help me organise my first week and trying to learn theory and practical machines to facilitate classes. I came home and spent hours devising Power Point presentations, activities, gathering materials and notes. I was exhausted, and I went to bed with my heart racing no slower than my mind, sickly lump in my stomach and throat and I felt like I could cry for the night. The next morning, I awoke feeling worse than I have ever felt before. My voice was half its normal volume (which isn't very loud at the best of times), but I couldn't miss my first day. It was induction for students and I had a couple of workshops to deliver. I got through the day, but any time anyone mentioned curriculum or having to teach classes, I would choke up and fight back the tears. On the drive home, I wondered "what is wrong with me? Why am I feeling like this?...must be the cold..I'll get a good sleep and be grand in the morning" In bed that night I again began to over-think everything that could go wrong and how badly my classes could go. "Will I be able to do it? (No) Am I ready for this? (No) I'm not experienced enough.. I don't know enough to go into the classroom". I awoke the next with a temperature, cold sweat and severe throat infection…"You're not goin in today"…"Jeys I have to I cant miss it, shur I'm supposed to be covering sick leave, I can't be sick".

The above excerpt illuminates a period of new experiences, precarity, questioning identity, impostership and transition. This research will look to theorise the above experience and investigate if this resonates with other NQAEs.

Table of Contents:

Abbreviations:

AE/AEs	Adult Educator/s
AE/FE	Adult Education/Further Education
AE/FE/CE	Adult Education/Further Education/Community Education
AONTAS	Aos Oideachais Náisiúnta Trí Aontú Saorálach - 'national adult education through voluntary unification'.
CE	Community Education
CPD	Continued Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DETE	Department of Enterprise, trade and Employment
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETB	Education and Training Board
FÁS	An Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FET Strategy	Further Education and Training Strategy
HDFE/H.DIP	Higher Diploma in Further Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NLN	National Learning Network
NQAE	Newly Qualified Adult Educator
NQT	Newly Qualified Adult Educator
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna

SPHE	Social, personal and Health Education
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme

Chapter 1 – A Newly Qualified Adult Educator:

Introduction:
In these precarious times, NQAEs are in a unique and vulnerable position where identity plays an immense role at the beginning of their career. This precarity can determine the outcome of our identity as adult educators, learners and human beings. This research will investigate the experiences and challenges of a group of NQAEs as they begin their new careers as Adult Educators.

We live in a neo-liberal society where austerity has brought many changes to the world as we once knew it (Fraser et al., 2013). Neo-liberalism is a political and economic theory which suggests the welfare of people may be progressed in the most beneficial way through protecting "private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005:2). Neo-liberalism works "under the assumption that 'a rising tide lifts all boats', or of 'trickle down'," where free markets and free trade will eradicate poverty and if the rich gain, so will the poor (Harvey, 2005:64). Neo-liberalism claims to bring a reduction in tax, an increase in jobs and choice of education as well as more opportunities (Fitzsimons, 2017). However, in reality, the wealthy gain and the middle and lower-classes lose. Neo-liberalism has led to the reorganisation of the connection between the market and state which, could be an attempt to give more power to the wealthy and less rights to society (Finnegan 2008).

Neo-liberalism "sees any outcome of the market as just, proper and natural, poverty and social problems become the mark of personal failure rather than systemic failures" (Finnegan, 2008:59). It is a term used to describe different economic and social concepts that "reinvigorate the accumulation of capital" (Fitzsimons, 2017:6). Neo-liberalism

instigates privatisation, reducing/removing funding from the government (to public schools, hospitals etc.) and it "drives consumer spending, the fulcrum of all capitalism" (Fitzsimons, 2017:6). This thesis argues that neo-liberalism has contributed to the precarious work conditions that exist for AEs in Ireland today in many ways, including; temporary and zero-hour contracts, a lack of permanency, pay cuts and lack of job security. The effects of neo-liberalism and austerity will be further expanded on page 28.

This thesis will explore the notion that in AE/FE/CE; professionalisation, outcomes and employability now override what was once a learner centred environment. It will seek to understand the meaning of Adult, Further and Community education and investigate the policy context surrounding this sector before exploring the experiences and challenges that arise for NQAEs. It will look at the precarious nature of the work undertaken by AEs nowadays and unlock the level of support available to NQAEs, both formal and informal as well as the workload associated with the job. It will delve into the theorists Jack Mezirow (1990, 1991) and Knud Illeris (2014), seeking to explore if transformative learning takes place at the beginning of a NQAEs career, through the lens of identity. I believe care is an element that underpins the work of an adult educator and this will be explored through the theory of Nel Noddings (2003, 2012, 2013).

The transition theory by Nancy Schlossberg (2011) will feature a position, to try and understand how the NQAE deals with their new role. Throughout this research, I refer to and draw literature from research that took place in traditional school settings (primary and post-primary) due to a gap in the literature about the experiences of adult educators. This may be because prior to the involvement of the Teaching Council, people tended to end up as educators in AE/FE/CE either through secondary school routes, industry or

community activism in the case of community education. The thesis draws on both national and international literature with the view of investigating 'what are the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators having recently qualified from a university accredited post-graduate teaching qualification in Further Education?'. The research takes a qualitative approach with an autoethnographic twist using vignettes to illustrate my own experiences of beginning my career as a NQAE. The vignettes are placed at the beginning of chapters to give a sense of what is to come and will be referred to throughout the thesis.

Choosing a research topic:

Choosing a research topic was tough in the beginning. However, my research question 'What are the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators having recently qualified from a university accredited post-graduate teaching qualification in Further Education?' arose from a personal experience I encountered at the beginning of the year. I found my role as a NQAE difficult in some respects whilst challenging and enjoyable in others. I apprehend that the following statements are not the experiences of all NQAEs. Nevertheless, speaking from my own experience; the student educator does not pick up the full responsibility of the class during teaching practice[1]. During this experience, they have support and guidance from the university and a cooperating teacher[2]. However, once qualified, the full responsibility of classes are placed on the NQAE with very little support or guidance. My experience was of an expectation that I would know exactly what materials to use, how to adopt and implement them, assess learners as well as keep

---

[1] Teaching practice is experience gained by the student educator where they take over the role of adult educator in an adult learning environment.

[2] Cooperating teacher is an Adult Educator in the adult learning environment designated to help, support and guide the student educator. The cooperating teacher is normally the main educator of the class that has been taken by the student educator.

everything up to date for internal and external scrutiny. Although I had acquired new skills and knowledge to implement in the classroom and had my own visions, beliefs and ideas, it was difficult to employ them in the real-life classroom due to the many pressures and demands of the daily duties of an AE. Again, while I cannot speak for all NQAEs, my experiences of beginning my career as an AE was a disorienting and uncomfortable experience. After this, I was interested in finding out about other educator's experiences and comparing these against my own. This research therefore looks for answers to the question; 'What are the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators having recently qualified from a university accredited post-graduate teaching qualification in Further Education?'. It aspires to find out about the challenges, opportunities and overall encounters of NQAEs. My research encompasses issues such as identity formation, precarity and professionalisation, support structures, experiences of educators, challenges, responsibilities and relationships and care.

Setting my professional context:

I finished the Higher Diploma in Further Education (HDFE) in Maynooth University in 2017. I had to choose whether to gain employment in the adult education sector or complete the Masters in Adult and Community Education (MACE). I decided to enrol onto the MACE because employment opportunities were poor at the time of graduating and I wanted to gain a deeper knowledge of how Adult Education is framed and the theories that underpin it. As I had qualified the previous year, I felt I would still have a good connection with my fellow colleagues and would have a valuable pool of participants available to engage in my research.

A word about language - Teacher? Facilitator? Educator?

The words 'teacher', 'facilitator' and 'educator' are very often used interchangeably even though their roles, methods and styles are very different. In general, a teacher would be viewed in the traditional mechanics of education standing at the top of the room giving knowledge. Freire (2005) would call this the "banking concept of education" (p.72) where the teacher deposits information and the learner receives it. A facilitator or educator hosts the learning space but maintains a mutual relationship with the learner where the learner learns from the educator and the educator learns from the learner. This is a respectful space where learning is encouraged but not forced. Freire (2005) labels this type of education "problem-posing" where teachers and students come together through "dialogue" to mutually learn from one another (p.80). Facilitator or educator is the style of 'teaching' that I identify and strive towards. I believe the role of the person hosting a learning space in Adult Education is to facilitate learning within the group by constructing knowledge *with* the learners. I will predominately use the term NQAE (Newly Qualified Adult Educator) or AE (Adult Educator) throughout this research. I would like to emphasise that I use these terms with the meaning of educator/facilitator as explained above.

Adult Education and the Adult Educator:

According to Roberts (2015), a Freirean approach says that "knowing is a distinctively human process of coming to understand through dialogue with others and interaction with an ever-changing world [known as] structures, policies, and practices" (p.379). This means there are ethical and political elements to education and it is never impartial. Roberts (2015) maintains that Freire believes there is always something to be learned and we should try to understand our world and ourselves as entirely as possible. Freire is best

known for his ideas around the banking system of education as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, which he suggests tries to hide truths that describe how individuals exist (Freire, 2005) and discourages learners from posing questions about the world (Roberts, 2015). His suggestion that problem-posing education is much more responsive to the needs of learners, allows them to engage in dialogue and critical reflection with each other, and with the facilitator to share knowledge and understanding (Roberts, 2015). For many, Adult education is an attempt to liberate learners. This involves "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2005:79). Dialogue overturns the concept of the teacher of students and instead "a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers" (Freire, 2005:80). In this concept, the teacher learns from the student and the student learns from the teacher. Rogers & Horrocks (2010) explain that many terms can be used to describe the principles and types of adult education; 'continuing education', 'recurrent education', 'lifelong learning' and 'non-formal education' (p. 39).

What is Further Education?

In Ireland, the term Further Education (FE) has emerged from Adult Education (AE) and Lifelong Learning (the history and policy of which will be explored later). For now, it is important to set the context for what FE means.

> According to Department of Education and Skills (2018):
>
> Further Education covers education and training which occurs after second
> level schooling but which is not part of the third level system. There are number
> of providers of Further and Adult Education and Training and a wide variety

of schools, organisations and institutions, are involved in the delivery of continuing education and training for young school leavers and adults.

Further Education (FE) is mostly organised by Education and Training Boards (ETB's) (who also take responsibility for primary and second level education) (Department of Education and Skills, 2018). There are sixteen ETB's in Ireland, each of which cover one to three counties. These ETB's were formed in 2013 and were formerly known as Vocational Education Committees (VEC's). Although operated by Education and Training Boards, further education is largely dependent on the second level schooling sector and is "influenced by state discourses and structures" (Grummell, 2014:125). SOLAS also facilitate and fund FE courses (Department of Education and Skills, 2018).

What is Further Education and Training?

Murray et al. (2014) explains that Further Education and Training (FET) is a term sometimes used interchangeably with AE and FE. AE was once the term used to describe the entire sector (including further education, Youthreach, community education etc.) but in more recent times, government reports and websites have referred to the whole sector as FET. Using FET as the all-encompassing term for the sector places importance on training within the sector and perhaps was a result of policy changes where outcomes and employability became the focus of AE/FE (this will be further expanded in the section on policy on p.30) (Ryan et al, 2014). For the purposes of this research, the entire sector will be referred to as AE/FE(/CE) (Adult Education/Further Education (/Community Education).

What is Community Education?

Community education indicates "any localised, structured adult learning that happens outside of traditional institutions such as schools and colleges" (Fitzsimons, 2017:3). Community education takes place in various locations such as community centres, adult education settings, health settings, churches or any available space. This type of education is "learner-centred and responds to the needs of the local community" and endeavours to include all adult learners (Aontas, 2016b). Community education could be defined as:

> providing individuals with knowledge which they can use collectively to change society if they so wish, and particularly equipping members of the working-class with the intellectual tools to play a full role in a democratic society or to challenge the inequalities and injustices of society in order to bring about radical social change (Johnston, 2000:15).

Structure and content of Thesis:

This thesis is set out over seven chapters followed by a bibliography and appendices. It includes vignettes of my own experiences of becoming a NQAE throughout, which add an element of practice and give relevant context to the theory.

Chapter one: Overview - A Newly Qualified Adult Educator

Chapter one introduces my topic. It explains why I chose this topic and my professional context. It will briefly delve into the socio-political context that has brought about the need for my research. It then explains the differences between a teacher, educator and facilitator and the reasoning behind the wording used in this research. After this it will explore the meaning of Adult Education, Further Education, Further Education and Training and Community Education.

Chapter Two: Literary Review - The Irish FET Landscape

This chapter will take the reader through the history of AE and the policy context that led to the professionalisation of the sector as well as the effects of austerity and neo-liberalism which led to the precariousness that is evident in AE.

Chapter Three: Literary Review – It's a handy number with paid holidays...so that's what it means to be an 'educator':

Chapter three is split into two sections. The first section deals with the working conditions of NQAEs, emotions, respectful relationships and support. This section also infuses one of the theories that frames the thesis – Nel Noddings (2003, 2012, 2013) theory of care in education. The second section also grounds the theory but through the lens of Jack

Mezirow's (1990, 1991) theory of transformative learning through the lens of identity through Knud Illeris (2014). This section will also include the transition theory.

Chapter Four: Methodology - How do you know what you know?

Chapter four delves into my ontological and epistemological standpoint and position within the research and provides a rationale. It will then describe my methods of research, methods of recruitment and the ethical aspect of the research.

Chapter Five: Findings - Finding your feet in the world of Adult Education:

This chapter will firstly introduce the participants and give the reader a brief background of each one, and it will then give the participants voices. This chapter is predominately focused around the voices of the participants with a summary of findings and the foundations of analysing the findings.

Chapter Six: Analysis of Findings - So it's a bit more complicated than it seems?

Chapter six will pursue a detailed analysis of the findings and look to the literature and theoretical framework to make sense of such findings.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion - At least someone cares:

This chapter will conclude the findings, literature and theory to summarise the focal points of the research.

Chapter 2 – The Irish FET Landscape:

Introduction:

This thesis aims to find out 'what are the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators having recently qualified from a university accredited post-graduate teaching qualification in Further Education?'. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the history of policy from the very beginning up to today to set the context for the research. It will look at the professionalisation of adult education and the policy that led to this, namely government papers and organisations. It will then turn to the neo-liberal society that Ireland finds itself in to investigate the repercussions austerity measures have placed on NQAEs and the AE/FE/CE sector.

Setting the scene in policy from the beginning:

As part of this research, it is important to place adult education in the wider education sector and look at its journey through time. This gives us a background of how adult education came about and enables an investigation into where and when the sector was professionalised with educators being encouraged to gain formal qualifications along with other recommendations laid out in policy. AE/FE/CE could be viewed as education that is not within the parameters of primary, post primary or higher education (Murray et al., 2014).

For the purposes of this research, I will briefly and broadly state the origins of AE in Ireland before 1988 to add context and clarity on the history from the beginning until now. Further on, I will explain the policy context of adult education from 1998 onwards (when a government policy document report called the 'green paper' was produced).

From the beginning, the Catholic Church held power within education in Ireland where they "operated and controlled the civil and moral education of Irish Catholics" (Inglis, 1998:151). As many as 17,000 children per year had no education after primary school, which meant they had low skill levels and an increased chance of becoming unemployed or being forced to emigrate in the future (O'Dubhlaing, 1997). Donagh O'Malley who was appointed as Minister for Education in 1966, had a huge interest in education and he hoped to change the way for future school goers by introducing free education for post primary school. Many vocational schools were constructed countrywide providing post primary schooling during the day and night classes for adults at night (McDonnell, 2003). These classes were impromptu, depending on the pastimes of the community they were in and the facilitator (holding the night class). People attending these classes included "women, the working class, those with literacy difficulties, early retirees and workers whose employers supported the need to improve certain skills" (Fitzsimons, 2017:73).

The *Murphy Report (1973)* was the first government funded report on AE in Ireland. It made many recommendations about the future of AE in Ireland including the formation of training courses to suit the needs of adult and community educators. It also recommended developing a distinct section in the Department of Education which would have sole responsibility for adult education, the employment of adult education officers, budgets and grants. It advocated the formation of a "statutory body…in each county", which was "County Education Committee – with responsibility for the development and servicing of all sections of the educational system" (Committee on Adult Education, 1973:122). From this report VECs were allotted Adult Education Organisers whose role was to coordinate learning programmes and provided adults with guidance and data. It also established to make proposals for the future of adult education in Ireland (McDonnell,

2003). A second report called *Lifelong Learning: Report on the Commission on Adult Education* otherwise called *The Kenny Report (1983)* was established to try to put in place a structure for adult education by recommending the formation of "county and county borough Adult Education Boards" as well as provide budgets for adult education, literacy and community education (Commission on Adult Education, 1984:129). It was around the time of the *Kenny report* that community education began to cultivate, consisting of groups (community and voluntary) who delivered education in the form of literacy, second chance and personal development. Community based education was mainly organised by women, for women (McDonnell, 2003).

In 1988, the Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) was formed. VTOS was presented through VECs which allowed adults who were unemployed to complete courses while remaining on social welfare benefit (McDonnell, 2003). VTOS is still strongly situated in Ireland particularly now, after the recession of the Celtic Tiger. It provides many adults with the opportunity to upskill and retrain while keeping an income. As of 2006, there were many voluntary literacy tutors working out of VECs to provide one on one and group assistance, support for unemployed, within prisons and the travelling community to name a few (Fitzsimons, 2017).

The professionalisation of adult education:

In modern times, if we receive a service from a 'professional', we generally think it has a standard of some sort, it is sought after and recognised as a good service and we would be comfortable to pay more for it than for a service that was not deemed 'professional'. The word 'professional' is now being used more frequently than ever, with many occupations being classed as professional. We often bring our dog to the professional

groomer or have our cars professionally valeted (Fitzsimons, 2017). As described, "Professionalisation [is] the process an occupation must go through to become a closed profession" (Fitzsimons, 2017:198). The professionalisation of occupations usually involves the creation of a "regulatory body to oversee membership", who must decide upon "prerequisite attributes", define "standards of practice" and "approve particular education and training programmes, including continuous professional development" (Fitzsimons, 2017:198). Fitzsimons (2017) maintains that there is usually a collaboration between Universities and the State, where the University will act as a frame of expertise (in their field of knowledge) to authenticate the practice and the State can legally authorise the above bodies to impose qualifications and criteria for professionals. Due to its unstable nature through continuous evolution and change as to what constitutes adequate criterions of 'professionalism', professionalisation can be a difficult and challenging concept to decide upon (Fitzsimons, 2017). The issue of people having diverse opinions about what professional practice is exists and it may cause tension where one educator thinks one method is good or acceptable while another may think it is not (Fitzsimons, 2017).

In Ireland, to be recognised to teach in public education (and receive public payment), an individual must be registered with the Teaching Council. This obligation to be registered with the Teaching Council was part of the professionalisation of the education sector. The Teaching Council is "the professional regulatory body for secondary and primary teachers whose remit was legislatively extended to incorporate Further Education and Training (FET) in 2009" (Fitzsimons, 2017:204-205). To register with the Teaching Council, individuals must hold a college/university degree along with a postgraduate course that is recognised by the Teaching Council.

> [The] Teaching Council is the professional standards body for the teaching
>
> profession, which promotes and regulates professional standards in teaching. It
>
> acts in the interests of the public good while upholding and enhancing standards
>
> in the teaching profession.
>
> (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2015)

The Teaching Council was "traditionally associated with the school system" (Fitzsimons, 2017:33) but their "remit was legislatively extended to incorporate Further Education and Training (FET) in 2009" (p.205). From then, AEs were required to be registered (and hold a university degree) with the Teaching Council, but there had been a sway towards professionalisation before this in 1998 from policy outlined in a government document called the *Green Paper: Adult Education in an Era of Learning (Green Paper)* which came into effect through *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (White Paper)* in 2000. The next section will address both these papers and summarize what they meant for adult education and educators in Ireland.

The introduction of the Green Paper (1998) and the White Paper (2000):

The beginning of this chapter presented the history and background of education in Ireland and the production of government funded documents which would make recommendations on the future of adult education in Ireland. The professionalisation of the adult education sector became important and it came through in a few ways. One of which was the above-mentioned requirement to register with the Teaching Council. However, as previously mentioned, the sector was shifting towards professionalisation before the Teaching Council existed through government policy documents. To

comprehend this professionalisation of the AE/FE sector, it is useful to look at the policy context that led to this, namely two government documents that were published – the *Green Paper (1998)* and the *White Paper (2000).*

McDonnell (2003) explains that the *Green Paper* was formed in 1998 resulting from pressure on the Department of Education from groups like AONTAS. AONTAS is an organisation that "advocates and lobbies for the development of a quality service for adult learners; promotes the value and benefits of adult learning and builds organisational capacity" (Aontas, 2016a).

The interpretation of adult education by the *Green Paper* was to outline it as "all systematic learning by adults, which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society; apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training" (Department of Education and Science, 1998:16). The Green Paper set out several recommendations for various areas of AE/FE/CE. These were mainly concerned with adult learners and existing adult educators. The areas for recommendations included; community education, accreditation, certification and guidance, training of adult educators and structures for adult education (Department of Education and Science, 1998). It was to "be used as a basis for discussion to enable the Government to define its priorities and to plan the development of the sector in a forthcoming White Paper" (Department of Education and Science, 1998:4). While the paper did little to provide for NQAEs, the main recommendations designed for adult educators (which could be argued, included NQAEs but was not designed specifically for them) was to; form a group who would suggest proposals for formally recognising adult educators professional qualifications, create a

forum for adult educators to share ideas and implement provisions to allow progression and training to educators.

The *White Paper (2000)* came about after the *Green Paper* and had altered its definition of education as "systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education and training" (Department of Education and Science, 2000:12). The *White Paper* was devised to set the policy for the recommendations that emerged from the *Green Paper*. Department of Education and science (2000) recognised that to implement the changes that were advised from the *Green Paper,* there would need to be a pool of "highly trained corps of adult educators and trainers who are dynamic and equipped to lead change" (p.150). It set out that the aim of the paper was to extend the current means of recognising qualifications and "embrace a variety of new qualifications" (Department of Education and Science, 2000:150). Again, parallel to the *Green Paper,* the *white paper* spoke mainly to learners and existing adult educators. However, due to the recommendations for existing educators, new educators would also be encouraged to gain formal recognition of qualifications. The development of a "generic training programme" as a "pre-service training programme for the sector" was the closest progression for NQAEs. The second recommendation that would speak to NQAEs was the provision for 'The National Adult Learning Council' to create a forum for educators to allow them to discuss and swap ideas, thoughts and provide support for one another.

The *White Paper* also set out that:

> Many with an Adult Education qualification, but who lack a "teaching" qualification, may find it impossible to secure stable employment in their chosen field. There are also many workers in the community and voluntary

sector with expertise and experience in this area but who lack the professional recognition of a formal qualification.

(Department of Education and Science, 2000:152)

The overall intention of the *White Paper (2000)* was to implement changes throughout the AE/FE/CE sector mainly in relation to programmes for Further Education schools and centres, support services for learners and educators and establishing Adult Education Boards. To combat the problem of a lack of adult educators who held formal qualifications, the *White Paper (2000)* endeavoured to professionalise the AE/FE sector by introducing the "training of trainers" which intimidated the aforementioned; particularly volunteers and educators who did not have formal qualifications (Department of Education and Science, 2000:19).

While the *White Paper* set out solid recommendations, which would give adult educators a good grounding for being recognised professionally, giving support and guidance for good practice as well as a having a say in policy related issues, very little actually changed for adult educators. The *White Paper* did make some changes and developed the sector in ways. It led to the founding of the "National Adult Literacy Strategy, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and Community Education" (Murtagh, 2014:30). However, Murtagh (2014) emphasises that the proposals were defective, little was changed and "the fragments of FET lay this way until 2013 with the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of SOLAS" (Crabbe, 2016:30).

The effects of austerity and neo-liberalism on adult and community education:

The last section dealt with the professionalisation of the AE/FE sector through registering as a qualified AE with the Teaching Council and through the recommendations that arose from the *White Paper* (which we know were not followed through on). This section seeks to explain and explore neo-liberalism in Ireland and how it impacted the AE/FE/CE sector through outcomes based learning and precarious work conditions for AEs and NQAEs.

As mentioned above, many of the recommendations laid out in the *White Paper* were not followed through and around that time there was much ambiguity for community education (you will remember from p.17, CE is education outside the sphere of other education and usually happens in local communities) where many decisions were being made by "government funders" rather than representatives where outcomes were starting to become a necessity of community education to receive funding (Fitzsimons, 2017:144). Some CE was brought in under FE and the *FET Strategy* was released which had a huge emphasis on employability and a "market driven economy" and very little emphasis on personal gain (O'Reilly, 2014:163).

> Neo-liberalism is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework categorized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005:2)

Harvey (2005) implies that the state must produce an "institutional framework" to assume these private property rights, free markets and free state (p.2). They must create markets

where they do not already exist and form organisations and operations to ensure private property rights and the correct running of markets. However, this is the only intervention the state should take to reduce bias opinions (Harvey, 2005). Finnegan (2008) argues that "neo-liberalism has emerged as both an expression of, and a response to, a series of technological and political changes" (p.56). This has commodified "social goods of all sorts including healthcare, natural resources and education" (Finnegan, 2008:57). Coulter & Nagle (2015) talk about the "political posturing of job creation" by the government (p.153). However, work that gives workers a "reasonable level of economic security" is pushed under the carpet (Coulter & Nagle, 2015:153).

> Neo-liberalism has worked very well for the wealthy 1%, the bondholders, private multinational corporations, financial markets, global wealth funds etc. It has worked for the private firms profiting from the commodification and commercialisation of water, housing, education, health etc. It has certainly not worked for the poor and middle classes of Europe and the US who have lost wages, working conditions, public services and face increased insecurity and poverty (Hearne, 2016).

The effects of neo-liberalism are evident in the pay cuts/freezes to both the public and private sectors and the precarious work conditions that exist. Precarious work describes "non-standard, flexible" work. It has caused the casualisation of work by "outsourcing, sub-contracting and temporary contracts" as well as the loss of rights to workers (Pembroke et al., 2017:1)

Austerity measures and particularly the recession of 2008 have had serious implications in all sectors of Ireland including the AE/FE/CE sector of education. Further Education and Training is in the foreground to support people who have lost jobs, faced unemployment and is frequently a place where people look towards to find a better future (McGlynn, 2014). However, Grummell (2014) argues that "neoliberal discourses are driving a performance-based and employment-orientated vision of education" (p. 122) where the main aim of further education courses is to get people employment ready or enable them to progress to higher education. O' Reilly (2014) expresses that "adult education policy is firmly set within the neoliberal ideology" (p. 161). Today, further education is situated in a confusing space with many "funders" involved. Two departments of government hold power within the adult education sector – the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, trade and Employment (DETE)" (Grummell, 2014:124).

The Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy (2014-2019):

The previous section explained neo-liberalism and the impact it had on the AE/FE/CE sector through pay cuts, the implementation of temporary and sub-contracting contracts as well as flexible working conditions. FET Act then came into effect in 2013 which placed more emphasis on outcomes and employability instead of the needs of the learners.

FET Act (2013) allowed for the termination of FÁS and the formation of SOLAS. SOLAS projected a five-year strategy for the establishment of FET in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2014).

The FET Strategy is intended therefore to provide a focus for the setting of investment priorities, and to provide a framework for the establishment and development of a strong FET sector. The FET Strategy aims to deliver a higher quality learning experience leading to better outcomes for all those who engage in FET.

(Department of Education and Skills, 2014:3)

Although the *FET Strategy* was the next step on from the *White Paper* and was supposed to develop Adult and Further Education in Ireland, the language and focus moved from learner centred to employability and serving the needs of the workforce and economic growth. It placed emphasis on "outcomes-based funding", productivity and becoming more useful in the workforce market (Department of Education and Skills, 2014:8). One of the focuses of the *FET Strategy* was about learners "having the right skills and the opportunities to use and develop them in order to gain confidence and self-esteem is essential to contribute to a better society, as well as to improve employability and productivity" (Department of Education and Skills, 2014:5). This strategy clearly talked to the needs of the labour market but not necessarily the needs of individuals.

Summary of chapter:

This section looked at the history and policy surrounding the AE/FE/CE sector from the beginning. It showed that professionalisation of the sector was implemented through the *Green Paper (1998)* and *White Paper (2000)* which encouraged AEs to gain a qualification, and through registration with the Teaching Council in 2009. Along with policy, neo-liberalism played a part in producing outcomes-based education where learners are expected to be employable from completing courses rather than fulfilling

personal gain. The implementation of policy, the registration with the Teaching Council as well as neo-liberalism and austerity have contributed to the precarious working conditions that NQAE/AEs face daily. This precarity surrounding pay, changeable working hours and short-term contracts as well as the workload placed on AEs to meet course outcomes will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 – Section 1 – It's a handy number with paid holidays:

"If I don't do the hours now, I won't get offered paid work"

> *"Got that phone call today,....about the hours"*
>
> *"Oh yeh, well?"*
>
> *"I'm covering sick leave, I think"*
>
> *"How long for?"*
>
> *"Dunno, depends how long they're off for..could be one day, could be 6 weeks"......*
>
> *"Oh god, I really really do not have time to do this extra class tomorrow and then attend a two-hour meeting. I need to prepare the class-do a lesson plan, figure out some sort of activity and **learn** the topic…As well as finish that assignment, prepare the other class and I'm working this evening."*
>
> *"Well then why don't you say you cannot do it..simple!"*
>
> *"Ha…if only it was…if I don't do the hours now, I won't get offered paid work…if it comes up"*
>
> *"and why are you going to the meeting..shur that's only for the full time ones..isn't it?"*
>
> *"Yeah but I have to be seen doing these extra things"*
>
> *"Right..but your burning the candle at both ends..I hope you know that!"*

The above vignette depicts the precariousness of the adult education sector, where NQAEs and AEs feel they must take all work that is available, and they must partake in all activities or else they may not receive further work. It shows the workload placed on AEs daily and their struggle to complete it all as well as the varying hours and uncertainty as to whether they will have work tomorrow or not.

Introduction:

This thesis looks to investigate the experiences and challenges of NQAEs. The previous chapter brought the reader through the policy and historical context from the beginning. It will be noted that this policy has contributed to the precarity and uncertainty that surrounds this sector today. This chapter will now introduce the precarious working conditions of NQAEs (and AEs) which is occupied by short-term, indefinite contracts, fluctuating hours, the need to be completely flexible and the responsibility of meeting outcomes. It will outline how these precarious and difficult working conditions lend to the need for formal and informal support and good working relationships from colleagues/employers, which is not always available for NQAEs. It could be argued that NQAEs entering this challenging and uncertain sector are in a vulnerable position where care and emotions underpin the work they do. These emotions may help them in connecting with their learners to form respectful, trusting relationships but they also play a role in the care that fortifies the work of an AE. Noddings (2003) theory of care in education will be explored as the theory that underpins my own practice and will act as a framework for the thesis.

Working conditions:

> What is known as 'precarious work' is associated with and characterizes the effects of neoliberal policy—the transference of economic risk onto workers, the erosion of workers' rights, the flexibilization and casualization of work contracts, self-responsibility, financial insecurity, and emotional stress.
>
> (Lopes and Dewan, 2014:28)

Precarity is a well-known term in Ireland in recent times and is widespread among the AE/FE/CE sector. For the NQAEs interviewed in this research, there appears to be a shortage of permanent, full-time jobs and an abundance of short-term, zero-hour contracts. This makes them part of a group which Standing (2011) would call the 'precariat'. The 'precariat' is an individual who lacks "labour-market security, job security, employment security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security and representation security" (Standing, 2011:17). As well as the above, these individuals lack "work-based identity", meaning they do not feel as though they are part of a social (work) group (Standing, 2011). Workers on precarious contracts are compelled to take every hour that is available to them and often may have a few jobs at the one time due to wages being too low or as a backup measure in case they lose one job (Bobek et al. (2018) and Standing (2011)), which is evident in my own experience, outlined in the vignette at the start of this chapter.

This type of employment causes ambiguity and stress along with being unable to make long term plans and having no access to pay (sick, holiday or parental) while having other negative impacts on family life, social life and relationships with others (Fitzsimmons, 2017; Lopes and Dewan, 2014; Kidder and Raworth, 2004). Precarious employment brings with it "short-term contracts, a lack of employment benefits, long and erratic hours, and a risk of sudden job loss" (Kidder and Raworth, 2004:12). Precarious hours may bring about an inadequate income and poor conditions but if in this situation, employees may have no choice but to remain quiet and assume this position as there is such uncertainty about their contracts, their renewal is at risk and they are at the lowest level in the system and could therefore be replaced at ease (Fitzsimons, 2017 and Lopes and

Dewan, 2014). This has established as a huge challenge for the NQAEs who participated in this research.

In general, contracts with changeable hours are enforced on workers, which can make planning career paths, education choices, family planning and stepping onto the property market virtually impossible (Bobek et al., 2018). This type of work can have harmful consequences on health – both mental and physical, something which many precarious workers cannot afford to have due to the costs of healthcare and the loss of income throughout this time (Bobek et al., 2018). As previously mentioned, precarity is both an issue of the labour market and a result of neoliberalism. There are various types of precarious work around Europe due to "socio-political choices made at the national level" (Bobek et al., 2018:9). O'Neill and Cullinane (2017) agree that professional precarity is developing as a difficulty in education. "Tutors do not have secure contracts; the hours are precarious; and they are likely to be juggling several jobs" (O'Neill and Cullinane, 2017:116).

Flexibility has transformed from meaning a balance between work and life to "a power imbalance where staff are expected to prove their flexibility by being permanently available, yet never secure" (Bobek et al., 2018:6). There is an inclination for tutors who are on part-time/casual/precarious contracts to free up all of their time, morning, day or evening in order to facilitate disjointed timetables, as well as accepting extra tasks with no additional benefits, such as; contact time with students, preparing for classes, evaluating said class, marking coursework, taking assessment drafts and applying feedback, attending meetings, writing reports and completing work for external examiners

to name but a few (Lopes and Dewan, 2014). This precarity is again clear in my own experience, as outlined at the beginning of this section.

The mass of workload for NQAEs can be intimidating; formulating lesson plans, curricula and papers that are unfamiliar, correcting exams and filling in paperwork may eat into weekends and evenings leaving very little time to switch off. "The sheer quantity of the typical teacher's workload is daunting" (Liston, Whitcomb and Borko, 2006:353). This is apparent in my vignette on page 5. Many NQAEs opted to become educators based on a vision or belief of what they perceive it to be. This may have involved the notion of changing the lives of their learners. However, the everyday tick the box duties often take up most of their time leaving their beliefs and visions in the distance.

In talking about school teachers, Wilson (2004) found:

> Teachers use imagery of drowning; of being overwhelmed; of being flattened, drained of themselves; of running around aimlessly like a headless chicken; of having to juggle too many balls or plates at once, to describe the experience of being overloaded with tasks and responsibilities (p.23).

This has also unfolded the same way for NQAEs, who face a wealth of responsibility from preparing and teaching the class to a feeling of responsibility for the learner's outcomes. Teachers may feel "responsibility for student achievement, student motivation, for having positive relationships with students and for the quality of their teaching" (Matteucci, 2017:279). This responsibility can prove to be beneficial or a burden as it can strengthen the student-teacher relationship and instigate positive critical reflection on practice, but it can also add to the workload of the NQAE (O'Leary and Rami, 2017). The responsibility

felt by AEs towards their learners can be linked to establishing working relationships with them and feeling care towards them. This will be delved into in the next paragraph.

Emotions & Care, Respectful Relationships & Support:

Emotions & Care:

Emotions and care play a huge role in teaching. "When people are emotional, they are moved by their feelings" (Hargreaves, 1998:835). Hargreaves (1998) maintains that this movement may be in the form of happiness, sadness or gloom. Emotions are fundamental to teaching, as they equip the classroom with fun, imagination and enjoyment. Good facilitation involves having the capacity to understand the thoughts, views and needs of learners through their body movements, signals and articulation. Understanding emotions help individuals to acknowledge emotions in others and share a similar commonality with others (Hargreaves, 1998). Emotions can play a significant role in a NQAEs life as they either support and allow the educator to thrive or they may cause the educator to question themselves and shut off from others. Emotions also play a role in the care we express for others needs.

Newly Qualified Adult Educator or Newly Qualified Carer?

As mentioned above, care is an essential element of emotions in the classroom. Nel Noddings is best known for her work around ethics of care and its significant role in encouraging learning. Noddings (2003) argues that in life, we want to be cared for and we want to care for others. This is a natural human instinct. "One cares for something or someone if one has a regard for or inclination toward that something or someone" (Noddings, 2003:9). Noddings (2003) talks about the "one-caring" and the "one cared for" (p.176) in life. That is, in every interaction there is one person caring and one person

being cared for. The person who is caring for the other accepts the person they are caring for. In education the educator is the one who care's and the learner is the one who is cared for. Noddings (2003) claims there is a moral or ethical element to teaching and caring for others. She looks at the feminine aspect of ethics which looks at feelings and emotions disregarding the masculine aspect which looks at justice and equality.

There are two types of caring – natural and ethical caring. Natural caring causes us to act because we want to whereas ethical caring causes us to act because we must. Ethical caring requires effort where natural caring does not however ethical caring comes from natural caring. The person caring for must want to care and not be forcing themselves to. In education the educator cares for the learner by receiving, seeing and feeling with them (Noddings, 2003). Along with receiving and helping the learner, the carer must also portray an ethical model with the learner in the hope of infusing "moral sense" in them (Noddings, 2003:179). "Dialogue, practice, and confirmation" are important in educating learners morally (Noddings, 2003:182). To engage in dialogue (listening to, talking to and accepting each other), there must be a good relationship built up between the educator and learner. Learners must be encouraged to practice caring and must recognise the good in others. She argues that the person caring must show engrossment; which means having thought about the person being cared for to understand them and their position. They must also demonstrate motivational displacement; determining the needs of the person being cared for. These two components (together) are essential in caring for another (Noddings, 2013). The person who is being cared for must respond to the caring for it to be effective. Many educators wonder how they will have time to implement a caring relationship "on top of all the other demands" but it is not something that is piled alongside

the daily duties of an educator, "it is underneath all we do as teachers" (Noddings, 2012:777).

Noddings theory of care is prevalent in the life of a NQAE who has recently qualified, both as the one caring and the one being cared for. They have just come from a space of being cared for into now caring for a group of learners. While this new identity may or may not prove difficult for the NQAE to adapt to, they are now in the unique position of not only caring for their learners but also being cared for by their peers/colleagues.

Respectful relationships:

Respect may be perceived as a "social construct" and relies on interaction between two or more people. One definition of respect that has proven useful is "the approval and recognition of the self by others" (O' Grady, 2015:168). Respect and relationships are important terms when we talk about the challenges and experiences of NQAEs because they are fundamental in enabling them to succeed. A NQAE needs to connect with colleagues, to gain their support and guidance but they also need to gain support and establish a relationship with their learners. The relationship between a teacher and a learner must be nurtured for learning to take place. Experiences in education should not be intimidated and learning should not be pushed on the learners (O' Grady, 2015). In research about school teachers, Aspfors and Bondas (2013) found that relationships with colleagues are central in a NQT's first term of teaching. Relationships are a font of fulfilment and emotional tension. These relationships with colleagues are of significant value in offering informal support, particularly in the beginning of a teacher's career (Aspfors and Bondas, 2013). This suggests that good, respectful, relationships offer support, guidance and act as a confidence booster for NQAEs. They are a source of

encouragement and advice for NQAEs who are in an emotionally vulnerable time seeking their identity as educators while also finding their feet in their new career.

Support:

It has been said that becoming an educator may be an emotional journey for some. In some cases, there is support for the NQAE in the form of meetings or training days, but often this type of support is a 'box ticking' exercise and gives guidelines for practice and procedure rather than physical, emotional or beneficial support. In talking about school teachers, Aitken and Harford (2010) explain this lack of support can leave individuals feeling annoyed, irritated, distressed and dissatisfied.   "Many new teachers feel totally intimidated around their experienced colleagues and might be cautious, if not downright reluctant, to discuss problems or concerns for fear of being perceived as weak or not in control" (Sweetland, 2004:8). In most professions, a Newly Qualified Person would be given less duties which would slowly progress but for NQAEs it is the opposite. Most experienced educators are busy with their own hectic workload and a NQAE may not want to ask for help as they feel they are consuming their colleagues time. As soon as a NQAE acquires a job they automatically pick up the full responsibility of it. Again, speaking about school teachers,

Summary of chapter:

The first section of this chapter looked at the work conditions faced by NQAEs (and perhaps AEs). It demonstrated that there is an abundance of short-term indefinite and temporary contracts available and a lack of permanent contracts. Precarious work conditions mean workers are expected to be flexible regarding hours, be available all hours of the day and have no access to job security, holiday or sick pay. Along with poor

pay and conditions, NQAEs have hectic schedules preparing for classes and are not paid for the extra work they do such as meeting learners to help with assessments, correcting assessments and filling in paperwork. Many NQAEs feel a substantial level of responsibility for the outcomes of their learners and for them in general. This can arise from having a good working relationship with them or from the care they feel for their learners. This care is the essence that AE/FE/CE is built on. The want to care for others and determine their needs is a natural part of life. Relationships with learners and colleagues are important in developing care but also in assisting the NQAE at the beginning of their career. Although relationships offer a level of support to the NQAE, there is often very little support available and NQAEs regularly feel they are a burden to their colleagues or they look inferior and unable for the job.

Chapter 3 – Section 2 - So that's what it means to be an 'educator':

"I don't think I can do this…I'm not good enough"

Its fine, you can do this..you are well capable of this..it's just nerves..don't panic.. …oh god..I think my heart is gonna pop out of my chest…what if I can't do this…I don't think I can do this..I'm not good enough.. I don't know enough yet..I'm supposed to know everything!..Relax..you've got this, you have done this so many times on teaching practice..you'll be fine…No I really don't think I can do this…

The above vignette displays the uncertainty and inability that many NQAEs feel at the beginning of their careers. This notion of 'not knowing everything' and feeling impostership is evident for a lot of NQAEs where they feel as though they are a fraud. This will be expanded on in this section.

Introduction:

This thesis set out to investigate the experiences and challenges of NQAEs. This section will introduce Mezirows theory of transformative learning (1990, 1991) through the lens of illeriss (2013) idea of identity. Identity is what it means to be an educator, how they think, believe and act and the styles and methods adopted by them. An uneasiness with one's identity often gives rise to the imposter syndrome (impostership) where a feeling of incapability and a lack of confidence ensues. A shift in identity, the imposter syndrome and transformative learning are all features in the beginning of a NQAEs career, but it could be argued that this is also a time of transitioning. Therefore, the transition theory by Schlossberg (2011) features a place in this section. This period can prove difficult

depending on the individual, their circumstances, the support available to them and the tactics they operate throughout the transition process.

A transformed identity?

To really understand how identity sits within this research, I feel it is helpful to look towards Jack Mezirow (1990, 1991), who proposed a theory of Transformative Learning. However, I will only use his theory as the foundation and look further towards Knud Illeris (2014a, 2014b) who felt that Mezirow's theory was too narrowly concentrated on the cognitive aspects (habits of mind and frames of reference) which are inadequate in encapsulating all aspects of how and what causes transformative learning to take place. He decided that 'identity' (a term firstly addressed by Erik Erikson) was the best term to incorporate all dimensions and he developed this to fit around the concept of transformative learning. He believed identity involves the "social environment and interaction with the individual" (Illeris, 2014b:153). Before getting into the theory of identity, it is useful to look at the various aspects of identity from the literature.

There are numerous descriptions of 'identity'. However, it can be extremely difficult to define. According to Lamote and Engels (2010) it is "the perception that teachers have of themselves as teachers" and it denotes the way teachers as individuals and as a group of professionals, recognise themselves as teachers (p.4). In the literature about school teachers, Mockler (2011) expresses teacher professional identity as what it means to 'be' a teacher and it shapes the decisions and methods used by teachers. It could be said that this is similar for AEs where educator identity is what it means to be an educator. In thinking about how identity is formed, it is useful to think of it "as dynamic rather than

static, emergent rather than fixed, multi-dimensional rather than linear, and fluid rather than compartmentalised" (Mockler, 2011:519).

In research about school teachers, Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2012) claim that the start of term is when NQTs are most likely to face a "reality shock" regarding their new roles and responsibilities (p.244). This is evidenced in my own story at the beginning of this thesis (p.5). We are not born with an identity as such, but we develop it over time through experiences and actions from our upbringing, influencing teachers, inherited nature, family and friends (Lamote and Engels (2010) and Palmer (2017)). Occasionally, there is an imbalance in whether the NQT should follow a "content-centred" or "learner-centred" style to suit either their own beliefs or that of the school and they may experience "feeling like a student on the inside, but they are expected by students (and colleagues) to behave like 'real' teachers and as adults" (Pillen et al., 2012:244). This could also be true for NQAEs where they are unsure if they should maintain their own styles and beliefs or adopt the belief of the setting they work in.

Becoming a NQAE is a time of immense learning and new experiences and it may provoke the NQAE to question this identity. Mezirow (1990) suggests that learning is a process that may involve unravelling new, unknown understandings or it may involve the reconsidering of ideas. Essentially, this type of learning is the creation of meaning for an individual to comprehend the experience. Individuals have a 'frame of reference', which is made up of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991:41-42). "A Meaning scheme is the particular knowledge, beliefs, value judgements, and feelings that become articulated in an interpretation" (Mezirow, 1991:44). They are principles, assumptions and conclusions that allow us to explain and understand situations. Meaning

perspectives "provide us with criteria for judging or evaluating right and wrong, bad and good, beautiful and ugly, true and false, appropriate and inappropriate" (Mezirow, 1991:44). "Critical reflection involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built" (Mezirow, 1990:1). It challenges the assumptions, views and beliefs a person holds. Mezirow (1991) proposes that when an individual has an experience that does not fit in with their world view, they encounter a 'disorienting dilemma' where their assumptions and beliefs are questioned (Mezirow, 1991:168). This produces a modification in their meaning perspectives or meaning schemes through reflection and they view their interpretations in a different light. While reflecting and comprehending this new meaning, they will engage in a discussion with others to channel their learning (called rational discourse) (Cranton, 1994). The individual is then said to have had a transformative learning experience and has a changed meaning perspective or renewed meaning schemes.

Theory suggests, at the beginning of their career, a NQAE will naturally critically reflect on their practice to evaluate and improve their performance. Often, upon critical reflection, expectations of the work of a teacher may not match the reality causing a 'disorienting dilemma' and transformative learning space for the NQAE (Mezirow, 1991:168). Mezirow's theory of frames of reference, reflection, disorienting dilemma and discourse leading to a change in perspective encompass excellent foundations upon which transformative learning takes place. However, it is narrowly defined within a "cognitive dimension" and it fails to recognise the "emotional and social dimensions and the situatedness of learning process" (Illeris, 2014b: 149). The theory is misunderstood, and it is argued that some of the case studies found within Mezirow's books are merely good education not transformative learning (Illeris, 2014a). To overcome this narrow

focus of transformative learning I will look towards Knud Illeris (2014) who has brought in the idea of identity.

Engaging in dialogue with oneself and reflecting deeply on our assumptions, beliefs and ideas of the world can trigger a questioning of one's identity – where do I fit in? Identity encompasses the individual and the social bringing them together in transformative learning. In modern times, individuals question their identity when they find precarity in their lives through work, self-fulfilment and interrogations about their existence (Illeris, 2014b). These are things that have a relation of some description with the outside world and it is difficult to hold onto one's identity when the world is changing rapidly. Careers, conditions and life propose fluctuations everyday so much so that people cannot maintain their identity (Illeris, 2014b). Individuals have part-identities which might include (depending on the individual); work, family, religious, political, every-day and national-cultural (Illeris, 2014b). An individual who is beginning their new career as an AE experiences ample precariousness in the beginning of their career and this may lead to questioning of their many identities (educator, learner, worker, mother, father, brother, sister etc).

A particularly strong identity that exists for NQAEs is a work identity (containing an individual's morals, beliefs, opinions and views) which may endure critical reflection due to a change of positioning, experience and viewpoint. Reflection and life experiences create our framework for ways of thinking about emotional and social happenings (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). NQAEs are faced with new experiences; the responsibility of having their own class, creating content and assessment, delivering lessons, managing the classroom, completing paperwork as well as fitting into the ethos of the centre, debating

different opinions and ideas, meeting new colleagues and settling into an unfamiliar environment. In meeting these situations, they engage in critical reflection which may offer a conflict between their existing meaning schemes/perspectives and reality which may lead to a transformative learning experience.

Illeris (2014a and 2014b) proposes that in certain situations, transformative learning may regress or stop completely. If the individual involved in transformative learning feels that they are too uncomfortable, the experiences are too much, and they cannot cope, they will either stop from where they are or retreat backwards. Often in this situation the person does not feel as though they have benefited from the experience in any favourable way. However, it is likely that their perspective will still have altered in some way and they have gone through a transformation of sorts (Illeris, 2014a, 2014b). This may be the experiences of some NQAEs in their new role; i.e. moving from an institution where transformative learning is supported and nurtured into a space that where it is not, a space that does not fit with the individual's values or beliefs, or an experience that they were not expecting where they are overwhelmed with the level of work/responsibility expected from them.

Who do you think you are?

Another aspect of identity and a challenge that is frequently posed to NQAEs (as well as many other newly qualified workers in different disciplines) is the notion of impostership or the imposter syndrome. This is the belief or feeling as though you are a forgery. One of the central writers of literature regarding adult education, Stephen Brookfield (2017) claims that the imposter syndrome presents "the sense that just round the corner is an event that will demonstrate to everyone around you that you have no idea what you're

doing" (p.227). It is an unpleasant experience which could cause some adult educators to leave the profession. Palmer (2017) talks about the importance of having vast experience in educating students, observing others and undertaking courses and books to educate. Yet often there is the feeling that it is the first time to walk into a classroom. This is a problem that many educators face, where they feel their skills and knowledge are not up to standard. Yet it is the "identity, selfhood" and self-knowledge that educates the learners, not 'the technique' (Palmer, 2017:104).

This can be linked to my vignette at the beginning of this section, which implies the feeling of being a fraud and not trusting one's own ability which creates the feeling of being incompetent. This is often the experiences of NQAEs and it suggests that they do not have confidence in themselves or their self-knowledge causing an over reliance on the techniques they have learned to implement while training. Brookfield (2017) implies that "every day teachers devote a lot of psychic energy to hiding their impostorship and looking confident and assured, wearing the mask of professionalism" (p.227). Impostorship brings with it the feeling of being incapable of doing a good job, positive compliments are unheard or dismissed and negatives remarks are taken on board strongly by the person (Brookfield, 2017). This feeling of being an imposter is a hard one to dispose even with experience and support, and it can occur at any time, but it usually ensues at the beginning of their career (Brookfield, 1990).

Transition Theory:
The beginning of a NQAEs career is a time filled with new challenges, opportunities, experiences and learning as outlined in chapters 2 and 3. It could be argued that the NQAE is in a space of transition, where they are transitioning from being a student (adult

educator) to a qualified adult educator. Often, change floats into our horizon, we sometimes expect it, embrace it and we know it will have a significant impact on us and other times we do not. One model that is useful in understanding transition is offered by Schlossberg (2011). According to Schlossberg (2011) the transition model consists of four S's – Situation, self, support and strategies. There are three types of transitions; anticipated transitions which are major life events we expect; such as graduating, or becoming a parent, unanticipated transitions which are disruptive events that occur unexpectedly such as an illness or accident and non-event transitions which are expected events that do not occur such as not getting married or becoming a parent (Schlossberg, 2011). Transitions occur in everyone's lives at some point. For AEs, it could be assumed to take place at the beginning of their career when the NQAE is given new roles, responsibilities and duties which they may never have fulfilled before. The transition causes "our roles, relationships, routines and assumptions" to adjust or become modified. It is not necessarily the transition that is critical but the extent to which these relationships, routines, assumptions and roles change. This modification demonstrates why even small or minor transitions can cause us huge stress.

It could be argued that people do not like or embrace change, rather the opposite, they generally fear and oppose it. The "4 S's" that Schlossberg (2011) talks about help individuals manage situations differently (p.159). To effectively deal with a transition, a person must look at the common features in all transitions - the "situation, self, supports and strategies". The situation indicates the persons' situation at the time of the transition. There may be other stresses in the person's life at that point that affects how they deal with the transition. The self indicates the persons internal power to manage and deal with the situation. If the person is optimistic and resilient they will be in a much better position

to glide through the transition. Support indicates the support available to the individual when the transition takes place. This is vital to an individuals' well-being and will help to speed up the transition process, i.e. professional support. Strategies refer to the strategies adopted by the person to deal with the situation. Someone who adopts numerous strategies will be better able to deal with the change. It could be assumed that if a person going through a transition has all four resources, they will find the transition much easier.

To look at the transition theory in context, a NQAE may be given a hefty workload where they must take on new classes, prepare material, meet new colleagues, organise assessments etc. The NQAE going through this transition period may have other stresses at that time perhaps regarding family/home life. The beginning of a NQAEs career is a vulnerable, emotional time with instability regarding identity which could lend to the person feeling pessimistic or lacking confidence in themselves and their ability. As well as uncertainty regarding their ability, it has been said that NQAEs lack formal support from their work setting. If the NQAE experiences all the above, this transition period from student (adult educator) to NQAE could prove to be a difficult one. The NQAE may adopt their own strategies (as mentioned in the theory) and methods of coping with the transition to make it easier for themselves. However, it should be considered that perhaps many NQAEs do not realise they are in this transition space and therefore do not comprehend that they are adopting strategies to cope. This example links to my experience illustrated in vignettes (p.5 and p.43.) which depict a level of transition where I did not have the "4 S's" in place and therefore found the transitioning period difficult.

Summary of chapter:

The second section of this chapter looked at identity, impostership and the transition theory. The beginning of a NQAEs career poses many experiences and challenges which may cause a questioning of identity. Theory suggests it is difficult but important to hold onto ones own identity and infuse it with the identity of their workplace. Many NQAEs face the imposter syndrome, where they feel as though they are unable for the job, and that one day, someone will decide that they are not suitable for the role. These challenges and experiences posed to NQAEs are sometimes difficult for them to comprehend and deal with and the questioning of identity may cause a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1990:1). This could then evolve into a transformative learning experience through the adjustment of their frames of reference. It could be said that the beginning of the NQAEs career is a time of transition. It is a time where the NQAE must manage new experiences but may not realise they are in a space of transition. The transition theory is based around the transition that is happening (e.g. the NQAE beginning their career), the NQAEs internal ability to cope with and manage this change in their lives, the support they receive from people around them (i.e. colleagues, learners, family) and the mechanisms they adopt to handle the transition. The ability to adopt strategies will ease the transition period for the NQAE.

Chapter 4 – How do you know what you know?

My Methodology:

This study is about exploring the experiences and challenges of adult educators, having recently qualified from a university accredited post graduate teaching qualification in further education. In thinking about my methodological approach to this research, I needed to firstly look at my own epistemological and ontological views of the world. In doing so, I found myself submerged in a world of unfamiliar territory and language. Innately, I held my own epistemological and ontological stand point, however, I did not realise what this was until I went searching for it.

> According to D'Cruz and Jones (2004:50)
>
> epistemology means how we know what we know and relates to assumptions about social reality. It is a theory of knowledge by which you set out your assumptions about particular problems and asks what constitutes an appropriate way of knowing about them.

How I interpret this is that epistemology signifies the ideas we believe to be truths in the social world, what knowledge we recognise and how we recognise it. Ontology and epistemology are closely related. "Ontology is related to epistemology because it refers to how we understand reality and therefore we will then theorize, research or explain it in particular ways" (D'Cruz and Jones, 2004:50). Ontology signifies how we comprehend truths and influences the way we research. It is the way we understand knowledge and my ontological view will affect the methods I employ to carry out this research.

The fact that I believe knowledge should be discovered and investigated by people validates my adoption of a qualitative methodology. I believe people discover knowledge through their experiences of the world and through conversing with others. The stories and life experiences of adult educators who have recently qualified is the best method in addressing my research. Qualitative research works on the premise that there are various interpretations of reality which depend upon your perception and interprets the world subjectively rather than objectively (Dodgson, 2017). The environment and social surrounding has an influence on the research and the results. "Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live" (Halloway and Galvin, 2016:3). In qualitative research, the researcher distinctly and explicitly defines the process used to retrieve information from participants, records the process (interview, focus group etc.), transcribes the recording and analyses the information. The researcher discloses all related and applicable information about themselves (i.e. insider research etc.) (Dodgson, 2017).

I am taking a broadly social constructivist approach to this research because I believe an individual's world view is formed through the amalgamation of the individual and the outside world. World views, ideas and opinions are formed through many different mediums where first-hand experiences, community, reading, family and media play a part in contributing to them. In social constructivism there is a link to context. Surroundings and experiences may influence ideas or views about a topic (Murray, 2018b). The context of participants lives is important in understanding the "historical and cultural settings of participants" (Creswell, 2013:25). According to Murray (2018b) people socially construct the world for themselves by themselves. "Meanings do not exist before a mind

engages them" and "Individuals construct their reality through experiences and interpretations" (Sarantakos, 2005:37).

The researcher identifies that their circumstances impact their understanding so they "position themselves" within the research (Creswell, 2013:25). It is for this purpose, I am positioning myself as an insider researcher, as I belong to the field of NQAEs in which I am extracting information from. With insider research, the researchers experiences are a "source of knowledge" (Holloway and Galvin, 2016:8). There are both benefits and shortcomings to insider research. The benefits include having a good understanding and awareness of the topic and the participants, who may feel more comfortable in divulging information to the researcher. The downside is that the researcher may have biases or prejudices disallowing the production of new data (Halloway and Galvin, 2016).

My own experiences contribute to the autoethnographic slant on this research, which holds a part of my epistemological views in that I feel knowledge is created from an individual's experiences within shared cultural experiences. Because I hold a shared experience (NQAE beginning my career) with my research population, it is fitting to intertwine my own stories within my research. Autoethnography is a method of writing and research that explains and investigates personal experience to comprehend cultural experience. The researcher uses the principles of an autobiography and ethnography to make an autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). "Vignettes can take a range of written, audio and visual forms. Written text includes short scenarios and extracts from literature and newspapers" (Given, 2008:918). Vignettes often depict real life stories that participants can identify with and are used by researchers to investigate social concerns and questions (Barter & Reynold, 2000). "Vignettes highlight selected parts of the real

world that can help unpackage individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes to a wide range of social issues" (Barter & Reynold, 2000:310). I have chosen to use vignettes in my research to highlight my own experiences and challenges in becoming a NQAE because I feel it gives an originality and richness to the research and participants receive a sense of commonality. I believe it adds depth and authenticity and it brings the research theory to life allowing the reader on a journey through the transition period. The personal nature of my research shines a lens on my world view. I felt the best way to find out about the experiences and challenges of NQAEs would be to talk to them and hear their stories. I wanted to use a moderately informal method as I was acquainted with some of my participants and I wanted it to be a conversational, relaxed experience. Having recently qualified in the same area as my participants and essentially being in a similar position to them will, to some degree influence the research and the outcomes. However, I feel that it may also be an advantage in allowing me to both understand and appreciate the participants lives and experiences.

Methods: Focus Groups and Semi-Structured Interviews:

I employed a variety of qualitative methods for my research. I used focus groups, semi structured face to face interviews, phone interviews and email interviews. This was to warrant a diverse range of experiences and information, to make it more convenient for my participants to contribute and to ensure I would uncover rich information about the participants experiences and stories of their lives. I also wanted to give participants the option to choose the most suitable and comfortable method for them to contribute their stories and experiences to give me an understanding of the world they live in. While some participants had no trouble meeting, others had no choice but to contribute through email

or phone which highlighted the time constraints and precariousness of the careers they have undertaken and is a true reflection of the pressure and workload they face.

As a qualitative researcher adopting a broadly social constructivist position, I considered focus groups to be the one of the best method in uncovering knowledge about the participants experiences and lives. Focus groups are used as a method of collecting data through group discussion and collaboration (Connolly (2015) and Morgan (1996)). They are used to acquire information that the researcher may use in their research. Connolly (2015) claims that the focus group participants will usually share similar experiences, thoughts, values and opinions. In a focus group, participants may either agree, disagree or support each other's views. For a focus group to work effectively participants must be relaxed, appreciated and allowed to give their views without judgement (Krueger and Casey, 2009). The facilitator should ensure the group stays with the topic but should allow the group to delve into the topic from whatever approaches they desire (Longhurst, 2016). The focus groups worked well with AEs as it was a familiar way to facilitate a group for them and it allowed them to share experiences, similarities and differences which proved valuable, more so for some participants who felt relieved to hear that others shared their experiences.

Interviews are also a valuable and viable method of reaching the participants knowledge on their life experiences and stories. Longhurst (2016) states that a semi-structured interview is an oral exchange where the person interviewing asks the other person questions to extract data from them. Generally, in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer will have a list of questions to ask the interviewee, however they will not be strict on enforcing these questions and will rather use them to guide the conversation.

There is space for the interviewee to engage in conversation around the topic but not directly related to the question (Longhurst, 2016). Phone interviews are a common substitute for face-to-face interviews, particularly when geographical issues arise (Portigal, 2013). There are benefits of phone interviews, which include saving time and money as opposed to travelling for face-to face interviews (Zhang and Parsons, 2016). However, as the interviewer cannot physically see the interviewee, it may be difficult to judge the pace and rhythm, and there may be some timing issues in relation to long pauses or the interviewer may interrupt the interviewee mid conversation (Portigal, 2013; Zhang and Parsons, 2016).

How I recruited:

The aim of this research is to discover the experiences and challenges of AEs having recently qualified from a university accredited postgraduate teaching qualification in further education. Therefore, I decided to use a pool of graduates from the past three years who have obtained the Higher Diploma in Further Education in Maynooth University. To gain access to this pool of candidates, I enlisted the help of someone who would have access to such people. "Gatekeepers are individuals who can give the researcher legitimate access to the field" (Ruane, 2016:211). It is "a person who stands between the data collector and a potential respondent. Gatekeepers…are able to control, who has access and when to the respondents" (Lavrakas, 2008:299). I solicited the help of a member of administrative staff who kindly sent an email on my behalf to previous graduates of the course. This was the only period where the gatekeeper assisted me and any replies to the research came directly to me, meaning the gatekeeper did not know who was participating in the research.

The email sent by the gatekeeper included a brief explanation of what I was researching and what might be involved in participating, it invited interested participants to reply by email directly to me if they would like more information on the research. I then emailed information about the research to the participants who replied, offered the opportunity for them to ask any questions they may have and advised that I would be in contact again in a few weeks with further information. I received twenty-four replies from willing participants. I then emailed 4-6 weeks later with concrete information and I asked participants to provide me with locations that were convenient for them to meet at (see appendix 1). The emails allowed the participants time to process the research and provided distance for the participants to opt out if they were not interested.

When it came to carrying out the field work, four participants had dropped out, so I was left with twenty in total. I completed three focus groups consisting of three and four people, two face-to-face interviews, two telephone interviews and four email interviews. Two more participants dropped out on the day of the focus groups. Focus group one had three participants (one participant had dropped out). It took place in a coffee shop in Maynooth and lasted for one hour and ten minutes. Focus group two also had three participants (again one participant had dropped out), it took place in a coffee shop in Dublin City Centre and lasted for one hour and focus group three had four participants, it took place in a hotel in Athlone and lasted for one and a half hours. All three focus groups were facilitated in a circular position around two coffee tables (brought together) and were recorded using a Samsung tablet and a Samsung phone. The face-to-face interviews took place in the participants homes in Kildare at their kitchen table, they lasted for forty-five minutes and twenty minutes each and again were recorded on a Samsung tablet and phone. I conducted the telephone interviews from my office at home on a Sunday (when no one

else was at home) and they lasted for twenty-five minutes and 30 minutes. Again, the telephone interviews were recorded on a Samsung tablet and phone.

I used two recording devices for my own peace of mind – as security in the event of one device getting broken/not recording. After the focus groups, face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews I moved and stored the files on my laptop (details below) and deleted them from both devices. I used coding to extract themes from the data. I had a few themes I envisioned may arise from the data and I merged all relevant data from each source together under these themes. I looked for similarities and threads in the remaining data which I then formed more themes from.

Ethics:

Throughout this research I ensured to be meticulous regarding ethics. As participants would be talking about their lives and careers I needed to ensure that I was aware of and capable of dealing with any ethical dilemmas that may arise. Participants should not be pressurised into participating and they must have the opportunity to retract from the research. (Connelly, 2014). Firstly, I made contact three times (with a few weeks in between) directly and individually to participants with information explaining my research, offering an opt out opportunity at any time and giving them ample time to think about the research to decide if they wanted to participate. Consent should be assumed liberally; potential participants need to understand exactly how they will be involved and they must be capable of consent (Connelly, 2014). I then ensured to send a consent form in advance for each participant to see before they even met me. The purpose of this was to give me permission to use the information they provided me with (a copy of which is included – see appendix 2). I pledged that I, myself would keep the participants

confidentiality, but I explained that due to the nature of focus groups, this confidentiality could not be guaranteed. I asked the participants to not sign the consent form until after the focus group/interview and only sign if they were completely sure they were comfortable with it. I kept the consent forms in a hidden locked safe in my home, to which I was the only person with access.

I recorded the interviews/focus groups on a Samsung Tablet and I then stored the recordings on my personal laptop under password lock which is only accessed by myself. I transcribed the recordings myself and sent a copy to the participants allowing them to edit, delete or add information to them. Again, these transcriptions were saved on my personal laptop under password protection.

In setting up focus groups, I was confronted with issues around confidentiality and I was cautious that participants would know myself and each other personally and I wondered 'would participants feel biased or pressurised to answer something because they know me?' 'or would they feel intimidated by knowing the other participants?'. Ethical choices "arise when we try to decide between one course of action and another not in terms of expediency or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong" (May, 2010:61). I decided that people would make their own informed decision and participate if they felt comfortable to do so and I decided I wouldn't disclose who was attending the focus groups, but I did mention that they may know the other participants and trusted that they would use their own judgements to ascertain if it was appropriate for them to attend. There were no issues with the participants in the focus groups. As I am in the same cohort as some of the participants, I worried that my own experiences and

biases may influence my findings, so I ensured to explore every avenue participants went down to certify that I had full clarity on what exactly they were saying.

As I am an insider researcher in this research with the use of auto-ethnographic vignettes, I had my own questions around what people would think of my story. Would it have any implications for my future career prospects if read by potential employers? I decided that my stories depicted the stories of others and the real-world experiences and challenges of NQAEs and it would be unnatural and go against my own epistemology and ontology to leave them out.

Summary of chapter:

This chapter outlined the methodological framework and methods used in this research. At the centre of my epistemological approach is to investigate the experiences and challenges of NQAEs to provide information and support to future NQAEs. I believe knowledge is discovered through their experiences and through dialogue with others, therefore it was imperative that the research took a qualitative approach. My own experiences of becoming a NQAE identified with the participants and thus instigated my inclusion of vignettes to bring an auto-ethnographic element to the research. The research employed three focus groups (two of which had three participants and one had four participants), two face-to-face interviews, two telephone calls and four email interviews. The next chapter will present the findings.

Chapter 4 – Finding your feet in the world of Adult Education:

Introduction:

The aim of this research was to uncover the experiences and challenges of adult educators who have recently qualified from a university accredited postgraduate teaching qualification in further education. I wanted to do so in a manner that speaks to my ontological and epistemological views and approach as an adult educator myself. Although I have recently become a NQAE myself, I will not emphasise my own experiences in this chapter and instead it will be solely the experiences of the participants. I used coding to extract themes from the findings which depict the experiences of the participants and these themes will form the basis for each heading/section. This section will present the findings from the focus groups, face to face interviews, phone interviews and email interviews as are detailed within the methodology chapter. This chapter will begin by introducing the participants and will then move to the various themes that emerged from the field.

To ensure complete anonymity I will not divulge the various methods by which each participant contributed through, I have changed all participants names and identifying features have been removed. I feel that giving a brief background on the type of work each participant does adds to the richness of their voices. I facilitated three focus groups (consisting of ten people in total), four email interviews, two phone interviews and two face to face interview. The ratio of male to female was six men and thirteen women. I did not seek one sex over the other, this was the organic ratio that replied and sought to contribute to the research. However, I feel this reflects the the sector where there are more female than male adult educators.

Introducing participants:

To begin with I will introduce participants and their pseudonyms.

Ellen graduated in 2017. She works fulltime hours in YouthReach (work experience and training programme for young adults who leave school early) on a resource contract. She teaches twenty-two hours and does six hours administration. She teaches Home Economics, Tourism and SPHE. She loves her work but would prefer full teaching hours as opposed to administration hours.

Donna graduated in 2017. She volunteers five hours per week with YouthReach on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, working with an adult literacy student. She enjoys this and is currently searching for work.

Dee graduated in 2017. She teaches ESOL English and HEA Support in a Further Education college. She works four hours forty minutes in total per week, spread over three days.

David graduated in 2017. He volunteers three hours per week teaching English to migrants. He has recently completed an English course and has just got a permanent fulltime position teaching English.

Mary graduated in 2016. She has recently secured work as a relief teacher until the end of August in the National Learning Network after volunteering every Monday. She usually works two days per week.

Peter graduated in 2017. He is currently not working or seeking work in adult education due to personal choice and circumstances.

Martin graduated in 2017. He has recently obtained fulltime work in a YouthReach type setting teaching Junior Certificate subjects after doing substitution work for months.

Muriel graduated in 2017. She works with young adults who have been expelled from school two to three days per week but would prefer fulltime hours, working with older adults.

Michelle graduated in 2017. She works with adults in two Further Education centres. She works eleven hours per week split between the two centres.

Kate graduated in 2017. She works in an Education and Training Board teaching adults and in YouthReach teaching young adults. She volunteered with small groups previous to this and now works nineteen hours per week.

Claire works in a Further Education college teaching Communications, Political and Intercultural studies and Learning Support. She works fulltime at twenty-two hours per week.

Mark graduated in 2017. He works in a Further Education college with his hours split between teaching and assisting learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Alan graduated in 2017. He secured hours in an Education and Training Board teaching Learning Support after completing a maternity leave contract previous to this in the same centre.

Martha graduated in 2017. She works in four centres as a part-time tutor with an Education and Training Board. She teaches ESOL and Communications twenty to twenty-two hours per week.

Paula graduated in 2017. She teaches Project Management in a Further Education college. She works full time.

Maria graduated in 2017. She teaches in community education settings for an Adult Education Service within an ETB. She teaches unaccredited and accredited courses and her hours vary between four and sixteen per week but averages around eight to ten per week.

Lucy graduated in 2017. She teaches in a YouthReach setting with twenty-two hours per week and really enjoys her work.

Sean is not working in Adult Education at the minute as there were no opportunities for him. He is currently working in the social care sector.

The emerging themes:

Finding some groundwork:

I will begin this section with the question I began the focus groups/interviews with. I asked participants why they chose to do the Higher Diploma in Further Education. This question gave me a good starting point while allowing participants to express their feelings for adult education and give me some background information. It emerged there were different motivating factors, one of which being a way of entering the teaching profession.

This was expressed by Michelle who said she "*wanted something that would give me a career within a year because the other things I looked at were 4 and 5 years…it's a really long route*".

Others, such as Muriel described *"this driving ambition that I want to be somebody. I want to be able to say after spending several years in college that "I am a whatever""*.

While Dee's motivation built on her own experiences:

> *I do volunteer work outside of college, I love helping and teaching people but obviously you couldn't just walk into a teaching job you had to do the H.dip so that's why I did the H.dip.*

For Kate, who was already working in the sector, the need to have the HDFE in order to gain employment was important:

> *I had been working voluntarily on a one to one small group basis in the local*
> *ETB and really enjoyed it and I'd been offered more work but I decided I didn't*

want to do it without what I would call it "being properly qualified". So that

was the reason I looked into it.

From this point forward, themes are presented based on their weight of presence.

Precariousness:

A prominent theme that emerged from every focus group/interview was the precariousness of the work of an adult educator in relation to the difficulty in finding work, working from different centres, lack of job security, no encouragement or availability to complete Continued Professional Development, the usefulness (or not) of having a Higher Diploma in Further Education and the method of selection when being chosen for a job.

When asked about looking for work and the availability of jobs Michelle said it was *"Soul destroying"*.

While Sean considered there to be "*No job prospects"* and peter believed "*the situation is somewhat grim as far as finding work; at present at least, due to the financial state of the country"*.

Dee "*found it struggling at the start to get any jobs like I was looking up all the websites, you apply for a panel but if you don't get the panel its tough luck, you have to wait for it to come around again"*.

Martha spoke about the difficulty of getting full time hours unless you work from different centres, *"I'm on a part time tutor panel but I work full time..at the moment only teach English as a second language in 4 different settings…so a lot of driving I'm on the road a lot because you have your hours but they are split between 4 different places"*.

Alan agreed with Martha and suggested that it is:

> *very difficult to get work. More than likely you are working in more than one centre to get your full hours. The work going is as a substitute teacher. A bit here and a bit there. I was lucky to get a fixed term contract for 5 months. I don't know where I will be teaching next year as that contract has now finished. One of my colleagues said to me that someone needs to retire before you get a permanent job somewhere. One teacher I was talking to was working as a substitute teacher for 10 years before she landed a permanent job. You get a few hours here and there until an opening comes up for you.*

This flexibility of work hours was common, Maria explained, *"my eh the hours are changing all the time between 4-16 but generally around 8 or 10"*.

Martha illuminated that *"your hours could change from like you were saying your hours went up and down, you can't say no if you are offered hours you feel you can't say no"*.

While Claire reinforced the precariousness of the work by saying *"the reality is that you can get dressed every morning and pack a lunch and wait to be called for subbing. I did this every morning for two years. Two mornings out of five I might get a call"*.

Obtaining a permanent contract seems to be challenging for a lot of participants. Martin explained:

> *Overall, I don't see many permanent jobs out there. Any job that people will get is either subbing in primary or secondary schools, or volunteering in different settings if allowed. A lot of jobs that are out there are giving to individual already in the centre. I know this as I was told off centre managers in where I subbed and volunteered in.*

Job security was a worry for some participants. Maria said: "*I'll never own a house or an apartment of my own if I stay in this line of work cause I have no job security*".

Many participants felt as though they were limited with choice of employment. Paula described:

> *For me I remember thinking I'll take any job within an hour but it's actually… [longer] to drive so its driving and traffic so the car wear and tear and the petrol, but I said I'll stick it out for the experience and find something hopefully closer so I would not say no because of the mileage.*

Many participants explained that the lack of fixed contracts and security also affected their ability to engage with Continued Professional Development. It is not emphasised, allocated or promoted in Adult Education. Martha explained:

> *but I was looking into this conference I attended last year…I was looking into doing it this year and I have two classes that day and as far as I know if I want to attend that class, I have to cancel my own classes you don't get paid for it and as I said if your able to reschedule it. you just don't get paid. So what's the*

incentive? this would be a really good class a lot of methodology and stuff like

that. it would be a good conference to go to and I would love to go to it.

There was a noticeable theme relating to 'knowing someone' to attain employment. Muriel described, "*the job that I'm doing at the minute, I was recommended by a friend of a friend*"

And Michelle "*so I actually got my jobs the old-fashioned Irish way which I don't really agree with, two people recommended me for these jobs and I got them*".

Mary agreed with this, saying "*I got the job I'd say because I stuck there volunteering and they knew me and I knew what needed, I knew the place and I knew about the different things*".

While most participants have found it extremely difficult to gain hours, quite a few felt that volunteering would keep their skills up to date and give them a better chance of gaining hours.   Kate explained that she *"volunteered for years in the centre I work in now"*.

and Mary "*volunteered, so I went in every Monday for about a year in the NLN volunteered*".

David was *also "volunteerin with an organisation"* while Donna explains "*I feel I have more options opening up to me now cause I'm volunteering*".

Some participants felt that the level of work that is completed does not match the wages. Kate talked about how:

> *Its time framed like you get paid whatever you get paid per hour but if you worked out what you actually worked especially the first year you are getting nothing per hours. The hours and hours into research and putting stuff together and trying to get classes that progress people without being too difficult and all that kind of stuff.*

Professionalisation:

Talking about having a recognised qualification (Higher Diploma in Further Education) and being registered with the *Teaching Council,* there was mixed feelings, some believe it is necessary and others were never asked about it, although many feel there is a difference in pay for people with it. Michelle said:

> *So I felt without the HDIP I wouldn't have got any of my jobs so I'm grateful for that, about the same time we met a woman who Highers tutors in ETB and she specifically told us you have to be on the panel for her to pick you. but then I know someone who doesn't have a degree or a HDIP and they have got a lot of work cause she's a friend of theirs, so it really depends on who's hiring, what they are looking for, for me I wouldn't have got my jobs without it, but for other people they don't seem to need it and I've worked in other places as well where people don't have a HDIP or degrees and they have been doing well without it.*

While Mary explained, "*In the other place [NLN] I'm in I get €15.68 per hour, that's the going rate, it doesn't matter what I have. The same with every, any of those places you go*

to. it doesn't matter what you have". Sean said, *"in some settings (paid employment) other staff were in receipt of the same hourly rate and they had no degree or h-dip and had just completed a 'train the trainer' course. In some cases I was doing their relief work".*

Martin replied:

> *I don't really think that the HDFE is greatly viewed as some people I have talked to about it never even knew it was even a course. Some education settings doesn't recognise it. I have received emails from jobs saying that my qualifications aren't recognised.*

Dee talked about the confusion around what exactly you are qualified in, saying:

> *One thing I found about the course, it doesn't really, you're not too sure what you can go into like I didn't realise you could substitute in secondary and primary…I was called out to an interview…in a secondary and FE school but it was actually for secondary teaching and I wasn't too sure if I could and I don't think I can cause its full time…so I missed out on a job because I wasn't sure.*

And David concluded with *"in fact actually even principals of schools and directors of FE centres aren't too sure what you're qualified".*

Workload and Responsibility:

The workload and responsibility of a NQAE and an experienced educator came out as another strong theme. Michelle explained:

you go out into the big bad world and suddenly you have this huge responsibility for grading, for preparing QQI folders for everything like that. It took up a lot of my time because I probably went way over the top checking things 3 or 4 times reading things over and over so it took me weeks to correct assessments, so It was really eating into my time a lot. So I think there's a huge transition between having your hand held in the teaching practice to going out in the big bad world and I think some people find it easier. I think I would have found it easier if there were other teachers I could bounce it off but I found I was kind of a solo-flier, just by the nature of the jobs I got.

Martha said:

It's definitely more responsibility I find it's a huge amount of responsibility, and I feel for me anyway I wasn't 100% ready it was a massive change…to go over like that and to teach you know full time and to be…you are responsible for your class.

And Paula felt that:

now I am accountable for my delivering my module and also the making sure the marking schemes, learning outcomes are met and all that so you know last year that wasn't my responsibility as a student tutor and I didn't deal with that at all, it was just the pleasure of teaching without the but now it's the reality and as we get closer to may this is becoming a reality that I need to make sure have I covered everything and this is really the concern I have at the moment.

In speaking about the workload faced by NQAEs, Kate found:

You don't just prepare a class, you prepare a class and then you have to try and deliver it in such a way that suits the group. and it could suit a group one way one day and not the group another day...you have to go through everything and try and find out what's the best way to do the next bunch of classes and then you have to correct everything and check everything and try and check people's knowledge to see where they are at. I think there's an awful lot in it that people don't realise are in it.

Martin concured with Kate saying, *"the class prep is more demanding now as I must approach the classes all myself, whereas before the other teach whose class I was taking gave me ideas and some class templets of theirs".*

Alan believed that:

There is a lot to learn. You need to learn how they assess each module, you need to be very familiar with the learning outcomes and how the assessments are meeting the learning outcomes. You have a huge amount of class prep to do before every class. Takes a huge amount of your time. You have to be familiar with the scheme of work. You also have a lot of correcting to do…You can be under pressure for time.

And Ellen admitted, *"they say don't bring work home but with this it's kind of impossible not to, you have to get the work done so it's either stay late or bring it home, you are always kind of building your own resources and catch up on yourself".*

The time constraints were also an issue for Martha who found *"I'm so intensely busy with lesson planning and all the other kind of assessment"* and *"I work 7 days a week. if I get finished by ten [at night] I'm happy. I feel as if I'm working all the time. constantly working. so I find the workload very very intense"*.

In speaking about hours, Maria also thought:

> *I did 16 [hours] and I remember that was hard and I'm doing 10 now and I feel I'm almost full time, well I do half an hour of other work in another job but it's pretty much full time but that's not what I expected. I thought 10 hours would be a nice relaxed life.*

Mary talked about a friend of hers who was struggling to stay on top of the workload, she felt she:

> *has been thrown in in the deep end. she had to take over a class and she just keeps saying to me I'm just floundering here. she's absolutely exhausted from it and she will stay back in the evenings to try and figure out you know make out a lesson plan which will probably she will not be able to use. cause everything will go awry the next day and it just won't work out but and I remember the teacher that I assisted…would say I spend 16 hours every weekend she says trying to do these lessons things she said, it's just, she says, me life is just dedicated to this you know, I wouldn't be able to work full-time, she works a few days each week, I wouldn't be able to do this full-time work, it's just too much. which it is really.*

Some participants however, didn't feel this pressure and workload as much, Mark explained, "*I think it is quite manageable. I came from an industry where a forty-five hour week was expected. I do hear a lot of other teachers complaining about it but personally it is not an issue for me*".

And Claire felt:

> *There is a lot of class prep and technology to learn how to use…I had to learn how to use video camera, & place videos onto pc. I also use voice recorders as part of student's assessments. I self-trained myself on these. Workload is manageable and really enjoy teaching. Every day brings new challenges, rewards and progress. Every teacher in my college has two jobs. Mine are teacher & learning support teacher. Others are teachers and over QA, writes up minutes of meetings etc.*

Identity:

Identity emerged strongly in relation to having a recognised qualification, being treated as a 'qualified educator', having a style and methodology that fits with the ethos of the workplace and dealing with governing bodies and their rules/regulations.

When asked about colleagues and learners attitudes towards them being a recently qualified educator, Mary explained:

> *I suppose I'm being taken a bit more serious and included although they didn't exclude me they just didn't really notice me much to tell you the truth you know they didn't turn around and say "oh I'm not going to talk to her", they just didn't..it was almost like I wasn't really to be taken seriously…so I am now*

doing relief teaching and its only now I feel that I am feeling included they are starting to talk to me about students and when they are having conversations about students they are asking me "what do you think?"''.

While David's opinion on how learners viewed a 'qualified educator' was:

I didn't realise they'd look up to me so much, now not me but my role as a teacher, like when I went into class it would go a bit quiet like this was even in the FET centre, and like they didn't have any fear of me or anythin like that it was just that kind of oh he's the teacher and I was like, and I wanted to kinda break that understanding, I felt they looked up to me too much or if I gave one of them help I felt like they'd show me too much appreciation, and I was like well this is my job and I felt if I gave them a small bit they were over grateful almost you know like as if you know it wasn't my job as if I was doin a favour but it was my job to help them you know, so that came as a surprise.

Talking about how it felt to be newly qualified, Maria illuminates the difficulty she faced, saying:

like I found the first 2 months really hard I was thinkin of quittin, em and now I feel like I'm gradually gettin better at it but I think it's a very emotional thing I'd like be I would have had alot of fears of public speakin but I'm gradually facing...like I did toastmasters which helped a bit and then the TP last year but I feel like I'm still facin that a big fear every day and it gets a tiny bit easier every week but so it's not just work like its emotional it's an emotional leap.

When asked about having their own style and ethos and how that sits with the centre they work in, Maria described how:

I feel like with my non-accredited courses I have complete freedom and when I went into an interview with my main manager we had a good chat and really saw eye to eye on everything on like everything about teaching methods like experiential learning I want the students to enjoy themselves and grow on a personal level and em so I have complete reign on that.

Martin felt "*very confident…to [take] my own classes, being my own boss in how can deliver the classes and "The centre where I am [are] very open to my way of teaching. I can bring my own ideas to the centre, once I stick to their ethos".*

Although it seems not all centres are as open to accepting the educator's styles and methods, as Alan explained:

You are expected to integrate and take on the centres ethos/beliefs, values & methods. The classes were set up as secondary school classrooms. Lots of desks. Very little room in the classroom to try new things. The class management style was very much about discipline in the classroom.

There was a feeling of rigidity around assessments, paper work and protocols coming from governing bodies and sometimes from the centre and fellow colleagues. Michelle said:

yeah, I mean there's no one in my class or watching what I'm doing so I do have that freedom, but I also have to hit all my QQI learning outcomes. So everything else has to be designed around that…it's very geared towards

assessment, most of the QQI programmes are, but I do feel I have freedom in my teaching styles, I can use what I want once I'm hitting my learning outcomes, so I suppose that's good…no, so yeah I have freedom but I don't. It's kind of dualistic, you have some freedom, but everything must be ticked and everything must be designed around learning outcomes.

Mark described his experience of "*setting of assessments was difficult as it was recommended to use previous assessments and while they ticked all the boxes on the QQI requirements I felt some of them were pitched a little too high for the students*".

Mary believed that there is a lot of pressure placed on educators in relation to protocol:

Assessment wise or anything like that you follow the model to the T. You have to dot the I's and cross the T's. and you have to tick the boxes. and that's really pressurising, and it puts a lot of people under pressure, there's a lot of complaints about ticking the boxes right down to the assessment, you know, it has to be gone over 3 times, 4 times, signatures, is it written right? is it written this way that way.. is the answer.. you know, the way they want it.

Imposter Syndrome:

Impostership showed up for a number of participants, but not all. Alan describes his experience when he began working as an adult educator:

I felt I was out of my depth and even now I feel that way sometimes. For me, I don't think that feeling will go away but when you get good feedback from your students, fellow teachers and principal you gain more confidence and you start

to feel like you can do this and you are having a positive impact on your students.

Claire maintained that *"all new transitions come with a level of uncertainty and anxiety. Will I be good enough, will they like me? Have I enough knowledge of subject area? What if I can't answer student's questions?"*.

And Kate agreed that:

> *everybody feels like that especially at first. Yeah most people feel like that no matter how confident you are in what you are doing you are almost looking over your shoulder for somebody to find out that you're not really a teacher, that you have no clue what you are doing…it's terribly scary no matter how well you know your subject, you still feel that you don't know how to put it together in such a way that you are confident that you are teaching it to people who are actually learning it and it is like someone is going to tip u on the shoulder and go you've been found out, off you go.*

Michelle also reiterated that:

> *your a professional, you have a bit of imposter syndrome, Am I able for this, you put me in this job and I have to deliver the goods. …especially at the start you know, finding my way a little bit more now, but your anxiety levels, I found my anxiety levels quite high this year.*

Martha opened up about how she "*wondered sometimes I thought there was something wrong with my teaching I was thinking when students don't come back I'm thinking oh god was it because I did a horrible lesson and now they never want to come back*".

Support and Relationships:

This theme emerged in each focus group/interview and it had mixed reactions. Most felt there was little support for them while others felt there was some support, however limited. Muriel explained that:

> *I'm very much on my own, it could do with alot of supports and its very unstructured. I'm feeling my way alot of the time…we are talking about young teens who couldn't give a flying f*** about anything really. I had a talk with the principle Friday, in one of the places I worked in last year, he was very interested in the program I'm working in. He wanted to know did I have a child psychologist working with me? did I have a career guidance worker with me? did I have a SNA with me? I can't remember the fourth thing because he said to really run that program you should have all those supports and instead it's just little own me doing what I want.*

The view seems to be that depending on the centre location and amount of staff, there is help available, but no one will take it upon themselves to give it unless you ask for it. Kate said:

> *there was support there when you asked. But the funny thing is that nearly everybody is under pressure with what they are doing…now the girls, I can go into them and say I'm a bit stuck at this or not great at computers, but one of my classes has one hour of computers a week. They are very good at helping*

you put together stuff but then that depends on how busy they are as well and where I worked they are quite good in sharing stuff in that there is a press where there are some folders and you can go and get ideas out of them for your classes.

And Mark felt he had help due to:

The principal of the FE school is the main provider of support and resources and is keen to ensure the welfare of all teachers and that materials/resources are available. The assistant principal is the point of contact for any resources particularly ICT equipment and has been very supportive and approachable. I had a mentor for the first couple of weeks who I touched base with once or twice a week but as the school year got busier I kind of adapted to my role and felt I did not need as much support. The principal has also organised a fortnightly meeting for staff for a forty-minute period. It is an opportunity to air any issues or ask any questions and also for face to face contact with management.

Many participants who are working in the same centre as they completed teaching practice found they had a lot of support, like Claire who said:

I am working in the same school as I did my placement in initially. All staff are incredibly supportive. Especially my mentor who supported me while on placement…I feel very respected, valued and cared about. There is a lovely supportive atmosphere with colleagues and students alike.

And Ellen, *"found students really respected me and I built a really good relationship with them during teaching practice and with colleagues too, everyone is very supportive"*.

However, Alan:

> *expected more support from the college…No mentor, very little support. Teachers are so busy it was very hard to get a teacher to sit down with you for half an hour to go through something with you. My experience was that you were very much on your own. There is a lot of work that has to get done outside of the classroom and I found that there is very little support for a new teacher.*

And Michelle:

> *was the only tutor of that nature I would have no one to bounce q's off, I had to deal with the QQI stuff on my own. There was no handover period between me and the other tutor that had done it before me. There was no one to even sit down and explain for an hour how things had been done, so I had to go in and try and figure it all out for myself.*

When asked about relationships with colleagues, participants felt that working from different settings posed a problem in establishing relationships. Maria explained, *"I think part of the problem is I work in two centres and I don't work in the centres coz I work…nearby…I wasn't see any other teachers and I wasn't seeing my manager so I had no one to talk to so I was just on my own"*.

However, some felt they established good relationships with others. Peter *"can honestly say I always gave and received great respect and good relationships with regard to all concerned"*.

This is concluded by Kate speaking about the importance of keeping a professional barrier between yourself and the student:

> *The only problem I would really have is trying to not be too friendly with the students because they think if you are chatty and you deliver your class in a friendly way…that makes you their friends and you have to be careful not to let that get too close…Trying to get the balance between respecting your role and thinking you're their best bud.*

Care, Anxiety & Stress:

These themes arose for some participants in various ways. Paula explains how her work is entwined in caring for others but how it also impacts on herself:

> *I think we are really dealing with people and their complexities and their expectations and your own and the centres and the stress is that…I really want to have an impact on their you know make them happy and…have self-confidence and all that that's my main concern.*

Alan coincided with this level of care, "*I want to help people create a better life for themselves and their family*" while Claire thinks "*when teaching in FE you have to take the whole person into account. There past experiences, knowledge and of course their interests*".

Martin believed, "*I would have a caring approach to all my students and peers. I believe if you show you care individuals open to you more therefore you gain that trust*".

Michelle strongly believes that caring is a vital element in being an adult educator:

I think that you have to care and you have to be willing to. It's very different being a teacher with adults and being a teacher with kids. I spent 3 hours the other night just answering emails to my adult students because they missed stuff, so you have to be able to be totally flexible, to be caring, to be interested in them succeeding, otherwise it's not going to work.

And Muriel harmonised with this:

I agree, it's totally a caring profession, I think you would be in the wrong job if you didn't have some level of care. Even though I'm teaching people that I specifically said I wouldn't like to teach, I still care about them and I still want to progress them, I have a youth worker with me all the time and she's always saying to me don't beat yourself up about it but that's me, I want them to learn something I care about them, these are young people and their whole future is ahead of them.

And Ellen concluded with:

Teaching is a caring role. I feel responsible for them, I often check if students have eaten today. There are so many issues with some of these students you are constantly thinking about them and making sure they are okay. If someone was having a hard time I'd even send food home with them and I would be very

open to them talking to me. I think this gives a better trusting relationship with the learners, they know we are there to help, support and guide them.

While not as strong, there was a thread of anxiousness and stress felt by some participants. When talking about anxiety and stress Maria explained:

I have deffo found the transition stressful feeling very responsible and not being sure I think I'm more settled now but not being sure how good I'm supposed to be how many mistakes I'm allowed to make…juggling cause your trying to remember the paperwork and I have to bring materials, like the centres don't understand what I ask them to pick up…and then I have to deal with difficult students like I have anger comin at me and people bein defensive and it's hard to know how to not take it home and how to not take it personally.

Martha found *"the workload very very intense and I find my stress levels ridiculously high and I'm just saying to myself that I'm only doing this this year".* While Kate explains that she found it *"quite overwhelming and I felt quite alone and by Christmas I was absolutely exhausted, I felt completed worn out and I was in the canteen one of the days and I couldn't even talk to people I was so tired".*

Luck:

Luck was a word which repeatedly came up throughout the fieldwork. In Europe, the word 'luck' means "good or bad fortune acquired unwittingly, by accident or chance" (Rescher, 2014:6). Luck was linked to various experiences of NQAEs. Paula felt *"lucky I think…right place at right time because I applied for a job and within two weeks I had*

the job and there was an interview. Ten-minute interview in between so yea yeah I was

lucky and lucky to get 22 hours because its pure luck you know".

Dee concurred:

> *so I was lucky it just so happened…I bumped into the principal and vice*
>
> *principal saying if they were ever stuck and I emailed them again and it just so*
>
> *happened by chance substitution last minute came up and they were able to ask*
>
> *me last minute and when I was finished they asked me to stay on and do more*
>
> *hours in something else, so I was pure lucky.*

While Lucy, felt *"lucky to have gained 22 hours in the one setting"* and Claire's luck was

to *"feel very respected, valued and cared about. There is a lovely supportive atmosphere*

with colleagues and students alike. I feel very lucky".

And Ellen felt *"I was very lucky, if I didn't have the job I'm in now I don't think I would*

have got anything, job prospects are very poor in my area. FE is left to one side, its not

concentrated on enough".

Kate considered herself *"really lucky and I appreciate that and I've been talking to others*

who haven't been so lucky" [In relation to resources available to the teachers]. While

Maria feels *"I'm lucky my values kinda matched up with my centre"* [in talking about

identity].

Other Findings:

I have explained the dominant themes in the above section, however, naturally other themes emerged for participants. These included:

Expectation of student profile:

Muriel "*had this vision when I started the HDIP, that I would be working with older adults who were returning to education who really loved the idea of learning that anything I brought to them, that they would be really interested*".

Mark had a similar expectation, "*I had imagined myself working with older adults. I had hoped to be in a setting with an older average age*".

Transformation of thoughts and ideas:

In talking about being an educator, Michelle felt:

> *It was transformative in the way that I thought about teaching, before I would have thought about it as standing up and giving knowledge doing the banking thing. The way that adults have to be taught was an eye-opener. I learnt alot from that.*

For Mary, the type of education was a big eye-opener:

> *I thought I would go in there and I would deliver lessons and do you know and then I would help the students how I wanted to help them all you know, get an education, I didn't know, it wasn't that type of an education, it's more like building up their self-esteem, making them become self-aware and helping them make decisions and*

it's not like an educational, well it is educational, but it's not like an academic

education, it's like life skills education.

Summary of key findings:

This chapter gave the participants organic voices, thoughts and feelings on their experiences and challenges having recently qualified as AEs. All participants mentioned the precariousness of the work they do regarding hours, working from more than one setting and varying hours from week to week. This has an impact on the relationship and support received from colleagues due to not spending time in one setting or another. It has emerged quite difficult to identify permanent hours and a lot of participants have to take substitute work which leaves little to no job security or stability. This concerns many participants as they feel that it may bring difficulties both now, where they cannot make daily or weekly plans, and in the future, such as buying a house. The lack of emphasis on progressing skills and knowledge (Continued Professional Development (CPD)) was noted and although many would like to partake in CPD, their contracts make it extremely difficult as they would lose a day's wages. In obtaining employment, many found 'having a foot in the door' or a personal contact had a huge benefit. Others found that having completed placement in a centre also had a significant impact on obtaining hours. Some participants found volunteering in a centre helped or thought it would help them to attain employment whilst also maintaining their skills and getting experience.

There were mixed feelings about having a Higher Diploma in Further Education; some felt it was advantageous in gaining employment while others felt it was not. There was also ambiguity from both participants and (potential) employers in what the HDFE allows an individual to teach. Identity struck a chord with most participants where they could

implement their own teaching style and method once they complied with the ethos of the centre and governing bodies. Although some felt they must follow the centre's values and beliefs. It also caused a more inclusive feeling from colleagues and symbolised what it means to be an educator for some, the relationship that they have with learners and how identity may affect this relationship with an emphasis on how the student now views the participant as a 'qualified educator'. Support and relationships showed that most participants have some level of support from colleagues, however, they only come to the fore when enlisted and there are no formal support structures, which hinders practice. This lack of support also plays out for learners with no SNAs or extra help for learners if required. Participants have good relationships with both colleagues and learners although many find it difficult to establish such relationships due to working from different settings.

Many find the workload associated with their work overwhelming, with many expressing how much free time/home time it takes up, particularly preparation work for classes, assessment and ensuring paperwork is correct for QQI. However, they found it fails to address the learners wants, concerns and needs. Others felt that depending on the career background they came from, it was very manageable. In becoming a NQAE, the level of responsibility has increased considerably for most, with the majority now feeling accountable for their learners outcomes in comparison to when they were a student educator. Although all participants gave the impression that they are happy and comfortable in their jobs, there is still a sense of uncertainty/impostership and a lack of confidence in themselves. Care presented as an overarching theme where participants feel a duty of care towards their students; they want to help them to better their lives, to give them confidence and to teach them new life-skills. While most participants gave the impression that they really do enjoy their jobs, many feel overwhelmed, exhausted and

anxious over the level of work and the hours they do. A theme of luck came through in various strands; from feeling lucky to have a full-time job to feeling lucky about having a network of supportive colleagues. Some other findings I came across related to participants having a vision of the type of learners they would have, while in reality this was completely different and with the type of education being more focused on skills for life rather than academic knowledge.

Summary of chapter:

This chapter allowed me to delve into the rich discussions that took place around the experiences and challenges faced by NQAEs. These discussions offered me an excellent insight into the positives, negatives, challenges and opportunities facing a NQAE and I will now delve even further into the themes that emerged throughout the research in my analysis.

Chapter 5 – So it's a bit more complicated than it seems?

Introduction:

It is remembered that this research sought to examine the experiences and challenges of Adult Educators having recently qualified from a university accredited postgraduate teaching qualification in further education. The previous section displayed the findings from the participants without much exploration. I think the findings address my research question very well. I think that by offering a space for the participants to articulate their stories and experiences gave me a superb insight into their lives as NQAEs and provided a space for them to recognise that there is a community of people in their exact situation. Qualitative analysis "deals with data presented in words… it aims to transform and interpret qualitative data in a rigorous and scholarly manner" (Sarantakos, 2005:344). It has emerged that there are many challenges and experiences associated with becoming a NQAE. This section will compare, contrast and present the findings from the fieldwork, the literature in chapters 2 and 3 and the theories of transformative learning (Mezirow 1990, 1991), identity (Illeris 2014) and care (Noddings 2003, 2012, 2013).

Professionalisation and Working Conditions:

You will remember from chapter 2 that professionalisation of this sector came about in policy because of the *'Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education'* (2000) which outlined the need for a "teaching qualification" to gain employment (Department of Education and Science, 2000:152). This research demonstrates that while many centres insist on having it, it is not a requirement for all centres, nor is it recognised in all centres. While many participants felt it helped them gain employment, there was an unknowingness and ambiguity from both participants and (potential) employers in what the qualification allows an individual to teach.

In talking about working conditions, it emerged that the poor working conditions have a vast impact on personal lives. The emphasis on outcomes and employability through neo-liberalism and the implementation of the FET strategy that was spoke about in chapter 2 lends to the precariousness of the contracts that participants face today. As Alan said *"the work going is as a substitute teacher. A bit here and a bit there"*. This precarity has many ramifications for NQAEs in terms of job security, holiday pay or sick pay. This was illustrated vividly by Maria, who explains *"I'll never own a house or apartment of my own if I stay in this line of work"*. The 'precariat' (Standing, 2011) is a worker who is insufficient in attaining a secure career and is obliged to take whatever work is available to them which instigates instability and uncertainty for the individual. This was demonstrated by Claire saying, *"the reality is that you can get dressed every morning and pack a lunch and wait to be called for subbing…two mornings out of five I might get a call"* and in my own experience (see vignette, p.33). This lack of permanency was further discussed through the indication that many individuals partake in voluntary work with these centres in the hope of gaining hours in the future and to gain some experience. You will remember from page 35, employment of this manner causes ambiguity, stress and undesirable impacts to NQAEs lives.

Parallel with the instability and insecurity of work is the amount of work and responsibility placed upon NQAEs. The literature on page 41 suggests that once the NQAE progresses from student educator to NQAE they take on *"a huge amount of responsibility"* (Martha) for classes and outcomes of learners (Matteucci, 2017). This can be linked back to the socio-political nature of the world we live in where serving the needs of the workforce and economic growth receives more emphasis than personal gain for

both educators and learners. This stemmed further from the FET strategy (described in chapter 2) which implemented additional 'box-ticking' exercises and cuts in AE/FE and CE. The participants had concerns around ensuring everything is done correctly for QQI or SOLAS which puts pressure on them and their time to *"follow the model to the T…tick the boxes…[check] is it written right? you know, the way they want it"* (Mary) but it does not have the learner's interests or needs at the forefront.

You will remember from the literature; Liston, Whitcomb and Borko (2006) suggested that "The sheer quantity of the typical teacher's workload is daunting" (p.353). It emerged that preparing for classes proved a substantial task that is not included in the hours of paid work. This causes undue stress, tension and extra work on the NQAE as demonstrated by Ellen who admitted *"they say don't bring work home but with this it's kind of impossible not to, you have to get the work done"*. While this was the concerns and thoughts of many participants, few did feel that the work was manageable in comparison to previous careers they had.

Identity:

You will recall from the literature, Illeris (2014) suggested that identity encompasses the individual and the social bringing them together in transformative learning. Another perspective maintains identity is what it means to be a 'teacher' (Lamote and Engels, 2010). This manifested for David, in a way that he didn't realise his *"role as a teacher"* had such an impact on how the learners acted in the classroom and he *"felt they looked up"* to him. This aspect of identity also implements how to act and what styles or methods to use (Lamote and Engels, 2010). Most participants, like Martin, found they *"can bring [their] own ideas to the centre, once [they] stick to [the centres] ethos"*. This conformity

can be linked to the socio-political context and policy mentioned above where NQAEs are restricted by governing bodies who implement the tick boxes. Michelle described that *"there's no one in my class or watching"*, however, learning outcomes set by QQI must be met, so *"it's kind of dualistic, but everything must be ticked"*. However, some participants, like Alan, are *"expected to integrate and take on the centres ethos/beliefs, values and methods"*. Identity can manifest itself in ways that are destructive to the individual. You are reminded of the literature which suggests that, impostership gives "the sense that just round the corner is an event that will demonstrate to everyone around you that you have no idea what you're doing" (Brookfield, 2017:227). This was evident from Alan who felt *"out of my depth" and* Michelle who deems it to cause people to think *"Am I able for this?"*.

It could be argued that impostership originates from the governing bodies who implement the above mentioned 'box-ticking' exercises and huge workload on NQAEs. It could also be a consequence of the emphasis placed on learner outcomes, employability and productivity from policy as well as the rigorous quality assurance for internal and external examination which causes NQAEs to constantly question their work (Department of Education and Skills, 2014). This was evident with Maria explaining that she was unsure *"how good I'm supposed to be [or] how many mistakes I'm allowed to make"* as well as my own experience on page 43.

Support and relationships:

You are reminded of the literature on page 40, which explained the importance of support and relationships for a NQAE. Without it, NQAEs can find that they are *"very much on [their] own"* (Muriel). Again, austerity and policy play a role here, with cuts to the

AE/FE/CE sector, even individuals in positions of power have little say as to what supports the NQAE can have. Muriel explains the principal of a centre "*wanted to know did I have a child psychologist working with me? Did I have a career guidance worker with me? Did I have a SNA with me?*". While formal supports are clearly seriously lacking in this sector, many participants such as Kate did point out that *"there was support there when you asked"*, although a few, like Alan *"expected more support"* from fellow colleagues and the centre. This lack of support from fellow colleagues could be pinned against time pressures and hefty workloads due to austerity measures.

Care & Emotions:

It emerged that care and emotions are fundamental elements in education. You are reminded of the literature from chapter 3, which explained that care is an essential element of emotions in the classroom to encourage learning. Noddings (2003) argues that in life, we want to be cared for and we want to care for others. All participants identified care as an integral part of their daily working lives with Muriel believing that *"it's totally a caring profession"* where she feels *"you would be in the wrong job if you didn't have some level of care"*. In congruence with Noddings (2012) who states caring "is underneath all we do as teachers" (p.777), Muriel expressed how she *"want[s] them to learn something, [she] care[s] about them, these are young people and their whole future is ahead of them"*. Claire articulated an important point about being an adult educator and showing a level of care by saying "*when teaching in FE you have to take the whole person into account. There past experiences, knowledge and of course their interests"*.

Luck:

Luck was an unanticipated theme that emerged for some participants. Ellen felt "*very lucky*" to get the job and if she didn't get it she doesn't "*think [she] would have got anything*". However, it could be questioned if it is reasonable that individuals feel 'lucky' to get a job after going to college for several years. It could be argued that this is a repercussion of neo-liberalism and the recession of 2008 (In Ireland) where we are now programmed to self-regulate, made to feel grateful and lucky to have a job even though it is a basic assumption and need. This self-regulation puts the ownership on individuals to find work for themselves rather than work being freely available, and it could be said that people use the term 'lucky' to detract from blaming society for the lack of support and opportunities neoliberalism and the recession has produced.

Transition Theory:

The literature in chapter 3 looked at the theory of transitioning by Schlossberg (2011) who states that the transition model consists of four S's – Situation, self, support and strategies. Many NQAEs are so busy juggling the many challenges that have been uncovered in this research, they are oblivious to the fact that they are transitioning. Schlossberg (2011) maintains that if the person is optimistic, resilient and have support they will be in a much better position to glide through the transition. It has been shown through this research that informal supports do exist, however most, if not all centres lack a formal support system for NQAEs and some have "*no mentor [and] very little support*" (Alan) which would help speed up the transition process (Schlossberg, 2011). The literature suggests that adopting strategies will enable the person to deal with the change more effectively. However, perhaps the act of not realising they are in a space of transition as well as passing off the idea of being 'lucky' to have their job, may be a strategy of coping with

the transition. The findings of this research have established that the line of work NQAEs face is precarious. It comprises of demanding workloads, a lack of adequate support, a feeling of not being able to adequately carry out the role and feeling lucky to have gained the position they are in. All these elements combine to make transitioning an arduous process to experience.

Chapter 6 – It's a precarious world, but at least someone cares:

Conclusion - Reflexivity:

My aim in assuming this research was to explore the experiences and challenges of NQAEs and it has brought me on a unique and fascinating journey. I had assumed I had pre-empted many of the themes that would emerge, however I was surprised by some findings that I had not anticipated such as 'luck', which emerged strongly for people who felt they were very lucky to have a job. This slightly baffled me to think that you go to college for an amount of years and you then feel lucky to have precarious working hours and conditions until I realised that it is a feeling I hold myself. I feel grateful and lucky to have two jobs while being able to substitute teaching hours on the side. This shows the effect of the neo-liberal society where we are now programmed to feel lucky to get any work that we can, regardless of stability or holidays.

In my own life, care underpins my work as an adult educator where I truly feel responsible for the outcome and wellbeing of my learners. However, I did not realise the amount of care, time and effort these NQAEs invest in their learners and it shows the true dedication, love and care held in adult education, regardless of the precariousness of the sector. The biggest learning for me was the realisation that it was not only me who felt as though I was not ready for the realities of teaching and I was not alone in feeling unequipped in my new role. Impostership proved to be a strong theme throughout with many participants believing that it's a very difficult issue to have to deal with at the beginning of your career and, in reality it could cause people to regress from their position. It has been a wonderfully enlightening journey to travel along, meet new people and learn from their pool of knowledge.

Final word:

This research asked the question: 'What are the experiences and challenges of adult educators having recently qualified from a university accredited postgraduate teaching qualification in further education?'. The interest in this topic came from my own experiences which unfolded at the beginning of my career where I wondered if it was just me who felt lacking, anxious and weighed down by the huge workload. This thesis has expressed that we live in a neo-liberal society where austerity has brought many changes. However, I only discovered the extent to which this plays out in our careers and every day working lives through completing this research. As this is my first year as a NQAE, I was slightly naive to the level of precariousness which operates in the AE/FE/CE sector. This precariousness plays out strongly through the flexible and casual working hours, lack of job security and lack of permanent contracts.

The AE/FE/CE sector has gone through many policy changes in previous years which along with neo-liberalism, contributed to the professionalising of the sector. This, in theory would have ensured all educators were qualified and would need their qualifications to gain employment. However, in practice it has led to confusion around what people are qualified in. The implementation of policy also lend emphasis on outcomes and employability-based learning. This brings with it challenges and extra work for AEs but also brings a feeling of inadequacy by educators who challenge themselves negatively and question the work they do. It brought mounds of paperwork and 'box ticking' exercises which the findings have shown hamper the methodologies and styles used by the AE making it more difficult for both them and the learner.

The literature and findings have shown that the work of an educator is truly a caring role. This is something I inevitably held closely, however didn't assume it to come to the fore quite so strongly. Our emotions cannot simply be left outside the classroom to be collected on our way out, they form a part of our identity as an educator. It illuminated the feeling becoming 'qualified' had on AEs and how it had an impact on the way the NQAE is viewed. Identity can take shape in many ways and it transpired many NQAEs feel a certain level of uncertainty or doubt about their ability as an AE. This uncertainty or questioning of identity may promote a change in perspective of their identity as an AE and can be linked to transformative learning experiences.

NQAEs face many new experiences and often do not realise they are in a space of transitioning (getting accustomed to a new role as AE), but this process can be made easier if the individual is in a stable emotional space with supportive colleagues, a supportive workplace and a support system in place where they can adopt strategies of coping. Unfortunately, much of the research illuminates the lack of formal support available to NQAEs. However, the fieldwork demonstrated that the majority (but not all) of NQAEs receive informal support from colleagues if they ask for it. Strategies for coping with the transition period for a NQAE may include making themselves oblivious to the fact they are transitioning.

This research displayed the many experiences and challenges of NQAEs. It has emerged that it is a difficult space to be in rife with precarity, uncertainty, a lack of support and an unknown identity but the work carried out by AEs is rewarding, caring, lifechanging and transformative for themselves and the learners in their care. I hope this research has shed some light on the clutter that surrounds being an adult educator in the AE/FE/CE sector

in Ireland and I am optimistic that it will show NQAEs that they are not alone, there is a body of adult educators willing to help and support them and that all NQAEs undergo similar thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Bibliography:

Aitken, R. and Harford, J. 2011. Induction needs of a group of teachers at different career stages in a school in the Republic of Ireland: Challenges and Expectations. *Elsevier*, 27 (2). pp. 350-356.

Aontas 2016a. *About AONTAS* [online]. Available from: https://www.aontas.com/about/what-we-do [Accessed 16 May 2018].

Aontas 2016b. *Community Education* [online]. Available from: https://www.aontas.com/community/community-education-network [Accessed 12 June 2018].

Aspfors, J. and Bondas, T. 2013. Caring about caring: newly qualified teachers' experiences of their relationships within the school community. *Teachers and Teaching*, 19(3). pp. 243-259.

Barter C. & Reynold, E. 2000. 'I wanna tell you a story': Exploring the application of vignettes in qualitative research with children and young people. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 3(4), 307-323.

Biesta, G. and Tedder, M. 2007. 'Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective' in *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 39(2), pp. 132-149.

Bobek, A., Pembroke, S. and Wickham, J. 2018. Living with Uncertainty. Belgium: Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

Brookfield, S. D. 1990. *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. 2017. *Becoming a Critically Reflexive Teacher*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Commission on Adult Education 1984. Lifelong Learning: Report on the Commission on adult education. Dublin: The Stationary Office.

Committee on Adult Education 1973. Adult Education in Ireland. Dublin: Stationary Office.

Connelly, L. M. 2014. Ethical Considerations in Research Studies. *Medsurg nursing,* 23(1). pp. 54-55.

Connolly, L. M. 2015. Focus Groups. *Medsurg Nursing*, 24(5), pp. 369-370.

Coulter, C. and Nagle, A. 2015. *Ireland Under Austerity: Neoliberal Crisis, Neoliberal Solutions.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Crabbe, M. 2016. *Post its and Pathways: What are the experiences of graduates from a Higher Diploma in Further Education when they enter the field of practice?* Unpublished Master's Thesis: Maynooth University.

Cranton, P. 1994. *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Creswell, J. W. 2013. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. USA: SAGE Publications.

D'Cruz, H. and Jones, M. 2004. *Social Work Research: Ethical and Political Contexts.* London: SAGE Publications.

Department of Education and Science 1998. *Green Paper: Adult Education in an Era of Learning.* Dublin: Stationary Office.

Department of Education and Science 2000. *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education.* Dublin: Stationary Office.

Department of Education and Skills 2014. Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019. SOLAS.

Department of Education and Skills 2018. *Further Education and Training* [online]. Available from: https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Further-Education-Training/ [Accessed 28 May 2018].

Dodgson, J. E. 2017. About Research: Qualitative Methodology. *Journal of Human Lactation,* 33(2), 355–358.

Ellis, C. Adams, T. E & Bochner, A. P. 2011. Autoethnography: An Overview. *Qualitative Social Research,* 12(1), 1-18.

Finnegan, F. 2008. Neo-Liberalism, Irish Society and Adult Education. *The Adult Learner,* pp. 54-77.

Fitzsimons, C. 2017. *Community Education and Neoliberalism: Philosophies, Practices and Policies in Ireland.* Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, Springer International Publishing.

Fraser, A., Murphy, E. and Kelly, S. 2013. Deepening neoliberalism via austerity and 'reform': The case of Ireland. *Human Geography,* 6(2), pp. 38-53.

Freire, P. 2005. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition.* With an introduction by D. Macedo. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Given, L. M. ed. 2008. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* Vol. 1&2, California: SAGE Publications.

Grummell, B. 2007. The 'Second Chance' Myth: Equality of Opportunity in Irish Adult Education Policies. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 55(2), pp. 182-201.

Grummell, B. 2014. FET: Responding to community needs or shaping communities to suit a global marketplace in crisis? *IN:* Murray, M., Grummell, B. and Ryan, A. (eds.) *Further Education & Training: History, Politics, Practice.* Maynooth: MACE Press. pp. 122-135.

Haggerty, L. and Postlethwaite, K. 2012. An exploration of changes in thinking in the transition from student teacher to newly qualified teacher. *Research Papers in Education,* 27(2), pp. 241-262.

Halloway, I. and Galvin, K. 2016. *Qualitative Research in Nursing and Healthcare*, 4th ed. UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Hargreaves, A. 1998. The Emotional Practice of Teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(8). pp. 835-854.

Harvey, D. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.* USA: Oxford University Press.

Hearne, R. 2016. Neoliberalism Exposed, *Progressive Technology @ TASC* [online], 15 June. Available from: https://www.tasc.ie/blog/2016/06/15/neoliberalism-exposed/ [Accessed 17 June 2018].

Illeris, K. 2014a. *Transformative Learning and Identity.* Oxon: Routledge.

Illeris, K. 2014b. 'Transformative Learning and Identity' in *Journal of Transformative Education,* 12(2), pp. 148-163.

Inglis, T. 1998. *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland.* Dublin: University college Dublin Press.

Johnston, R. 2000. Community education and lifelong learning, local spice for global fare? *IN:* Field, J and Leister, M. (eds.) *Lifelong Learning: Education Across the Lifespan.* Leicester: Taylor and Francis. pp. 13-33.

Kidder, T. and Raworth, K. 2004. 'Good Jobs' and Hidden Costs: Women Workers Documenting the Price of Precarious Employment. *Gender and Development*, 12(2), pp. 12-21.

Krueger, R. and Casey, M. A. 2009. *Focus Groups: a practical guide for applied research.* 4th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Lamote, C. and Engels, N. 2010. The development of student teachers' professional identity. *European Journal of Teacher Education,* 33(1), pp. 3-18.

Lavrakas, P.J. ed. 2008. *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods,* Vol. 1, USA: SAGE Publications.

Liston, D., Whitcomb, J. and Borko, H. 2006. Too Little or Too Much: Teacher Preparation and the first years of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(4), pp. 351-354.

Longhurst, R. 2016. Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups *IN:* Clifford, N., Cope, M., Gillespie, T. and French, S. (eds.) *Key Methods in Geography*. London: SAGE. pp. 143-156.

Lopes, A. and Dewan, I. 2014. Precarious pedagogies? The impact of casual and zero-hour contracts in Higher Education. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 7 (8). pp. 28-42.

Matteucci, C.M. 2017. Teachers' sense of responsibility for educational outcomes and its associations with teachers' instructional approaches and professional wellbeing. *Social psychology of education,* 20(2), pp. 275-298.

May, T. 2010. *Social Research*. 4th ed. Berkshire, England: McGraw-Hill Education.

McDonnell, F. 2003. Adult Education in the Republic of Ireland. *Forum International* [online]. Available at: https://www.die-bonn.de/doks/mcdonnell0301.pdf (Accessed 25 January 2018)

McGlynn, L. 2014. Community Education and the Labour Activation Challenge. *The ITB Journal,* 15(1), pp. 103-136.

Mezirow, J. 1990. *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: a guide to transformative and emancipatory learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Mezirow, J. 1991. *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Mockler, N. 2011. Beyond 'what works': understanding teacher identity as a practical and political tool. *Teachers and Teaching*, 17(5), pp. 517-528.

Morgan, D. L. 1996. Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, pp. 129-152.

Murray, M., Grummell, B. and Ryan, A. 2014 (eds.) *Further Education & Training: History, Politics, Practice.* Maynooth: MACE Press.

Murray, M. 2018a. Conceptualising Power and Politics - Foucault and governmentality [Lecture notes accessed through Moodle]. *AD603: Power, Politics and Society: Adult Education in Context.* Maynooth University [Accessed 28 May 2018]

Murray, M. 2018b. Social Constructionism, *ADF6: Adult and Community Education*. 26 February, Maynooth University.

Murtagh, L. 2014. From humble beginnings to the dawning of a new era In: Murray, M., Grummell, B. and Ryan, A. (eds.) *Further Education & Training: History, Politics, Practice.* Maynooth: MACE Press. pp. 13-26.

Noddings, N. 2003. *Caring: a feminine approach to ethics and moral education.* California: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. 2012. The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(6), pp. 771-781.

Noddings, N. 2013. *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. California: University of California.

O'Dubhlaing, S. 1997. *Donogh O'Malley And The Free Post Primary Education Scheme.* Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Maynooth University.

O' Grady, E. 2015. Establishing respectful educative relationships: a study of newly qualified teachers in Ireland. *Cambridge Journal of Education,* 45(2), pp. 167-185.

O'Leary, M. and Rami, J. 2017. The impact of austerity in Further Education: cross-cultural perspectives from England and Ireland *IN:* Bartram, B. ed. *International and Comparative Education.* Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 74-86.

O'Neill, J. and Cullinane, S. 2017. Holding the line: A slow movement towards a critical professional development for community educators *IN:* Aontas, The Adult Learner. *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education.* Dublin: Aontas. pp.113-128.

O'Reilly, N. 2014. Principles and pragmatism- advocating for adult and community education within a neoliberal policy framework. *IN:* Murray, M., Grummell, B. and Ryan, A. (eds.) *Further Education & Training: History, Politics, Practice.* Maynooth: MACE Press. pp. 161-167.

Palmer, P. 2017. *The Courage to Teach Guide: for Reflection & Renewal.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Pembroke, S., Wickham, J. and Bobek, A. 2017. *The Social Implications of Precarious Work Project: The nature and extent of precarious work in Ireland.* Ireland: Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

Pillen, M., Douwe, B. and Brok, P. D. 2012. Tensions in beginning teachers' professional identity development, accompanying feelings and coping strategies. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(3), pp. 240-260.

Portigal, S. 2013. *Interviewing Users: How to uncover compelling insights*. Newyork: Rosenfield.

Rescher, N. 2014. *Luck: The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Roberts, P. 2015. Paulo Freire and Utopian Education. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies,* 37(5), pp. 376-392.

Rogers, A. and Horrocks, N. 2010. *Teaching Adults*. 4th ed. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.

Ruane, Janet M. 2015. *Introducing Social Research Methods: Essentials for Getting the Edge*. Sussex:John Wiley & Sons.

Sarantakos, S. 2005. *Social Research*. 3rd ed. Hampsire and NY: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.

Schlossberg, N. 2011. The challenge of change: the transition model and its applications. *Journal of employment counselling*, 48(4), 159-162.

Standing, G. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

Sweetland, B. 2004. Choosing the best strategies for supporting new teachers [online]. pp.5-25. Available at: https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/6810_hicks_ch_1.pdf (Accessed 4 January 2018)

Teaching Council of Ireland 2015. *About us* [online]. Available at: http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/About-Us/ [Accessed 22 April 2018]

Wilson, D. F. 2004. *Supporting Teachers Supporting Pupils: The Emotions of Teaching and Learning,* New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Zhang, N. and Parsons, R. D. 2016. *Field Experience: Transitioning from Student to Professional*. USA: SAGE.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Research information sheet:

To ,

Thanks again for your interest in my research. I am looking to find out where you are in the country to cluster participants for focus groups. If possible, could you reply by email with your location by 7th February 2018. If you cannot attend a focus group but are still interested in participating, please contact me and I can try to arrange an alternative method.

I hope to begin the focus groups in late February/early March. I imagine that various themes may emerge from the focus group not limited to but including:

- Your experiences in transitioning from student to teacher.
- The support structures available to Newly Qualified Teachers.
- The challenges and responsibilities a Newly Qualified Teacher faces – i.e. duties, assessment, class plans, behaviour issues etc.
- Your identity in becoming a teacher and relationships with colleagues and students.
- Physical/emotional strain felt by Newly Qualified Teachers in transitioning from students.
- Any other thoughts to note from your experiences.

As mentioned above, the topics are not limited, and I imagine many questions and themes may emerge from our conversations.

Thank you again for your interest. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email or mobile.

Kind Regards
Lisa McIntyre

Mobile No: 0861510609
Email Address: lisa.mcintyre.2017@mumail.ie

Appendix 2 - Research Consent:

I ………………………………….. confirm that I agree to participate in Lisa McIntyre's research study.

I have read and understand the information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time before the 20th April 2018.

If I take part in a focus group, I agree to the focus group being audio recorded.

If I engage in a face-to-face or telephone interview, I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.

I agree to the use of the information that is produced by the focus group to be used in a thesis, academic presentations and publications.

I agree for the information that is produced through face to face, email or telephone interviews to be used in a thesis, academic presentations and publications.

I understand that all methods to keep participants anonymous will be carried out, but due to the nature of focus groups, this may be out of the researcher's hands.

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the thesis, academic presentations and publications.

_____   _____

Participants Name   Date

_____   _____

Participants Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Researchers Name   Signature   Date