The Experience and Effect of External Evaluation on Teachers' Practice

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Declaration

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

Signed:__________________________ (John Mescal)

Student Number: 60124342

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Michael (RIP) and Mairéad Mescal who instilled in me the importance of education and a love of learning. I will be forever grateful.

Abstract

Limited research exists on the effects of evaluation on primary teachers' teaching practices in Ireland. This research seeks to fill this gap. It focused on external evaluation in a sample of Irish primary schools. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research aimed to understand how teachers experienced evaluation, and to what extent, and, for what reasons evaluation brought about changes in their practices. This research combined two overarching theories of adult learning theory and social cognitive theory to bridge the gap between the two phenomena in this study; evaluation and teacher growth and development. Analysis of quantitative data provided contextual information regarding the evaluation process. Surveys and qualitative data from interviews with principals and teachers captured their experiences, providing nuanced and wide-ranging accounts of their experiences of evaluation and its effects on their practices. Sample schools made good progress in implementing inspectors' recommendations regarding teaching practices. Data suggested teachers had mixed experiences of evaluation, especially regarding the nature of recommendations and the consistency and balance of feedback in identifying teaching strengths and deficiencies. Factors that affected the teachers' respect for evaluation included the degree of partnership between teachers and inspectors; the inspectors' personality and style and how far they considered school context factors in their evaluations. Teachers reported varying levels of trust in the process, largely due to the perceived paucity of time inspectors spent on the evaluation and their professional experience, especially in specialised areas. Although the teachers experienced heightened emotions before and during evaluation, and some found the experience negative, it nonetheless enabled them to reflect on practices they had ignored. The findings provide a new and valuable insight into how teachers experience evaluation and how it affects their teaching practices. The study makes many practical, and some novel, recommendations on how evaluation might be improved in Irish primary schools.

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

BERA – British Educational Research Association

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Inclusion in Schools

DES – Department of Education and Skills

DoE – Department of Education

FT – Follow-Through

IMIS – Information Management Inspection System

MU – Maynooth University

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PCSP – Primary Curriculum Support Programme

PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

SICI – Standing International Conference of Inspectorates

TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

WSE – Whole School Evaluation

The Effects of External Evaluation on Teachers' Perceptions of their Teaching Practices – and on the Practices Themselves – in a Cohort of Primary Schools in Ireland

1.1. Introduction

In this research I focus on external evaluation in Ireland, exploring the effects on teachers' practices in primary schools of such evaluation by inspectors from the Department of Education's Inspectorate. The perceptions of teachers and principals are analysed to investigate these effects. A selection of published reports are reviewed to show the types of observations made by inspectors on teaching practices in selected schools. Analysis of the reports show the progress teachers and schools made in implementing recommendations regarding teaching practices and serve as necessary contextual background for exploring the the effects of evaluation on teachers' practice.

There has been limited research into the effects of evaluation in Ireland on teachers' practices (Ehren & Visscher, 2008; Jones et al., 2017; McNamara & O'Hara, 2008). The main aims of this dissertation is to contribute to knowledge and to add to existing research about evaluation in Ireland, and, in particular, to give voice to teachers in Irish primary schools about their experiences of it. A further objective is to make recommendations regarding such evaluation and to locate it broadly as a form of practitioner-based research that seeks to contribute to practice in this field.

I blend two overarching theories, adult learning theory (ALT) and social cognitive theory (SCT) to bridge the gap between the two phenomenon in this study; evaluation and teacher growth and development. In merging these two theories it provided a distinctive way of exploring evaluation and teacher development and thereby contributing to knowledge in a unique way.

1.2. Definitions

This section provides definitions of frequently used terms associated with the field of evaluation that are included in the dissertation. Further definitions are offered in the main text from a methodological or theoretical perspective in the relevant sections and chapters where necessary.

Evaluation refers to the process whereby school inspectors make judgements, using specific and relevant evaluation criteria, on the quality of educational provision in a school. It involves giving feedback to schools, teachers and the system generally. 'Internal evaluation' takes place when such judgements are made solely by personnel within the school'. 'External evaluation' signifies that the process is executed by external evaluators. i.e., Department of Education inspectors.

Effects – the effects, both professionally and personally, that external evaluation has on schools, teachers, pupils and the system generally.

Teachers' practice/teachers' practices/teaching practice'- For this dissertation, these three terms can be taken to have the same meaning. They refer to the various components of teachers' practice including their subject and pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, planning, preparation and assessment practices, teaching approaches and methodologies, and their provision for pupils with individual learning needs. It also refers to their capacity to reflect; to question their actions and examine the effects of those actions as a way of improving the quality of their work. The terms also include teachers' collective practices within a school, sharing of expertise among cohorts of teachers, and engagement in CPD.

Performance output - refers to the performance of teachers, schools or a system as measured by standardised assessments.

Follow-through Inspection - an inspection to evaluate the progress a school has made on implementing main recommendations made in an earlier inspection where a written report has been published or issued to the school. (DES, 2016b).

School Improvement – a particular approach to educational change that focuses on the development of student learning by modifying or developing classroom practice and adapting leadership and management arrangements to support teaching and learning**.**

Student Performance – the extent to which a student achieves their potential across a range of academic subjects.

Quality of Schools – the extent to which a school and its teachers provide for the students' academic, social, emotional, spiritual and holistic development.

School Excellence – A school and its teachers that displays excellence in providing for the students' academic, social, emotional, spiritual and holistic development.

1.3. The Research Question

The research question this study seeks to answer is: 'What are the effects of external evaluation on teachers' practices in primary schools in Ireland?' I investigated this question under four supplementary questions that arose as the research progressed. They were:

1. What is the nature of recommendations regarding teachers' practices in sample schools?
2. What progress do schools make in addressing these recommendations?
3. How do teachers experience the evaluation process?
4. How does the experience of evaluation affect teachers' perceptions of their practices, and, by extension, the practices themselves?

1.4. Rationale for Choice of Topic

The rationale for the choice of study is discussed in subsequent paragraphs. There are two overarching reasons for engaging in this study. Firstly, my personal position provided the entry point. In the second place, and at a wider level, the literature shows that there is a gap in the understanding of the field; there is limited research into the effects of evaluation on primary teachers' practice in Ireland. It is necessary that this subject is researched so that the positive effects of evaluation on teachers' practice can be captured, documented into the knowledge field of evaluation and so that learning from the research can contribute to evaluation policies and practices. Conversely, ineffective or destructive elements of evaluation regarding teachers' practice require detection so that they contribute to understanding the discipline of evaluation and teachers' learning. The following paragraphs explore the rationale for the choice of topic based on these two reasons.

Firstly, my personal position is explored in terms of the rationale. As a senior inspector with the Department of Education, I am interested in learning the effects of inspection on teachers' practices and, by extension, on school improvement, if any, in primary schools in Ireland. Although the evaluation process can capture the effects that evaluation has on schools through the lens of the Inspectorate, my professional role does not afford me the opportunity or authorisation to enquire as to how teachers experience the evaluation process. There is no mechanism in place to formally capture such experiences. Follow-through evaluations provide schools and the system generally the opportunity to see how evaluation affects teaching practices and the progress schools makes in implementing recommendations regarding such practices. However, there has been limited research by researchers or the Department's Inspectorate that explores the perspectives of teachers. This reason provides my personal and professional motive for engaging in this research so that I can make a contribution to education regarding the affects evaluation has on teachers' practice.

Being a practitioner-researcher who has trained as a teacher and now works as an inspector, regularly evaluating teaching practices and providing feedback to teachers and principals in a wide variety of schools, I was very interested to find out the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices. While I am visiting schools or completing evaluations, teachers occasionally offer anecdotal insights into how they experienced particular evaluations or how interactions they had with an inspector(s) effected them. At times, colleagues within the Inspectorate have recounted conversations they had with teachers and principals about how they experienced evaluation. Some of these accounts suggest that evaluation had a positive effect on teachers and specific areas of their practice, while other accounts were less complimentary about the process, and showed that no change had occurred in teaching practices after the inspection or, in some cases, that the inspection had had a negative effect on teachers. These anecdotal stories provided the initial motivation for me to research this area further.

I am deeply passionate about the pursuit of excellence for children in the education system, and believe in the important role evaluation can play in bringing about improvements in teaching and, hence, in learning experiences and outcomes. Reflecting on the stories I heard about inspection encouraged me to find out more so that as a practitioner-researcher I could make a unique contribution to knowledge and provide recommendations for improvements in school evaluation generally. Through the use of a mixed-methods approach in this research, I wished to hear from a wide population of teachers and principals whom I surveyed about their experiences of, and insights into, evaluation. I also heard from teachers and principals in interviews about the effects that evaluation had on their teaching practices. Being a practitioner-researcher enabled me to design questions that were informed by my thorough practical and experiential knowledge of evaluation in primary schools. It also enabled me to conduct the research and interviews with the teachers concerned in an authoritative yet

empathetic way. My knowledge and experience of conducting such evaluations enabled me to analyse the data in a way that would have been less insightful had I not been so centrally involved in this process. The approaches for conducting the research are discussed in Chapter Three.

Given the significant resources spent on school inspection and the conflicting views in the literature as to its effects on improvement within schools (discussed in Chapter Two), clearly a more informed sense of teachers' experiences of the evaluation process is needed. As an inspector with the Department, I am exceptionally well placed to use the findings of the present research to make recommendations that will valuably inform evaluation policy in Ireland. The current approach to quality in the Inspectorate's work with a school typically involves surveys conducted with the principal, board of management members, and parent representatives. In addition, the board of management responds to published evaluations. Teachers are not allowed to provide feedback on their experiences of the evaluation process, either within follow-up surveys or during the school response stage of the evaluation process. This study allows a sample of teachers the opportunity to voice their experiences of the evaluation process and to talk about the effects it has had on their teaching practices.

A gap in the understanding of the field of evaluation serves as a strong rationale for the study and this is explored subsequently. It is widely recognised that there is a restricted selection of research on the effects of inspection/evaluation (SICI, 2019). Section 2.6 will discuss the research on evaluation and identify the main themes that emerge from the limited range of studies that have been completed on the impact of evaluation. What is significant for the rationale for this study is that a limited quantity of studies are in English and they are based on a small number of countries (SICI, 2019). Through this research, I aim to help fill this vacuum for both the International and National knowledge base on the effects of evaluation.

While there remains a small amount of research in the area, the studies that have been completed present a conflicting picture on the effects of evaluation and there are no obvious answers to the question if it follows that inspections affects quality in schools and teachers' practice or performance (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Jones & Tymms, 2014; Penninckx et al., 2016; Whitby, 2010). The three conflicting arguments about the impact of evaluation include that: it has no effect on teachers or inconclusive evidence, it has a negative impact on teachers' and it has a positive impact on teachers (discussed in sections 2.6.1, 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 respectively). What appears common across the three points of view is that inspection can have a damaging impact on the morale of teachers and that their attitudes to evaluation are for the most part perceived as negative and evaluation itself is thought of as a stressful process. Literature reveals that there is little consensus on what comprises the most effective form of evaluation (Dóbert, 2004; Faubert, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2000). The contradictory points of view present an obvious gap in the knowledge field. As a result of the conflicting points of view regarding the impact of evaluation, the lack of up to date research in the area and the gap in understanding, I hope this research will provide much needed insights into how teachers experience evaluation and the impact it has on their practice. It is anticipated that this study will provide necessary answers as to why teachers progress their practice, or alternatively, do not change their practice post evaluation. In addition, I intend to explore the most effective ways of evaluating to affect change in teachers' practice and discover the barriers that exist within the evaluation process for affecting teacher growth and development. These findings should supply crucial knowledge for the area of evaluation.

Within the Irish context specifically, there has been limited research into the effects of evaluation in Ireland on teachers' practices (Ehren & Visscher, 2008; Jones *et al.*, 2017; McNamara & O'Hara, 2008). The majority of research has been carried out over ten years ago and is limited to the post-primary sector such as studies by Dillon (2011), Griffin, (2010),

Harvey (2015), Ladden (2015) and Mathews (2010). Completed research in Ireland does not include how primary teachers experienced evaluation or how the experience of evaluation brings changes in their practices; something this research intends to fill the void in. Of particular note from the studies completed in Ireland, and, in the context of the rationale for my research, relates to Dillon’s conclusions whereby she suggests how the impact of external evaluation on classroom practice can be maximised as a focus for further study. Similarly, in Ladden’s conclusions, he proposed a pilot study in a number of schools where inspectors take time to build a stronger relationship with teachers, and mentor and coach them on how to improve their classroom performance. Conclusions contained within the two studies suggest a gap in research relating to the impact evaluation and inspectors can have in progressing teachers’ practice, something my research intends to examine.

1.5. Chapter Outline

The remainder of this introductory chapter provides and outline of the chapters presented in the thesis. Chapter Two outlines the relevant literature relating to school evaluation and teacher growth and development. It explains what is understood from the literature regarding the purpose of evaluation, supporting an operational definition of evaluation that is used as a lens through which to examine evaluation in Ireland. Of greatest significance in Chapter Two is what can be learned from the literature regarding the effects that evaluation has on schools’ performance and individual teachers. The chapter discusses the various types of evaluation and traces the development of evaluation policy in Ireland. It explores the empirical research on evaluation, both from an international and an Irish perspective. Literature on teacher growth and development is reviewed to ascertain what can be learned regarding the factors that facilitate teacher learning and what elements as a barrier to their development. The chapter concludes by presenting a conceptual framework on evaluation which was informed by the literature.

The methodology for the study is presented in Chapter Three. The theoretical framework for the study is explained and presented. It shows how and why a mixed-methods approach, involving quantitative and qualitative data sets, was utilised. Chapter Three explains that the research is based on the interpretive research paradigm. It discusses the target population and sampling strategy applied in the research and how the study's credibility, trustworthiness, rigour/reliability, and relatability were established. Ethical considerations are also highlighted. The mode for analysing the data, which involved inductive and deductive techniques and thematic analysis, is also explained.

Chapter Four presents the research findings, which are organised under the four research questions guiding the study. Responses to the first two questions suggest the 'what' of the study, i.e., what effects does evaluation have on teachers' practices? Answers to questions three and four present the 'how' of the study: how does evaluation affect teachers' experiences and practices? The chapter also presents the themes that emerged in the thematic analysis. The findings are discussed and compared and contrasted with those obtained in the literature review and conclusions are presented within Chapter Five.

Finally, Chapter Six presents the recommendations drawn from the research and identifies possible areas for further research. It also discusses the limitations of the study.

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I review the relevant literature relating to the subject of school evaluation and teacher growth and development in the context of the research question. I sourced the literature by entering keywords into library searches. These words included *inspection, evaluation, impact, effect, changes, teachers, schools, accountability, improvement, primary schools, Ireland, evaluation theory, empirical research, teacher growth, teacher learning, teacher professional development*. Various combinations of these words were used in searches. Given the large volume of articles, reports and papers that emerged, it was necessary to apply selection criteria to narrow the range. In the next stage of selection, the researcher filtered the articles/papers/books by choosing articles/books/papers:

1. That discussed the purpose of evaluation
2. With a focus on the effects of evaluation on schools, teachers and pupils
3. That included empirical research on evaluation.

I then reviewed the bibliography sections of the chosen literature to ascertain whether any additional relevant literature could be thereby accessed. The review of this literature resulted in the identification of several themes that were subsequently linked together and included in the conclusion of this chapter to form a conceptual framework for evaluation (Section 2.9) in which to plan the research and analyse and discuss the findings of the research questions.

Specifically, this chapter explains that what is understood from the literature is that the main purposes of evaluation are evaluation for accountability and school improvement. A school improvement lens is chosen to guide this research, and Section 2.7 below justifies such a stance. Of most significance from the literature is the effects that evaluation has on schools and their performance and on teachers. Section 2.6 provides an overview of what has been

learned from the literature in terms of the effects of evaluation and it suggests that evaluation can have no effect, a negative effect, or a positive effect, on teachers. When positive effects are found the literature suggests that certain factors need to be taken into account for this to be the case (discussed in Section 2.6.3.1). The review highlights feedback as a significant feature of evaluation. What the research says about what is described as effective forms of feedback and their effects on teachers and schools is discussed. Two main types of evaluation are identified in the literature: internal and external evaluation. The benefits and limitations of each are discussed, as are systems in which both forms co-exist.

Evaluation policy and the development of evaluation practices and procedures in the Irish context are explored to provide a background in which this research was conducted. Also included is an exploration of what has been learned from research on evaluation in Ireland. Finally, learning from literature on teacher growth and development is explored in section 2.8.

2.2 The Purposes of Evaluation

I explore various purposes of evaluation in this section; firstly, from a broad perspective followed by a narrowing of the focus to two specific purposes of evaluation; evaluation for accountability and evaluation for improvement.

Over the past 20 years or so, the purposes of inspection have been well documented and discussed in the literature and it has evolved into an established field of study (Cullingford, 1999; Ehren, 2016; Nevo, 2002; Scriven, 1996; Woods and Jeffrey, 1998). The literature shows that evaluation serves many purposes and that they commonly overlap (Ottesen and Stephens, 2018). Such purposes include evaluation for accountability, development, knowledge production, social improvement, satisfying the market and a political purpose, professional development, organisational development, teaching improvement, and improvement of learning (Baxter, 2017; Descy & Tessaring, 2004; MacBeath, 1999). These purposes must be clear about who evaluation is for and who will gain from it (MacBeath, 1999).

MacRuairc in Ottesen and Stephens (2018) identified the overarching purpose of evaluation as the process of explaining what happens in schools. This simple explanation suggests that evaluation describes a school. But why is it described, who is it described for, what criteria (if any) have been used to inform the description, and what can the description be used for? This section will explore some of these questions. Janssens and Van Amelsvoort (2008) also suggest a general description of the purposes of inspection, which is endorsed by many academics in the field:

> the process of periodic, targeted scrutiny carried out to provide independent verification, and to report on whether the quality of schools is meeting national and local performance standards, legislative and professional requirements and the needs of students and parent (p.16)

In their most basic form, the purpose of inspections is to gather data that are necessary to gain knowledge about the quality of education in the school in which the enquiry is carried out. Inspection is driven by datasets that ascertain such quality based on factors including teaching development and school improvement (Baxter, 2017).

According to a cohort of authors, the objective of evaluation is to assess the competence of teachers and to ensure the school's compliance with professional standards and regulations and performance outputs. It also serves to provide feedback to teachers and schools on how they can advance their teaching practices, share their expertise with school staff and transfer their skills and knowledge (1997; Hargreaves, 1998; Maychell et al., Woods and Jeffrey, 1998).

The purpose of evaluation varies from country to country. Matthews and Sammon (2004) differentiate between the statutory functions of inspectors in several European countries. For example, the purpose of Ofsted evaluations in the UK is to evaluate the quality and standards in schools in an impartial manner (Earley, 1998). Matthews and Sammon (2004)

explain that Ofsted has no statutory responsibility regarding improvement, even though ‘raising standards, improving lives’’ is part of its logo. Ofsted’s role is that of a detached and independent external evaluator (Mathews, 2010). Ehren et al. (2013) summarise the purposes of evaluation within Inspectorates of six European countries (Austria, Ireland, Sweden, The Netherlands, England, and the Czech Republic). Their summary suggests that the purposes of evaluation can be divided into three categories: control, support/improvement, and liaison. They observe that many systems combine two, or even three, of these roles and that conflict can arise when they are combined. Similarly, De Grauwe (2007, p.10) suggests that there are tensions between control and support/improvement and observes a recurring global theme in the literature of headteachers and teachers voicing disapproval of this mixture; further, that the combination of control and support/improvement roles in one person (inspector) or agency (Inspectorate) corrupts the relationship between the evaluator and those who are being evaluated. De Grauwe suggests that this issue is not a new one and that this duality of purpose can create a fundamental conflict in evaluators’ responsibilities.

The focus on control has led to a decline in the relationship that schools and inspectors have hitherto enjoyed since one exerts power and control over the other. The imbalance of power that occurs also reduces the level of trust in judgements that inspectors provide, as does the fact that inspectors often evaluate the response (if any) to their advice in subsequent visits to schools. Ehren et al. (2013) and De Grauwe (2007) agree that the conflation of control and support creates tension between the standardised protocols and the need to have solutions that are fit for purpose. This tension increases when schools have greater autonomy and require inspection and evaluation services that are appropriate to their specific context. The needs of a small rural school, for example, are very different from those of a large, urban school. They conclude that the need for a diversified inspection and support service is at odds with the traditional practice of delivering standardised services requested by the central governing body.

The purposes of inspection (accountability and school improvement) that are prevalent in the literature are also very evident in Ireland in 'A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools' (DES, 2016b). The Guide clearly states that 'development and improvement' and 'responsibility and accountability' are two of the four key principles that underpin the Inspectorate's work in schools. While the Guide outlines the types of inspections carried out by the Inspectorate, the Code of Practice for the Inspectorate sets out how they are carried out. The Code of Practice builds upon the Inspectorate's standard operational protocol that has been adopted in the Education Act (1998). It highlights that it seeks to build on effective practices in schools by affirming aspects of schools' practices and providing recommendations and advice to promote areas for development within schools. It can also involve highlighting poor or weak elements of practice that require development while aiming to create an environment of mutual co-operation between teachers, parents, school leaders, boards of management and parents. Hislop (2017; p.8) states that it is up to schools and others to determine whether the Inspectorate lives up to the stated purpose, practices and principles of its work and whether it fosters a collaborative and co-professional approach. This research aims to further explore some of these issues.

It is evident from the literature reviewed in this section that evaluation can serve a variety of purposes: accountability, development and improvement, support, learning, knowledge development, reflection, enforcing standards, and satisfying the market and political purposes. It is also apparent from a wide range of literature (Anderson, 2005; Barber, 2004; Baxter, 2017; Ehren, 2006; Ehren & Visscher, 2006; 2016; Frink et al., 2004; Hislop, 2017; MacBeath, 1999; Romzek, 2000; Scriven, 1991; Sirotnik, 2002;) that inspection for accountability and school improvement are the most prevalent reasons for school evaluations. For this reason, and as these are central aspects of Irish evaluation policy they warrant further

discussion and will be explored in the next two sections as these two purposes are likely to influence the nature of evaluation and its effects on the schools and teachers who are being evaluated.

2.2.1 Evaluation for Accountability

Accountability in education has been the focus of much attention (Anderson, 2005; Barber, 2004; Frink et al., 2004; Scriven, 1991; Sirotnik, 2002; Romzek, 2000) and has been ascribed different meanings in various studies (Leung, 2005). Understanding these various meanings and endeavouring to decipher which of them are relevant to education is a difficult task. Categorising accountability into three basic approaches offers a useful starting point. They can be considered as a market-type approach to accountability, a management approach to accountability, and professional accountability. I explore each of the three approaches in the following three subsections, firstly a market type approach to accountability is discussed.

2.2.1.1 A Market-Type Approach to Accountability. Theory from a cohort of researchers suggests that accountability is associated with a neo-liberal market viewpoint (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Harris & Herrington, 2006). Accountability serves to provide the market (parents, students, and others) with information about the quality of education across the school system and to identify differences between schools. This theory suggests that market accountability is orientated towards greater consumer control, and, in theory, that it empowers parents' decision-making as to which schools their children should attend since they are equipped with hard and reliable data to help them to make an informed choice. The assumption here is that greater consumer control will ensure that schools are reaching centrally defined standards that warrant their receipt of public funds.

Chubb and Moe (1990) and Harris and Herrington (2006) suggest that evaluating performance and providing suitable rewards and sanctions encourages schools and teachers to perform to a higher standard. The publication of league tables commenced in the 1990s in the

UK, while inspection reports in Ireland were published for the first time in 2005. From the perspective of market accountability, it could be assumed that the publication of such data in the UK and of reports in Ireland may have been done to support decision-making by parents and that pressure from parents might lead to school improvement. It is worth noting that evaluation reports in the Irish context do not provide an overall quality rating for schools, nor do they include the results of standardised data that would facilitate the compilation of league tables (DES, 2016b). Instead, they include quality statements for the various dimensions of school life including leadership and management, teaching, and learning or support for pupils. In an Irish context, Byrne and Smyth (2010) conclude that, in general, parents are not overly concerned with information on school quality. Hargreaves (1995) notes that, when a school receives a negative report, there is limited evidence that it causes parents to make alternative school choices. In some locations, particularly rural areas, there are few schooling alternatives. McNamara and O'Hara (2008) question whether consumers, i.e., parents, have the financial independence or means to make choices or sufficiently reliable information to enable them to make informed decisions about schools.

Lynch and Moran (2006) state that market-driven choice has not been the modus operandi in Ireland, that the State does not endorse league tables, and that it discourages competition between schools. However, data from their study of second-level education show that there is growing pressure on a significant minority of parents to do the best for their children by paying for extra education and tuition in grind schools quite apart from what is provided in regular schools, indicating an increase in the incidence of market-driven choice for some 'middle-class' parents.

Some observers insist that this form of accountability can do more harm than good and that it can, in at least some cases, demotivate teachers, label schools as failing, and add to undesirable practices such as cheating and the manipulation of students' results (Jacob, 2005;

Jacob & Levitt, 2003; Rosenthal, 2004). They also claim that a major argument within the market competition approach is the reliability of the data that is utilised to inform reports due to their narrow focus. There are significant challenges in evaluation as to what is being measured. Biesta (2007) questions what is being measured, how it is being measured, and whether, only what is measured is valued. It is reasonable to suggest that these challenges influence the market-type approach to accountability, in that, if a narrow range of instruments is used to measure quality or the instruments are not robust enough to capture the multifaceted dimensions of education quality it questions the reliability of the market-type approach to accountability.

Many observers claim that school test results are frequently utilised to measure school and system performance and that, while such tests can be the starting point for accountability, they are only one aspect of the many dimensions of school life (Biesta, 2008; Earl, 2008; Mac Beath, 1999; MacNab, 2004; Mitchell, 2001; Stoll & Fink, 1996; Wilcox & Gray, 1994). Ottesen and Stephens claim that inspections are neither neutral nor natural (2018, p.110). What evaluations find is contingent on what they are looking for, and what they are looking for depends on what is valued (Ottesen and Stephens, 2018). Sahlberg (2011) maintains that attainment in literacy and numeracy have become the main yardsticks for the success or failure of students, teachers, and schools. This not only has implications for the power that literacy and numeracy have in the organisation of school life regarding school priorities and timetabling, for example, but also for the perceived professionalism of teachers whose subjects have more agency. The emphasis on competencies such as literacy and numeracy suggests that external evaluation will shape practice in schools (Stephens in Ottesen & Stephens, 2018). Biesta notes that questions need to be asked as to:

> What extent can tests accurately capture the knowledge and skills in a student population, of a particular school's students or of individual students? Are test results

> indicative of system quality or of teacher or leader competencies and effectiveness….and, most importantly, do we value what we measure, or do we measure what we value? (2009, p.33)

Other observers consider that taking a market-type approach to accountability in evaluations is not always an accurate reflection of the schools, that evaluations lack clarity about what a school is about and are based on a mere snapshot of school life. i.e., what is evident at a particular time (Cullingford, 1999; Woods & Jeffrey, 1998). Empirical research also suggests that evaluations can be rushed and that, due to time limitations, evaluators cannot get a comprehensive picture of the school (Dillon, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Perryman, 2009). These authors claim that an emphasis on school data alone cannot capture comprehensively the quality of a school, that the concept of 'quality' that is built into evaluations is overly narrow. Quinn Patton (2002) observes that information collected utilising a systematic procedure and rigorous scientific methods whereby the evaluator is distanced from the subject (via the top-down, 'done to' approach) fails to provide adequate knowledge about the success or limitations of the programme or to take account of school contextual factors.

The issue of how best to measure quality in education is further evident in the variation of school types. Studies (Gilroy & Wilcox, 1997; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997) show that schools serving disadvantaged and inner-city areas often have more adverse reports than those in more privileged areas, and that little attention is paid to the contextual aspects of the schools. Law and Glover (1999) suggest that inspection reports serving disadvantaged and inner-city schools should be less focused on test results and instead acknowledge the varying conditions of schools and evaluate a broader range of issues such as students' readiness to learn and the inclusiveness of the education provision to cater for the diversity of the students' needs. This observation is significant when the purpose of evaluation is seen to serve a market-type approach to accountability; if evaluation fails to capture the multi-layered contexts of such

schools and focuses on specific data sets such as test results to inform its conclusions it calls the validity of the market-type approach to accountability into question.

In this section I put forward the argument that a market-based approach to accountability has negative consequences for schools, the system they serve, learners and their parents. The reliability of the data used to inform judgements is called into question, its impact can demoralise and demotivate teachers and lead schools to cheat and manipulate results. There is a strong argument here that a market-based approach is not based on the principles of improvement or the gathering of data from a broad range of school activities that are put in place for pupils' formative development. I discuss the management approach to accountability in the next section.

2.2.1.2 A Management Approach to Accountability. This approach to accountability is an organised attempt to create more goal-oriented, efficient, and effective schools through rational procedures (Ladden, 2015). New Managerialism involves public services being perceived as businesses, with mission statements identifying their goals and objectives that could be quantified or measured. Managers (principals, in the case of schools) with increased accountability are held accountable for objectives being met and money being spent, with an emphasis on outputs and the quality and effectiveness of the service in satisfying the demands and expectations of customers, consumers or clients (Farnham & Horton, 1993; Jennings & Lomas, 2003; Segerholm, 2003). New managerialism can be seen to value outputs over inputs, as well as closely monitoring employees' performance using performance indicators while retaining power and control centrally. Within this mode of governance, the social purposes of education are deprioritised, and schools change from being centres of learning to service delivery operations with productivity targets (Lynch, 2014).

Some authors have linked the neo-liberal agenda and the concept of new public management and responsibility with decentralisation and giving schools greater autonomy;

subsequently, this move to decentralisation and school autonomy is connected to a greater need for evaluation and accountability (Johannesson et al., 2002 MacNamara and O'Hara, 2008;). Johannesson et al. (2002) claim that the neo-liberal education policy/New Managerialism has dominated education discourse internationally and has influenced governance practices. They argue that New Managerialism involves the use of scientific methods such as quality standards, benchmarking, and evidence-based practices to inform educational decision-making and to improve school performance. This is based on a rudimentary assumption that strategic school improvement and school development planning will on their own, improve schools. Within the management approach, school leaders are expected to adopt the role of strategic managers by interpreting systematically collected data and by creating improvement goals among staff. Some observers suggest that taking this scientific, systematic approach to education is favoured by school administrators and educators. Slavin (2002) proposes that 'rigorous systematic and objective procedures, using experimental or quasi-experimental designs' (p.16) will produce valid knowledge and transform education. Others oppose this approach, claiming that there is little evidence to support this view, and argue that a trend towards more detailed definitions of course content, and an increase in required learning outcomes, fool-proof teaching methods, and standardised assessment models impinge on the professional autonomy of teachers (McNamara and O'Hara, 2010). Mathews and Sammon (1995) claim that accountability measures that focus on these management practices and school organisation operate at the expense of what is experienced in the classroom.

The new management approach to accountability within evaluation is not the preferred method of the researcher. I agree with McNamara and O'Hara (2010) and Mathews and Sammon (1995) that such an approach could cause the de-skilling of teachers and negatively affect their classroom performance. An approach to evaluation that promotes improvement and development is discussed later in Section 2.2.2.

2.2.1.3 Professional Accountability. I discuss professional accountability in this subsection. Theories about professional accountability differentiate between those described as experts and those without expertise. Professional approaches to accountability hold educators accountable and increase the powers of teachers in decision-making. The basis of this approach is that education is such a multifaceted endeavour that it is challenging to identify all, or even some, of the desired outcomes and that the teacher should therefore be allowed a wide discretion to engage with such complexity (Ladden, 2015). This approach assumes that teachers already have this information (the desired outcomes and the many facets that make up quality education provision) and that they are therefore well-placed to make good professional decisions. This perspective is grounded in a sense of trust that professionals will carry out their duties, largely on account of a sense of obligation and the desire to do the right thing for their students (Anderson, 2005).

Those responsible for overseeing provision in education look for ways of ensuring accountability that respect the professionalism of teachers. Pearson and Moomaw claim that 'like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students, as doctors and lawyers do for their patients and clients' (2005, p.45). External evaluation in Ireland, within its design, principles and aims, seeks to respect this professionalism. Evaluation in the Irish context, from the point of view of the Inspectorate, seeks to affirm the aspects of school and teaching practices that are working well and to provide practical advice to teachers with the overarching aim of school improvement. The process is intended to enable professional reflection and development (DES, 2016b). It is evident that professional accountability is a complex issue that I am endeavouring to help clarify by engaging in this study. By investigating whether teachers experience inspection in this way is a question the study sought to explore.

2.2.2 Evaluation for Improvement

In this part of the literature I explore school improvement theory. One of the main theories on improving provision in education is school improvement theory. This theory has been defined as 'a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change' (Hopkins, 2005; p.2-3). Central to the theory is the concept that if the internal conditions in the school are improved, student learning will benefit. School improvement is concerned with supporting quality education and developing a school's capability to change to enhance pupils' learning (Sun et al., 2007). School improvement research has proved to be progressively influential, important, and powerful for growing awareness that schools' teaching practices can both positively and negatively affect student outcomes (Harris, 2014).

Although there are numerous strategies for school improvement, some researchers highlight that school improvement processes must necessarily focus on teaching methods, learning styles and curriculum change in schools (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001; Stoll, 2009; Weiner, 2002). They claim that 'creating powerful and effective learning experiences for students is the heartland for school improvement' (2001, p.xi). Sammons offers a different emphasis and disagrees with an exclusive focus on pedagogy (2006). She contends that to bring about school improvement, schools should focus on both organisational and pedagogical change. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1993) argue that strengthening a school's organisation is important in school improvement. Developing pedagogy without putting in place effective organisational structures and supports has a limited effect while developing an efficient organisation that does not concentrate on the core activities of teaching and learning is a pointless task (Sammons, 2006). Organisational development includes enhancing aspects such as management, leadership and teamwork. There is agreement among some researchers that whatever changes are carried out in a school need to be evaluated, monitored and reviewed.

Empirical evidence needs to be provided to measure their effects (Hopkins, 2001; Merrett 2000 Sammons, 2006).

There is agreement among certain scholars that inspection can play an important role in school improvement and, therefore, evaluating with the aim of school improvement is a core purpose of evaluation (Baxter, 2017; Ehren and Visscher, 2006; Ehren, 2006, 2016; Hislop, 2017; MacBeath, 1999). School evaluation is also a judgement of whether a particular school is effective and the recommendations that arise from inspections are signposts for school improvement (Griffin, 2009).

Chapman's (2001) review of the literature on school improvement and inspections concluded that there were three levels at which school improvement might be achieved through evaluation: national, school, and classroom level. Chapman recognised that the inclusion in inspection reports of specific recommendations concerning teaching and learning was necessary for evaluation for improvement. In addition, his review of the literature highlighted the value of the evaluator's feedback to individual teachers following their classroom observation. Given the significance of feedback within evaluation and its role in promoting school improvement, it is discussed in more detail in Section 2.4, below.

In Ireland, school inspectors support policy development and this support is an aspect of their statutory function. Section 13(3:g) of the Education Act 1998 requires the Inspectorate in Ireland to advise the Minister for Education on any matter regarding the provision of education or educational policy, including the curriculum, assessment and teaching methods, to inform policy development and guide educational improvement. Whole-school evaluation (WSE) was created to provide impartial, reliable, high-quality data from which education policies might be modified or developed where appropriate (Department of Education, 1999, p.4). While it could be argued that this aspect of the Inspectorate's role is not directly involved with individual schools, inspectors are involved with schools in gathering the data through

evaluation and the policies that are developed are aimed at improvement at both system and school levels, thus reinforcing the argument for evaluation for improvement.

2.2.3 What Counts as Progress?

Having explored the purpose of evaluation and identified that is serves an accountability and improvement agenda within sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 it is necessary to address the question of what counts as progress and what is learned from the literature in terms of the conceptions of 'good', 'progress' and 'improvement'? This discussion is required as evaluation involves making a judgement on the quality of educational provision in a school (as defined in section 1.2). Quality in education is often described using these conceptions. When an inspector determines the quality of education in a school to be 'good', 'satisfactory', 'excellent' or otherwise, what does that mean? What measurements, instruments and indicators are used to inform those judgements? The measures of 'good', 'progress' and 'improvement' are value laden and serve some people and agendas over others. Within this section I will provide a brief overview of what I understand from the literature in terms of how quality in education is measured. I also identify the blindspots with particular measurements. I revisit this discussion again in section 3.7.1 under my positionality whereby I offer a rationale as to where I stand on judging quality in education. This literature on the conception of 'good' and 'quality' in education is returned to once again in chapter five when the findings are discussed in the context of the literature.

The last number of decades has seen a significant rise in attentiveness in the measurement of education, in the language of the educational measurement culture and the measurement of educational outcomes. Possibly, the most remarkable display of this phenomenon is evident in the international comparative studies such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). These

studies which often result in league tables are assumed to signal who is better and who is best. Findings from such studies are frequently used by governments to inform educational policy, repeatedly under the banner of ‘raising standards’ (Biesta, 2009). Learning from the literature shows that we live in an age in which discussions about education are overshadowed by measurement and comparisons of educational outcomes. There are serious limitations with this approach in that systems end up valuing what is measured rather than engaging in the measurement of what we value (Biesta, 2009; Fischman et al., 2006; Siegel, 2004; Sirotnik, 2002). Fischman et al (2006) argue that holding teachers accountable for meeting such educational outcomes is a frustrating matter for teachers. While governments, politicians and legislators often look at test scores, school retention rates, graduation statistics teachers ponder whether such quantitative indicators appropriately portray their most significant skills and abilities and the important work of schools.

The literature suggests that the various interested parties in education have different criteria for judging quality and have different agendas. The absence of clearly defined and agreed purposes and aims of education leads to the effect of an often tacit reliance on the most publicised view of what education is for or a ‘common sense’ view of it (Biesta, 2009, p.37). The leading example of a ‘common sense’ view about the purpose of education is the suggestion that what matters most is the academic achievement in a limited number of curriculum areas, specifically language, science and mathematics and why such attention is afforded to studies such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA.

Various interest groups are at cross purposes with each other and fail to agree on the same indicators of quality. These interest groups have different expectations for teachers’ work and differing opinions about how to determine success in education. A politician may only be interested in student scores, a government official maybe more focussed on student attendance and retention rates and unions may be only interested in the consistency of hours worked by

teachers. Although these stakeholders differ in their perspectives, they base their judgements on standardisations and fail to recognise what teachers see as their prime responsibility, the development of both the academic and personal needs of their students (Biesta, 2009; Fischman et al., 2006).

The rise of measurement culture in education has had an overwhelming impact on education policy, education practice, schools and teachers. The advantage of this rise in the measurement culture has enabled conversations on quality to be based on hard data rather than on assumptions and opinions. The obvious limitations are that the shape and direction of education cannot be solely based on such factual information. In order to bring values and purpose back to the discussion about quality in education, especially in situations (such as evaluation) in which measures features highly, the literature suggests that the question as to what constitutes good education is paramount. The values and purpose of education needs to be at the fore of the conversation (Biesta, 2009; Fischman et al., 2006; Siegel, 2004; Sirotnik, 2002). Some literature is in agreement with regard to some main components, indicators or measures of good quality education.

Good quality education involves students being active in the construction of knowledge and understanding and consists of a more facilitative role for the teacher. (Biesta, 2009). Quality education experiences comprise of learning being dependent on the activities of the student and not determined by inputs. It is concerned with the development of personal qualities and capacities such as those outlined in the Scottish national curriculum framework (2004) or the Primary School Curriculum (1999). These curricula specify the aims of good education to be enabling four capacities, that of the successful learner, the confident individual the responsible citizen and the effective contributor. Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) claim that what is emerging in the literature when describing good quality education is more concerned with pupils and students' emotional welfare. Good quality education provides children and young

people with the knowledge, skills, understanding, dispositions and judgment skills to enable them to engage with a modern world (Biesta, 2009). This 'qualification' function is undoubtedly one of the major purposes of education and when a system allows for development in these various components it could be classed as 'good quality' provision.

Fischman et al, (2006) suggests that good education involves creative teachers who build deep connections and relationships with students which in turns supports the students' deeper engagement in the learning process. They also suggest that quality education experiences involve connecting students to the wider world. Taking students on field trips opens their minds, develops curiosity and progresses their awareness of a wider world. What is particularly striking about Fischman et al's conclusions (2006) is that while teachers in their study identify the aforementioned themes in this paragraph as describing good quality education for their students they conclude that teachers find this hard to achieve. They describe that the increased measures and standardisations required in classrooms and tougher exam criteria leaves teachers in a quandary, how to achieve these high quality experiences for their students while also meeting the needs of what governments perceive as quality learning outcomes? The literature implies that what some stakeholders describe as the components of good quality is not recognised or prioritised by other stakeholders.

In this section a brief critique of the literature with respect to the conceptions of good, progress and improvement within education were presented. It suggests that significant attention is afforded to achievement in particular curricular areas such as languages, science and mathematics as a measure of what constitutes good quality in education. For the most part policy makers, politicians and those serving economic interests are mentioned in the literature as paying most attention to an outcomes approach to measurement of quality. It is also understood from the literature that the conception of good varies depending on various interested parties. Some stakeholders (including teachers) view the concept of good quality

education as being linked to the holistic development of the learner in which their social, emotional, spiritual, academic development are emphasised and learners are prepared for being good citizens of the their immediate and wider world. Some literature also claims that quality in education involves qualifying children and young people for the world of work by developing their knowledge, skills, attitudes, dispositions and judgement making skills.

The literature also shows that there are many blind spots when it comes to the measurements for gauging good quality education. Some factual based measures such as that of TIMMS, PIRLS, PISA are informed by a very narrow and philosophically uninformed view of education (Siegel, 2004). Siegel claims that a well-rounded and educated person is much more than a person who is able to function well in a particular set of assessments or who can function successfully in the workforce. But the latter is, in effect, the full vision of the well-educated person conceived by those who rely on the outcomes of high stakes tests to inform education policy. The literature agrees on one of the fundamental limitations of high stakes testing as a measure of gauging quality in that it is discriminatory because certain groups (for example, learners situated in more socio economically challenged areas) perform at a lower level or fail the test at a higher rate than others (Siegel, 2004; Sirotnik, 2002). Another issue is that systems, schools and teachers can become fixated on performing well in the high stakes tests and 'teach to the test' while ignoring the holistic elements of education. It is evident from the literature that measurements to assess quality in education needs to be robust enough to take account of the multifaceted elements of good quality education and not be confined to specific curriculum areas that are gauged by high stakes tests (Biesta, 2009). Evaluation and assessment systems should be about creating and using ways to collect information on teaching and learning and making appraisals or judgements on that information. Effective assessment methods to judge quality take time to develop and are not cheap. With the exceptions of economy and efficiency, there is little educational reasoning for using easily scored tests, and

by extension, lesser justification to make high stakes decisions based on the results of such tests. Sirotnik (2002) claims that there is much more to life in such complex organisations as schools that can be indicated by such narrow instruments and there is more to a human being than can be assessed by a few tests. He advises that a responsible evaluation and accountability system would be based on professional judgement using multiple indicators and assessments – both quantitative and qualitative and over extended periods of time. They evaluation system and indicators need to be sensitive to the needs of each individual and to the purposes and complexities of schooling, including contextual conditions, schooling processes and the outcomes of teaching and learning. I outline my stance on how quality is measured later on in section 3.7.1.

2.3 Forms of Evaluation

I consider the forms of evaluation in this section. External evaluation is the main focus of this research and so a review of literature in terms of what is understood regarding external evaluation is necessary. Internal evaluation is also discussed. The literature shows that there are some overlapping features between external and internal evaluation and then some characteristics that set them apart. I explore internal evaluation as it is recognised in the literature that effective systems combine both external and internal forms working together and so an understanding of both forms is warranted to fully appreciate evaluation in its completeness.

Evaluation as described by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is 'a general term used to describe any activity where the quality of provision is the subject of systematic study' (1989 p.1010). Scriven (1996) and Cullingford (1999) agree that, while evaluation is a new principle, it is a very old practice:

> The inspection of schools and other agencies seems like a fairly recent phenomenon, but the issues that it addresses are ancient. They are matters of power and control, of

> personal and public accountability. They invoke complex questions about the nature of evidence and the effects of change. There have always been questions about judgements, the significance of anecdotes and personal opinion, and the effects on other people. Judgements are always made, privately if not always publicly (Cullingford, 1999, p.1)

Eurydice's (2007) report on the forms of evaluation in European countries since the 1990s outlines three main organisational policies. Firstly, in most European countries, the authorities responsible for evaluating education (mainly Inspectorates) are also given responsibility for inspecting schools. This inspection is done either centrally or using a devolved approach. The criteria for evaluating schools have been standardised and form the basis for making judgements on quality. The second form, the devolved approach, involves schools being accountable to local authorities that play an important role in the evaluation process. This approach involves the development of national structures, standards and attainment tests to allow for local authorities' lack of experience in evaluation. Countries such as Denmark, Hungary, Belgium and the Netherlands utilise such standards and attainment tests in external evaluations. The third form of evaluation policy that Eurydice explores (2007) includes countries such as Italy and France that have remained at the fringes of external evaluation. These countries have moved toward more standardised evaluation systems, strongly promoting school self-evaluation.

While many researchers acknowledge the role that external evaluation plays in sustaining standards and upholding accountability, many studies disagree as to the best manner in which such evaluation should be conducted (Grubb, 1999; Nevo, 2001). The move towards a more decentralised approach to education and an increase in schools' autonomy has persuaded an increasing number of countries to establish more participatory and autonomous forms of evaluation. The rigour and objectivity of internal or self-evaluation have been

questioned (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2012). McNamara and O'Hara (2008) note that consumers and institutions require greater accountability, and as a result, governments are not in a rush to hand over control of schools as they endeavour to sustain standards and ensure accountability. This change has meant that Inspectorates and school authorities in many countries have had to explore ways in which external and internal evaluation can work together. In the next two sections I explore external evaluation and internal evaluation.

2.3.1 External Evaluation

Inspection, also known as external evaluation, is frequently discussed in the relevant literature. In this form of evaluation, external agents carry out judgements on the quality of the school or organisation. Almost all countries in Europe have some form of evaluation for schools. Although the functions and approaches to evaluation vary among countries, there are commonalities in the European context in that Inspectorates set expectations, gather evidence and make recommendations (MacRuairc, cited in Ottesen and Stephens, 2018). Wilcox and Gray (1996) suggest that inspection can be seen as a steering mechanism that takes over the life of the school. They provide a useful way of categorising inspection using four elements: evaluation, audit, disciplinary power and social action. Within the first category, 'evaluation', the use of quantitative methods with a dependence on statistics and scientific methods gives evaluation positivist characteristics. Evaluation regards procedures as being objective and that they consequently eliminate the risk of personal judgement. Regarding the 'audit' element, inspection involves making the internal workings of an organisation more apparent to the public. Performativity and normalisation are at the core of inspection as a 'disciplinary power,' which draws on the work of Foucault; the capacity of inspection to form judgements and to make enquiry. The final element of inspection, social action, uses Haberma's theory (1972) of communicative action. This theory perceives social action as being facilitated through language, within the context of two forms of social action: strategic and communicative.

Each of these perspectives suggests that inspection is a control mechanism. This view of inspection is shared by many others who have carried out research in the area or put forward theories of their own concerning inspection and its association with control (Cullingford, 1999; Pawson & Tilley cited in Blamey & Mackenzie, 2007; Power, 1997; Troman, 1997; Veugelers, 2004).

Feedback as part of the inspection process is viewed as strategic action and is provided using criteria of effectiveness. Some researchers and educators are highly critical of external evaluation and claim it is used increasingly to define and control every aspect of teaching and learning. McNamara and O'Hara suggest that "the obsession with uniformity, conformity, and accountability standards has seriously damaged the autonomy and morale of professionals and organisations" (2008, p.16). Hargreaves (1995) notes that many teachers feel degraded by evaluation processes that focus on uniformity and accountability and the apparent obligation it places on them to justify their professional existence and practices. Some theories contend that inspection negatively affects teachers' professionalism and development (Baxter, 2013; Stephens, cited in Ottesen & Stephens, 2018). Schön (1983) maintains that reflection is significant in teachers' professional development and can be learned and improved upon by supporting the identification of success in practice as well as areas for development. Reflection avoids practice becoming stagnant and means that knowledge is constantly developing, although the capacity to reflect on practice is difficult for many reasons (Johns, 2009).

There are difficulties identified with external evaluation supporting reflection; when evaluation adopts a performative approach to evaluating teaching and learning it can put demands on teachers working in busy environments and hamper reflection (Ball, 2012). Ozga suggests that the external evaluation process is "relentless" and "inescapable" (2009, p.154) and that it affords little time for reflective practice. Ottesen and Stephens (2018) state that, due to its connection to the accountability agenda, external evaluation does not allow teaching

practices to be developed in the classroom but demands instead evidence of a very good or excellent finished product. This, she claims, has consequences for reflective practice, with teachers prioritising making improvements in response to an externally imposed agenda rather than improvements that they consider to be important.

The literature also suggests an argument against the negative view of external evaluation. It contends that the beneficial influence that inspection has on school improvement is evident in research; a selection of studies showing the beneficial influence of inspections are available are available (Brimblecombe et al., 1996; Ehren & Visscher, 2008; Ouston et al., 1997; Russell, 1996; Woods & Jeffrey, 1998). There are very few empirical studies in the Irish context on this point, something I aim to address in the context of primary schooling. Studies by Fidler *et al.* (1996), Matthews and Sammons (2004, 2005) and Van Bruggen (2005) suggest that inspection plays a crucial role as a catalyst for change and development and has a positive effect on schools' quality and improvement. These studies also suggest that inspection provides schools with a starting point from which to work towards improvement. The studies claim that school inspections can provide a blend of pressure and improvement and that schools in these studies have generally found the process helpful to their development.

There are significant reasons offered for the current dominance of external forms of evaluation. Firstly, governments have a responsibility to ensure that young citizens receive a good quality education. Secondly, they have to ensure that schools are providing value for money. By establishing quality standards and evaluation criteria, external evaluation makes it possible to assess whether schools are reaching these benchmarks. Furthermore, external evaluation enables education departments to compare schools, thereby increasing transparency (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008).

Although most countries in the developed world mainly employ external forms of evaluation (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008), there have been moves in many countries in recent

years to develop internal evaluations models. Awareness of some negative effects of external evaluation has persuaded policy makers to put in place more autonomous forms of evaluation, such as internal evaluation, which I discuss in the subsequent section.

2.3.2 Internal Evaluation

As a result of research highlighting the limitations of external evaluation, there has been a move by many countries since the late 1980s and early 1990s to foster more innovative approaches to evaluation and so internal evaluation has been encouraged (MacBeath, 1999, 2006; Nevo, 2002; Stoll & Fink, 1996; Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2007).

MacRuairc, cited in Ottesen and Stephens (2018), notes that the terms 'school self-evaluation,' 'internal evaluation,' 'internal review' and 'internal audit' are often used synonymously and interchangeably to describe broadly similar systems. While external evaluation provides for an external agent to make judgements on school quality, in internal or self-evaluation the school's stakeholders carry out the evaluation. There is significant involvement by teachers and school staff (Meuret & Morlaix, 2003) and it requires schools to monitor themselves systematically.

MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) are advocates of self-evaluation and maintain that it is at the centre of systems' approaches to quality and quality assurance. He maintains that self-evaluation has two purposes: improvement and accountability (MacBeath, 2008). However, the literature suggests that a conflict arises when self-evaluation seeks to serve both purposes. Leung (2005) puts forward the view that school-self-evaluation for development and improvement requires teachers to be willing, enthusiastic, and committed to giving time and effort to it, as well as the autonomy to choose the form and dissemination of the report. It requires trust from governments and a high level of training for teachers and schools. Leung observes that accountability, on the other hand, means that external evaluators must identify

honestly the weaknesses of schools and publicly report them in their evaluations. The literature on school accountability (discussed previously in Section 2.2.1) suggests that such critical reports can spell serious consequences for the school. Leung (2005) has identified certain conditions that support the implementation of internal evaluation for both improvement and accountability. Firstly, there is a need to take the process slowly, and for teachers to be given time to be persuaded to change their beliefs. Secondly, an effective system for school self-evaluation involves negotiation whereby teachers are involved in the design of indicators rather than their being forced upon them. Finally, Leung suggests a combination of pressure and support. The burden of a demanding workload in terms of paperwork, meetings, and scheduling of classroom observations needs to be balanced by professional development and the selection of resources. The presence and commitment of senior management is also crucial to school self-evaluation.

Other studies suggest that internal evaluation has many benefits. Flynn (1992) contends from his review of literature in the area that practitioners who are most closely involved in their area of work and accustomed to their context are best placed to evaluate their practices and to make recommendations for improvement. He also suggests that greater participation enables practitioners to better understand the rationale for change and as a result, they are more likely to implement the recommendations. This is similar to Leithwood et al.'s (2001) view on self-evaluation that it provides teachers with opportunities to take control of aspects of their development and gives them a greater awareness, understanding, and assurance regarding the school's direction. Neil and Johnston's (2002) research on school-self-evaluation suggests that external evaluation investigates legal requirements regarding the running of schools as well as the school context and culture. They maintain that the power of self-evaluation lies in its capacity to pinpoint how to improve schools. It includes reflection on schools' aims, determining criteria for success, and confirming the most suitable methods for judging actions

within the school. MacBeath (1999) proposes that improvement is less likely to happen through externally mandated change than through the school's identification of its strengths and areas for development. Flynn (2002), Leithwood et al. (2001) and Neil and Johnston (2002) believe that teachers are more motivated by evaluation findings when they have been involved in creating the evaluation criteria and gathering the evidence on which judgement is based. Neil and Johnson (2002) and Flynn (2002) contend that within the self-evaluation approach, professional and organisational development takes precedence over accountability and teachers are facilitated to participate in reflection on aspects of their own practice. Elliot (2001) suggests that schools are very unpredictable and so trusting teachers to employ wisdom and judgement self-evaluation structures is wise. Darling-Hammond (2004) found that school self-evaluation enables schools to systematically gather data pertinent to their context and to use the data as a basis for vital reflection on its operation, supporting the setting of relevant targets for improvement and quality teaching and learning. Plowright (2007) and Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007) put forward the theory that school self-evaluation is more conducive than external evaluation to the development of school improvement. This section on internal evaluation shows there are many benefits to it as a form of evaluation, among them, and relevant to this research is that it supports reflection between teachers, supports a rationale for change and is conducive to school improvement. In this research I aspire to find out if external evaluation can have such effects on teachers' growth and development.

Despite the arguments highlighting the benefits of internal evaluation, there are also some criticisms associated with it. One of the major limitations suggested is the issue of objectivity and the competence and willingness of teachers to evaluate their practices. Vanhoof *et al.* (2009) have found teachers wary of the time implications of self-evaluation and that they regarded it less favourably than principals did. In the next section I explore both systems i.e. external and internal evaluation working together.

2.3.3 External and Internal Evaluation Combined

In the previous two sections, the literature on external and internal evaluation showed that there are benefits, as well as limitations, to each approach. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that there is a range of literature that suggests that a combination of both forms of evaluation is necessary to satisfy the accountability and improvement requirements of evaluation. Nevo maintains that 'both systems should exist because we need both and because they might even benefit from each other' (2002, p.6). Some literature proposes that external evaluation complements internal evaluation and vice versa. Firstly, it is claimed, external evaluation prompts schools to engage in internal evaluation (Nevo, 2001). There are also views from both empirical studies and from more general educational commentary that, in instances where schools have good self-evaluation procedures in place, external evaluation need not be as detailed as it might otherwise need to be (Fitzgibbon, 1996; Mathews, 2010; McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; Simons, 2002). Secondly, some literature suggests that external evaluation enables self-evaluation to be more thorough and effective. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007) contend that, while internal evaluation can be more intuitive to the needs of the school, without external evaluation there is a lack of objectivity and a school can suffer from 'organisational blindness' (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2007, p.107). Finally, Coleman (2007), Neil and Johnson (2002) and Nevo (2002) maintain that external evaluation confirms the effectiveness of internal evaluation and can provide a seal of approval for internal evaluation.

The literature also suggests that internal evaluation enhances external evaluation. As Nevo has noted, "internal evaluation will protect external evaluation from becoming too simplistic, it will create a more positive attitude toward evaluation within the school, and this makes external evaluation less of a threat to teachers and other school evaluators" (2006, p.457). I indicated in the previous sections that external evaluation is often criticised for being too narrowly focused in its endeavour to form generalisations about schools, often resulting in

inspectors addressing generic system issues rather than contextualising the evaluation to the needs of the school. The use of school data generated from internal evaluation can also add validity and reliability to the results of external evaluation (Brown, 2013). Nevo (2002) states that the use of such an internal perspective can contribute valuably to external evaluation. Finally, a study by MacBeath and McGlynn (2002) finds that schools that have a well-developed system of internal evaluation welcome an external perspective because it celebrates and affirms their efforts and they welcome such a critical and impartial eye. The authors contend that a major limitation of external evaluation is that schools either accept or reject its findings and, therefore, may not implement the changes it deems necessary. If schools have well-developed reflective and self-evaluation skills, they are better equipped to understand external evaluation findings.

It is therefore evident that both internal and external evaluation are important, and that one cannot exist without the other. Livingstone and McCall (2005) have found that the development of internal evaluation has not led to a substantial decrease in the influence of external evaluation; the latter continues to play a crucial role in promoting a culture of self-evaluation in schools (Earley, 1998). It is evident that there are important connections between both forms of evaluation. It is therefore worthwhile to explore whether external evaluation prompted teachers to engage in self-evaluation, and, if so, if teachers felt their work in self-evaluation within the school was affirmed by external evaluation. These questions will be addressed to some extent within my study.

In this section I dealt with the forms of evaluation. A significant feature of evaluation (external or internal) is feedback and it warrants exploration within the literature. For this research, it is important to understand what has been learned from the literature regarding effective feedback and its effect on individuals, teachers and schools. In addition, it is necessary

to ascertain when feedback has no effect or negative effect why this might be the case. I delve into feedback in this regard and its connection with evaluation in the following section.

2.4 Evaluation and Feedback

The function of school inspection as feedback is recognised in the international literature (Ball, 1998, 2008; Perryman, 2006, 2007, 2009; Thrupp, 1998) and has been found in various studies (Ehren & Visscher, 2006; Matthews and Sammon, 2004) to be a crucial aspect of the external evaluation/inspection process. For these reasons, feedback warrants particular attention in the process of reviewing the literature.

Feedback can have a powerful influence on learning and achievement and plays a critical role in individuals' learning success (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 2009). Mory, as cited in Poulos and Mahony offers a simple definition: 'feedback is communication that provides a significant function in knowledge acquisition' (2008, p.144). Knight and York, cited in Poulos and Mahony maintain that: 'feedback must indicate how the learner (the teacher within the context of this study) can develop in his or her future work' (2008, p.144). Henderson et al. (2019) contend that certain conditions facilitate effective feedback. They propose twelve conditions, among them the need for feedback to be detailed, specific and actionable. Their studies also show the need for learners to be active in the feedback process and that any advice should be tailored to the needs of the individual or organisation. They contend that, for effective feedback to occur, there should be provisions in place to ensure consistency.

Ehren and Visscher (2006) put forward the idea that strategies are useful to evaluation feedback. They include identifying the progress made, the ability level and what performance issues have arisen. They contend that feedback should be provided as the evaluation progresses, and should incorporate critical dialogue so that the inspector and the teacher/school can learn from each other. Ehren and Visscher (2006) suggest that the feedback process should include

an oral presentation of the report before the written report is finalised. A right of reply should also be included to alleviate fears that the report is about to be cast in stone. They also suggest that the report's language should be carefully chosen since misuse of language can cause misinterpretations and negative reactions from teachers and school personnel. Ehren and Visscher conclude that feedback should engender positive relations among the school community, raise morale and make careful use of school data for classroom decision-making. It should take cognisance of school factors, including willingness to change and previous success in implementing innovative practices.

Studies have identified that feedback by inspectors during the inspection process benefits the improvement aspect of evaluation, yet also acknowledge that giving and receiving feedback can be complex (Brimblecombe et al., 1996; Ehren & Visscher, 2008). These studies conclude that schools use the feedback provided during inspection to improve their practices and that they continue to carry out improvements up to six months after the evaluation. MacBeath and McGlynn (2002) believe that schools can be blind to areas that need improvement and have difficulty looking beyond their perspectives. External inspection can give beneficial feedback to schools by gauging them against similar schools and by sharing ideas and innovative practices that have worked elsewhere. Studies also identify that feedback is important to teachers (Russell, 1996; Woods & Jeffrey, 1998). It fulfils their desire to be well thought of and, for some teachers, it is the first time that someone has recognised the value of their teaching (Woods & Jeffrey, 1998). This suggests that some teachers, at least, find feedback in the inspection process affirming.

According to Matthews and Sammons (2004), trust is an important starting point for inspections to have a positive effect on school improvement. There is a range of research that suggests that, when teachers perceive inspectors' feedback as fair, informed, relevant, clear and explicit, they are more likely to be positive about the inspection experience (Mathews &

Sammons, 2004). Other empirical studies emphasise the importance of how feedback is delivered (Dedering & Muller, 2011; Dobblelaer, Prins & Van Dongen, 2013). Vollmeyer and Rheinberg's (2005) empirical study on the effects of feedback concludes that a positive feedback style considerably increases the likelihood of agreement with the feedback given and the implementation of actions that lead to improvement. Shute (2008) and Fengler (2010) conclude from reviews of research on feedback that, for it to be successful, feedback should relate to specific behaviour, including possibilities for improvement and being objective. Ehren and Visscher (2006) put forward a similar theory that inspectors' feedback should produce a positive relationship between teachers and pupils, concentrate on a small number of teaching and learning goals, and raise morale. They note, as do other studies, that it is important to take school factors and contexts into account when delivering feedback (Carlbaum, 2016; Gartner & Pant, 2011; McCrone *et al*., 2007; Wilcox & Gray, 1994).

MacBeath (1999) offers the theory that establishing credibility and faith in the inspectors' carrying out the evaluation and providing feedback is an important prerequisite for inspection to bring about improvement. Empirical studies show that the experience, knowledge and expertise of those providing the feedback affect how their advice is received and acted upon (Dean, 1995; Gartner and Pant, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Ladden, 2015; Mathews, 2010). These studies suggest that teachers feel better about inspection and feedback when the inspectors who provide it have relevant teaching experience or expertise. In these studies, teachers expressed concern regarding the credibility of inspectors with a secondary school background inspecting in a primary school context, and of inspectors who had no experience teaching new curriculum programmes that had been implemented since they joined the Inspectorate. MacRuairc in Ottesen and Stephens (2018) puts forward the theory that the legitimacy of the inspector making the judgements is significant. MacRuairc explains Eisner's (Lindgren et al., 2012) two models of how inspectors' judgements gain legitimacy: the expert

or educational connoisseur model and the regulatory or evidence-based model (MacRuairc in Ottesen & Stephens, 2018, p.13). He explains that, within the former model, professional judgments depend on the background, training and experience of the inspector; judgments are neither technical nor objective but are replete with experience, emotion and metaphor (MacRuairc in Ottesen & Stephens, 2018, p.13). Within the regulatory or evidence-based model, the quality of evaluation instruments maintains reliability and stability, inspectors' judgments are founded on norms and standards, and personal values and ideas are disregarded (MacRuairc in Ottesen & Stephens, 2018). It is apparent from this section that feedback plays a fundamental role in evaluation. There are ways it should be delivered for maximum effect and it is also obvious that the style of who is delivering the feedback is also important. In this research I hope to shine some further light on how teachers experience feedback as part of the evaluation process.

In the next section of the literature review I will provide an overview of evaluation policy in Ireland and explain which forms of evaluation are in use, thereby providing the context for this research.

2.5 Evaluation in the Irish Context

In Section 2.3, I explored the two main forms of evaluation – external and internal evaluation – and the strengths and shortcomings of each one were discussed. The literature suggests that both forms working together complement each other and cannot exist without each other. In this section I trace the development of evaluation policy in Ireland with a particular focus on external evaluation which is the subject of my study. It would appear from the policy documents that I explore in this section that Irish schools operate in the context of an external and internal evaluation policy (Ottesen & Stephens, 2018, p.55), with external evaluation dominating the past and the present and school self-evaluation gaining momentum since 2004.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the evaluation of early-year settings, primary and post-primary schools, and centres for education. It carries out a range of evaluations in such settings and is responsible for advising and supporting them. Inspectors are former teachers or early-year practitioners, and many have also worked as school principals, deputy principals, or advisors with school support services. Others have experience in curriculum design and the implementation of assessment practices in school management or educational research (www.gov.ie).

2.5.1 Inspection Policy in Ireland

Table 1 (below) is included to outline the major policy documents and guidelines that shape internal and external evaluation policy in Ireland which are my focus for this section. The table includes the legislation that gives evaluation its statutory status and preceding paper. It also includes the inspection frameworks and guidelines used in previous decades which were reviewed to inform the current guides and frameworks for evaluation at primary level. Currently, external evaluation is the dominant form of evaluation, with many different models including whole school evaluation (WSE). The introduction of school self-evaluation has been the biggest change in recent times (MacRuairc, cited in Ottesen & Stephens, 2018). Since the publication in 1995 of Charting our Education Future, the Government's White Paper on Education, there has been a renewed focus on evaluation in Irish education. Previously, inspection in the primary sector was infrequent (McNamara & O'Hara, 2012) and the capacity of the Inspectorate (according to the OECD) was 'far from being tapped' (1991, p.44). The White Paper heralded the development of the school evaluation system in Ireland within a broad framework of school improvement, system improvement, and accountability. Section 13 of the Education Act (1998) outlines the functions of the Irish Inspectorate and provides the legal basis for inspection in Ireland. It sets out the responsibility of the Minister for Education regarding quality assurance within the education system. It identifies three main objectives of

the Inspectorate: contributing to evaluation; contributing to development; and support of the education system. Hislop perceives that school inspectors are charged with fulfilling 'both improvement and accountability functions' (2017, p.13). The Cromien Report (2000), an internal report commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills, recognised evaluation (inspection and whole school evaluation) and policy development as the main functions of the Inspectorate (Coolahan & O'Donovan, 2009).

The Professional Code of Practice on Evaluating and Reporting for the Inspectorate (Department of Education and Science, 2002) specified the guiding principles of the work of the Inspectorate. They included: fostering mutual respect and trust as the basis of a positive professional relationship between inspectors and the school community; promoting partnership and collaboration through the involvement of the school community in the evaluation process; and engaging in discussion with school staff and education partners. The Code noted that inspectors are obliged to ensure that teachers receive a fair and accurate evaluation of their work. The Code was reviewed in 2015 to align with the wider range of inspection models that had developed since 2002 and is underpinned by four key principles. These include:

1. A focus on learners
2. Development and improvement
3. Respectful engagement
4. Responsibility and accountability

The Code states that the Inspectorate is committed to carrying out inspections that offer opportunities to affirm good practices and to provide practical advice to individual teachers, principals and boards of management to improve learning experiences and outcomes for pupils. The Education Act (1998) identifies accountability and improvement as the main purposes of evaluation in Ireland, while the Code of Practice suggests that the Irish Inspectorate focuses not just on development and improvement but also responsibility and accountability.

Table 1

Development of Evaluation Policy in Ireland (Primary Level)

Date	Publication
1995	Government White Paper on Education '*Charting our Education Future'*
1998	The Education Act 1998
2002	The Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate
2003	*Looking at Our School: 'An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools'*
2006	*A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary/Post-Primary Schools*
2012	School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools
2012	Circular 0039/2012 (Department of Education and Skills circular requiring all schools to engage in SSE)
2013	A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation – Management Leadership and Learning in Primary School
2015	Code of Practice for the Inspectorate
2016	A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools
2016	Looking at Our Schools 2016 - A Quality Framework for Primary Schools
2016	School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 (Primary)
2016	Circular 0039/2016 (Department of Education and Skills circular requiring all schools to engage in SSE)
2018	Circular 0070/2018 (Department of Education and Skills circular regarding leadership and management in Primary Schools)

2.5.2 Evaluation Framework – Looking at our Schools (LAOS)

In this section I explore the development of the current evaluation framework for schools. The DES produced Looking at our School: An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary/Post Primary Schools (LAOS) in 2003. The purpose of this document was to facilitate the inclusion of self-evaluation as a central feature of the planning process in schools. The document outlined five key areas of evaluation, which were further subdivided into 143 'themes for self-evaluation'. The aim was that schools would evaluate themselves by reference to the main

themes, gathering evidence and rating themselves on a four-point continuum. This internal evaluation would then be used by the Inspectorate during whole-school evaluation. It was not without its challenges, for example, MacNamara and O'Hara (2012) claim that, within LAOS, there is an assumption that teachers have the skills and resources to gather the appropriate evidence and make judgments under the selected themes. It lacked the provision of necessary training for school leaders and teachers on how to achieve successful implementation of the framework.

The Inspectorate reviewed LAOS in 2016 and published Looking at our School: A Quality Framework for Primary and Post Primary Schools which is now the Inspectorate's framework for evaluation in primary and post-primary schools. It was developed to reinforce both school self-evaluation and school inspection. The framework was designed to give a clear picture to schools on what good or very good practices in a school looks like within the two main areas of Leadership and Management and Teaching and Learning.

2.5.3 External Evaluation in Ireland

In this component of the literature review I outline external evaluation policy and the current approach to external evaluation in Ireland with a particular focus on the whole-school evaluation (WSE) model and Follow-Through (FT) model which are the relevant to this study. A new approach and model of inspection, whole-school evaluation (WSE), was introduced in 1998 and 1999 in consultation with the education partners and replaced the Tuairiscí Scoile model of inspection. It focused on three dimensions in schools: the quality of teaching and learning, school management, and school planning. Partnership was now considered central to policy formation and decision making in the Irish education system (Department of Education and Science, 1999, p.12) and so a transparent partnership approach was adopted at every stage of the model's development (McNamara et al., 2002). WSE was piloted in 1998 and 1999. Overall, there was positive feedback among teachers about the pilot of the WSE, particularly

primary teachers. The pilot also showed that teachers were less confident about the effects of WSE on future development in schools than about how it was carried out (Department of Education and Skills, 1999). The pilot was also the subject of anxiety among teachers in the weeks before evaluation, and they expressed the view that evaluation did not take school context into account.

WSE commenced in 2004 and quickly became one of the most widely used forms of external inspection by the Inspectorate in primary and post-primary schools. The process was designed to, 'monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the State by recognised schools and centres of education' (Department of Education and Skills, 1998, Section 7 (2) (b)). Reports arising from WSE have been published on the Department of Education and Skill's Website (www.gov.ie) since 2006.

The 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) caused significant concern about falling student attainment in reading, mathematics, and science in Ireland. This concern caused unease regarding the quality of teaching and learning in these subject areas and prompted a political and public desire for greater transparency and accountability (Hall and Horgan, 2015). In 2011 the Department of Education published the National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 (DES, 2011). This strategy set out the Department's vision, targets, and actions for raising standards in literacy and numeracy against a background of the 2009 PISA conclusions. Among the actions included was improved assessment and evaluation to support better learning in these subject areas. Although the drivers about literacy and numeracy were distinct from evaluation, the new National Strategy emphasised literacy and numeracy in both internal and external evaluation. Ó Breacháin and O'Toole (2013) suggest that this new emphasis serves a political rather than a pedagogical agenda. It has led to concerns (previously identified in Chapter One and Section 2.2.1.1) that

what is easily measured is valued, rather than endeavouring to find more innovative ways to measure what might be more valuable (Hargreaves & Braun, 2013).

Since 2012, the Irish system has significantly enhanced its inspection programme and schools identified as being underperforming are more likely to be monitored by the Inspectorate (Jones et al., 2017). Over the past two decades, school evaluation policy and practice have evolved to comprise "accountability, benchmarking, deregulation, decentralisation, value for money, quality assurance" (Brown et al., 2016(a), p.4). Some observers claim that evaluation is now a form of governance that involves criteria that are externally imposed rather than internally generated (Brady, 2016). Others maintain that the focus on accountability and transparency has benefitted schools, teachers and the public and has led to school improvement (Coolahan et al., 2017). Ireland is moving towards a more risk-based approach to evaluation rather than a cyclical or chronological approach to selecting schools for inspection; risk-based means the collection and use of data to identify risks of failure within schools (Gray, 2014).

The introduction of a greater range of inspection models including, short, unannounced incidental inspection, specific evaluations that focus on one area of the curriculum (curriculum evaluations), follow-through evaluation and WSEs has meant the Inspectorate adopts a risk-based approach to inspection. Information and data can now be gathered in shorter evaluation models to identify risks of failure that may exist in teaching practices or student learning (DES, 2013a). Further, more intensive inspections can be conducted in schools where such risks are identified. Within these evaluations, inspectors provide teachers with feedback on their practices and identify areas for development that need to be addressed. This developmental aspect of the risk-based approach to evaluation supports the argument for evaluation for improvement within the Irish context.

In 2016, the Inspectorate published its Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools. The Guide provides an overview of the approaches taken to inspection in primary schools across the seven inspection models currently in use:

- Incidental Inspection
- Curriculum Evaluation
- Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs
- Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools
- Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning
- Whole-School Evaluation
- Follow-through Inspection.

The focus within this research has been on teachers' experiences of Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) and Follow-through Inspection. WSE-MLLs focus on five key questions:

1. How good are the learning achievements of pupils?
2. How good is the teaching?
3. How is the well-being of pupils supported?
4. How effective are school leadership and management?
5. How effective is school self-evaluation and how well is it being used to improve learning, teaching, leadership and management? (A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools, DES, 2016b)

WSE-MLL focuses strongly on the quality of teaching and learning. Most of the in-school evaluation time is spent in classroom and learning settings. The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons being taught, the effectiveness of teaching approaches and methodologies, classroom organisations, and how well pupils are managed. WSE-MLL also concentrates on how pupils are supported and how assessment information is utilised to support

teaching and learning (A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools, DES, 2016b). Feedback is provided to individual teachers after classroom observations, and the school staff and members of the school's board of management and parents' association. A written report is issued to the school in the weeks following the evaluation and provides an opportunity for the school to factually verify that the contents are accurate and to provide a formal response if it wishes. Under Section 13 (9) of the Education Act (1998), there is a procedure available for anyone in the school who feels affected by the contents of the report or the way the evaluation was conducted and who wishes to appeal the evaluation. During WSE-MLL, inspectors evaluate the quality of school provision using the quality continuum (Table 2), which provides descriptive terms that the inspector may choose from. The school does not receive a single overall judgement of quality; rather, judgements are provided on the various dimensions of the school such as leadership and management, teaching and learning, and supports for pupils. The quality of teaching of any one teacher is not judged or reported upon within WSE, the school is evaluated as a unit.

Table 2

Quality Continuum Levels

Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Weak

Follow-through inspections take place to evaluate the progress the school has made in implementing the main recommendations from the evaluation. It is a newer feature of the system, in which in previous times the need for action to follow inspection was more morally based than contractually based (Eurydice, 2015). Inspectors provide feedback to individual teachers and school management after a follow-through evaluation and the report is published following the same procedure described above for WSE-MLL. Inspectors judge the quality of improvement using a four-point scale: very good progress, good progress, partial progress, or no progress. Is it these two models of external inspection that the teachers who are the subject

of this research experienced and my research proposes to fill the gap about how teachers experience these evaluation processes

2.5.4 Research on Evaluation in Ireland

Little research has been undertaken regarding evaluation in Ireland, and, in particular, on external evaluation and its effects on schools' performance and teachers. I provide a summary of what research has taken place in this section. Empirical research by MacNamara and O'Hara (2005, 2006) suggests that the WSE process is positive, affirming and supportive for teachers and schools. Inspection reports were found by school personnel to be fair and helpful, that evaluation provides a focus for schools, and that it has value in terms of increased cohesion and collegiality. Research at that time also showed that schools had not yet adopted self-evaluation or the concept of gathering school data on which to base evaluative judgements. In a later publication, McNamara and O'Hara (2008) present schools' experiences of external evaluation. They report that the initial efforts of WSE were successful and perceived positively by schools and stakeholders. Again, however, they find a lack of data from which to inform judgments was a limitation of the process. In addition, MacNamara and O'Hara (2008, p.78) maintained that there was a reluctance among inspectors to report on serious issues in schools. Reid (2006) suggests that WSE adopted a 'softly, softly' approach to evaluation. In a case study on the emergence of evaluation culture in the public sector, with the focus on education in Ireland, McNamara et al. (2009) conclude that the form of evaluation that had by then emerged was consensual, collaborative and negotiated. McNamara and O'Hara (2008) found that teachers were critical of the WSE feedback that inspectors provided. They report that teachers found it too general or impractical, with no system in place by the Department to follow up on the recommendations. In addition, they found that inspectors were determined to stick to the evaluation framework and that they adopted a rigid approach to their work that affected the quality of the advice and support; there was no scope for spontaneity to report on the unique

aspects of a particular school (2008, p.92). It was learned in the introduction within the rationale for the study that there is limited research into the effects of evaluation on teachers, with many doctoral theses having been completed over ten years ago and focused on the post-primary sector. Within the Irish context most research appears to have been completed over a decade ago. I hope to ascertain if some of the issues which were highlighted about evaluation still persist, to establish if some successes have been achieved by teachers as a result of evaluation or if new challenges for evaluation and teachers have emerged since previous studies.

I explore what the literature suggests in terms of its effects on schools, their performance and teachers in the following section.

2.6 Research on the Effects of Evaluation

This section of the literature review examines in detail what inspection means for schools' performance and teachers. Many of the authors that will be encountered in this discussion agree that research on the effects of evaluation is limited. Research on the effects on teachers' practice is even sparser. The literature suggests a gap in this regard, a gap I endeavour to fulfil through this research study by focusing on the effects of external evaluation on teachers' practice in a cohort of primary schools in Ireland.

The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) recognised the narrow range of research on the effects of inspection/evaluation. It researched what was published regarding such effects in an attempt to identify what could be learned from the publications. It examined 235 journals on education and educational research and found approximately 176 relevant articles. One of the main findings that emerged was that many of the studies are published in English and describe systems in a small number of countries/regions including the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Finland, Flanders, Germany, Norway and the Czech Republic. Four main fields were examined: school improvement, student achievement results,

unintended consequences of inspection and perceptions of evaluations by teachers (SICI, 2019).

The cost, benefits and potential effects of inspection on schools–that is to say, on teachers and their students' performance–have been the focus of argument and discussion for many years. Research does not provide a clear answer to the question of whether inspections affect quality in these areas (De Wolf and Janssens, 2007; Jones and Tymms, 2014; Penninckx et al., 2016; Whitby, 2010). As far back as 1985, Winkey wrote, 'there is no evident relationship between inspectorial visits and the excellence of schools' (1985, p11).

As alluded to in Section 2.2.2, some research shows that evaluation supports improvement in schools and also a body of research that suggests that it has limited or no effect on improvement. In the following section I explore what the literature suggests about the effects that evaluation has on teachers and their students' performance. It suggests, variously, that evaluation has no effect/inconclusive evidence, a positive effect, and, in some instances, a negative effect.

2.6.1 No Effect on Teachers and Their Students' Performance or Inconclusive Evidence

Hopkins et al. (1999) noted that the occasional nature of inspection means that it does not contribute to the quality of education in schools. More broadly, a range of research from the UK suggests that it is risky to presume any kind of link between inspection and school improvement (Boyne et al., 2002; Cullingford, 1999). Empirical studies carried out by Cullingford and Daniels (1999) and Ousten and Davies (1998) support the argument that inspection does little to support improvement. Ouston and Davies (1998) researched 55 schools evaluated between 1993 and 1996. They found that the link between inspection and change in teaching practices was inconclusive. Similarly, Cullingford and Daniels (1999) tracked the performance of GCSE results within 426 schools inspected over four years. They found less improvement in GCSE during the years they were inspected than in the years they were not.

Studying evidence from OFSTED inspections, Perryman's (2005) case study examined the effects of 'special measures' on a school within the two years following evaluations. The term 'special measures' refers to schools under Ofsted's jurisdiction when they consider the school has failed to provide an acceptable standard of teaching, has poor facilities, or otherwise fails to meet the minimum standards for education set by the government and other agencies or when they judge the school lacks the leadership capacity amongst its management to ensure improvements. A school subject to special measures has regular short-notice Ofsted inspections to monitor its improvement (Ofsted, 2021). Perryman found that, although the series of evaluations improved the school in areas such as literacy and numeracy in the short term, it then reverted to its prior standards in these areas. While undergoing 'special measures,' the school was subjected to several inspections within a very short timeframe. The disciplinary power of these inspections greatly affected the school staff, who felt they were constantly under scrutiny. The school was finally freed from special measures when its self-evaluation plan and planning documentation satisfied Ofsted's criteria for inspection, at which point the school management took over from the inspectors. Perryman (2009) maintains that improvement under this 'panopticon' system ('panopticon' being Bentham's (1787) term for an all-seeing penal surveillance system) is not sustainable since the desire for improvement is merely external, with disciplinary power 'making schools conform to what is seen as school effectiveness' (2009, p.611). Perryman claims that, when improvement is dependent on the 'the gaze' of an inspector, it is difficult to maintain such improvement once 'the gaze' is no longer present. She proposes a mix of internal and external evaluation approaches as a better solution, in which the school takes on responsibility for its development. Conclusions drawn from research carried out in schools by Neil and Johnson (2002) and from theoretical research by Flynn (1992) concur with Perryman in this respect. These authors found that schools are more likely to persist with practices and systems that they initiate.

The literature also suggests that evaluation has a limited effect on teachers' practices and is therefore inadequate for achieving improvement in classrooms. Findings from both theoretical and empirical research question the effectiveness of evaluation in improving teachers' practices (Brunsden et al., 2006; De Wolf and Janssens, 2007; Grubb, 1999; Learmonth, 2000; Leeuw, 2003). Some of this literature claims that evaluation takes teachers' and head teachers' attention away from the fundamentals of teaching practice since they focus on preparing for the inspection and are thereby distracted. Case et al. (2000) conclude that inspections, despite their intensity for the teachers in their case study due to the need for planning and preparation for evaluation and responding to feedback, had no lasting effects on their teaching practices one year following the inspection. In the following section, I reference literature that makes the claim that evaluation has a negative impact on teachers and their students' performance.

2.6.2 Negative Effects on Teachers and Their Students' Performance

Some literature suggests that the effect of evaluation on teachers is largely negative. It leaves little doubt that inspections are demanding and stressful events for teachers. A significant number of empirical studies and theoretical perspectives suggest that evaluation evokes strong emotional responses among teachers and that it induces them to engage in both well-meaning and less honourable behaviour. For example, Shaw et al. (2003) analysed results from more than 3,000 schools over five years. They found that external evaluation had a consistently negative effect on achievement in the largest number of schools. I provide detail in the subsequent three sections in relation to the main themes under negative effects.

2.6.2.1 Gaming the System. MacBeath (2004a) maintains that an impending inspection is a time for schools to set aside learning and focus on tactical manoeuvres that will impress and outwit their visitors. MacBeath contends that inspection preparation is an

overriding obsession for some schools. Much empirical research suggests that schools and teachers deliberately engage in strategic behaviour in response to inspection (Brimblecombe et al., 1995; Case et al., 2000; De Wolf and Janssens, 2007; Perryman, 2009). Thus, schools and teachers intentionally engage in behaviours to provide a better image of the school and their teaching practices, and, in some cases, mislead inspectors in the process.

According to De Wolf and Janssens (2007) and Smith (1995), strategic behaviour to gain benefits includes window dressing, fraud, gaming and misrepresentation. Window dressing means applying procedures and practices that do not reflect school processes but are implemented to be evaluated positively by inspectors in their inspection reports. Other examples of window dressing behaviour are performing during the inspection and pre-planning inspection arrangements among teachers to hide various practices. Perryman (2006) concludes that this behaviour by teachers and schools prevents inspectors from seeing actual teaching practice because of the sheer extent of stage management, game playing, performance and cynicism that is being engaged in.

These strategic behaviours have been widely observed in studies (Ball, 2001; Burns, 2000; Chapman, 2002; De Wolf & Janssens; 2007). In Chapman's study a teacher told the researchers that OFSTED inspectors had failed to capture many significant issues of teaching practice due to the principal's strategic behaviour:

> Senior teams reported that they attempted to minimise their vulnerability to variability of inspection teams or poor timing of an inspection through rigorous planning and thorough preparation of staff…One middle manager reported 'they are critical times for the head and he will do everything in his power to present the school in its best light. (2002, p.21)

This behaviour was also evident in Burns' study. Teachers interviewed in it reported, 'I think OFSTED week was like a performance…a play and we acted very, very well…it wasn't the

real school' (2000, p.26). Wilcox and Gray have made similar observations. They describe an inspection week thus:

> The school's performance during the inspection week is a more chancy affair. It is subject to subtleties and vagaries of the key participants, the extent to which the teachers 'rehearse' and the coherence of the teachers and senior managers 'direction.' What emerges, pursuing the metaphor of the drama, is a 'performance'. That performance is the product of numerous interactions between teachers, pupils and inspectors, each of which is subject to interpretation. Circumstances may well arise in which the (mis)interpretation of nuance upon nuance results in an inappropriate picture given of the whole institution (1996, p.56).

Other studies have suggested that schools engage in intensive training programmes and CPD to prepare for the inspected delivery of lessons. In Plowright's study on the effects of evaluation, a head teacher admitted: 'we'd trained our staff well. We used one or two tricks that we knew would go down well' (2007, p.382). Mathews and Sammons (2004) found that some schools produced two self-evaluation reports: a working document for their purposes and a more favourable one for inspection.

Studies have found that teachers implement more formal approaches and methodologies during inspection observations to obtain more favourable reports and feedback (Case et al., 2000; Hardy, 2012; Perryman, 2006). They also suggest that teachers make sudden changes to the physical school and classroom environments on being notified about an inspection and throughout the inspection itself, and have found evidence of enhanced displays and classroom organisation in advance of inspections (Barber, 2004; Lefstein, 2013; Penninckx et al., 2015). Perryman (2009) labels such practices as fabrication of the stage. In her study, preparing the stage went further than enhancing the physical environment. She suggests that members of middle and senior school management played a game throughout the inspection

process. This game involved teaching lessons in a particular manner and exhibiting the correct documentation, with teachers and school management suppressing negative thoughts and comments and even hiding some pupils during the evaluation process. Another study has found that some pupils who were unusually challenging to deal with were placed on school trips on inspection days (Duffy, 2005). Mac Beath (2004b) claims that there were some reports of less capable teachers being replaced during inspection week or that it was arranged that they were not present for the evaluation. Empirical studies on the No Child Left Behind initiative in the United States found that schools shifted resources towards students and subjects that were most critical to the accountability rating (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Reback, 2008; Neal & Whitmore Schanzenbach, 2010), taught to the test (Figlio & Getzler 2002) and cheated by removing low-performing students from the testing pool (Figlio & Getzler 2002; Cullen & Reback, 2006). In section 2.5.4 I discussed that there was little research into the effects of evaluation in Ireland, however, the research that has been carried out finds that teacher were negatively impacted upon as a result of evaluation. It is clear from studies by Dillon (2011), Griffin (2010), Mathews (2010) and MacNamara (2002) that evaluation caused stress, anxiety, tension and fear.

2.6.2.2 When Evaluation is a Negative Distraction. In this section I discuss findings in literature that suggest that evaluation can be a negative interruption. Distraction from normal school life and planning can occur due to the notification, conduct or even aftermath of a school inspection. According to De Wolf and Janssens (2007), the assessor and/or the approach used for the assessment can trigger a one-sided emphasis by the school on the elements of teaching practice that are being evaluated. Thus the performance measurement scheme becomes flawed, and the actions involved in adjusting the performance measure lead to schools engaging in undesirable strategic behaviour. Ehren (2016) calls this type of strategic behaviour ‘sub-optimisation.’ It occurs when schools focus on specific areas that will be inspected while neglecting the objectives of the school as a whole. Examples of such behaviour have been

documented in various empirical studies (Barber, 2004; Chuckle et al., 1998; McCrone *et al.*, 2007; Nees, 2006; Rosenthal, 2004; Yeung, 2012). Hence, schools emphasise practices that are quantified in the performance measurement scheme at the expense of unquantifiable aspects of performance. Such behaviours include school staff overlooking their primary responsibilities and postponing, or even ignoring, their priorities to prepare for the evaluation (McCrone et al., 2007). Barber (2004) and Rosenthal (2004) claim that this distracting and unnecessary level of preparation drives teachers away from lesson planning, preparation and delivery, while Yeung (2012) has found that inspection preparation distracts principals from the core business of leading a school.

In the period post-inspection, actions related to the implementation of recommendations can reduce the attention given to other areas (Cuckle *et al.*, 1998; Nees, 2006). For example, McCrone et al. cite a teacher in whose school the teachers and principal had placed such emphasis on reading recommended in the inspection that it was at the cost of writing, 'We've cured the reading problem, but now we can't write' (2007, p.68). Ehren (2016) describes this effect as 'myopia', with schools pursuing short-term targets at the expense of legitimate, long-term objectives.

In her review of literature in this area, Ehren identifies two further undesirable consequences: ossification (organisational paralysis) and measure fixation. Ossification refers to a behaviour whereby schools refrain from implementing innovative practices because such practices are not measured using established inspection criteria. This is particularly the case in systems where performance measurements are very rigid. Ehren describes measure fixation as schools concentrating on measures of success rather than underlying objectives. For example, schools implement school self-evaluation instruments to score positively on inspection indicators that measure quality assurance, rather than focusing on instruments to improve the quality of their education.

2.6.2.3 The Stress and Trauma of Evaluation. Several studies have found inspection has severe emotional effects on teachers, ranging from moderate to severe stress and anxiety (Brunsden et al., 2006; Penninckx et al., 2015a). Other studies find inspection results in conflict, frustration, irritability, tiredness, feelings of worthlessness, sleeplessness, and occasionally, depression (Ferguson et al., 2000; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). Empirical research shows strong emotional reactions among teachers before, during and after inspections, and is often described as having a traumatic effect on many teachers (Brimblecombe et al., 1995; Case et al., 2000; Dean, 1995; Wilcox & Gray, 1994; Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). Some of these studies show that inspections cause stress among teachers on account of the controlling quality of the inspections (Brimblecombe et al., 1995; Case et al., 2000). Teachers' level of preparedness before the inspection process, their concern about how the inspectors will engage with them during the inspection, elements of the process itself and reporting and follow-up are all key sources of anxiety reported by teachers in these studies. The studies also suggest feelings of distrust, and a uniform dislike, of inspections. Anger, apathy and frustration were common feelings among teachers about the inspection. A remark by a teacher in Case et al.'s (2000) field note study typifies teachers' emotions across the studies. The teacher stated:

> The build-up of pressure started when we found out that Ofsted were coming and we felt we had to make ourselves into this perfect school, which put tremendous pressure on everyone. As time went on we got absolutely exhausted, ratty with each other and the children. And the jobs just didn't stop coming. In the last term, we were working day and night to get ready. During the week of the inspection, teachers spoke of sleepless nights, feeling a failure, letting the side down and being just absolutely mentally and physically exhausted…I felt like shit… I was less enthusiastic 'cause I was tearful…A couple of things went wrong the first day, the next day was super

> stressed. They were with me from nine right through to the end of the day. I thought if anyone speaks to me I'll burst into tears.

It is also apparent from the same study that teacher morale was low at the time of inspection. Inspection induced in some teachers illness and absenteeism in and around the days of inspection; for some, it even prompted premature retirement (Case et al., 2000).

In the studies on the effects of inspection on teachers, the themes of teachers' competence and professional inadequacy were prominent. Research by Case et al. (2000); Nias (1989), Nias et al. (1989) and Woods and Jeffrey (1996) shows that inspection stifles teachers' creativity and innovative skills. This finding supports Pearson and Moomaw's (2005) suggestion that, when teachers are treated as professionals, they respond positively. Around the time of inspection, teachers are fearful of continuing with creative and spontaneous practices that stray from the constraints of school policy, schemes of work and planning documentation. In the hope that they will be inspected more favourably, they endeavour to implement practices that align with bureaucratic criteria. These studies show that such restraints in teaching practices cause resentment among teachers, who regard themselves as highly trained and educated professionals with considerable experience. The findings suggest that some teachers feel de-professionalised during an inspection and question why they should be reviewed by outsiders.

Another recurring theme within the various studies about inspection that troubled, frustrated and fatigued teachers was the onerous amount of paperwork (Case et al., 2000; Dean, 1995). The preparation of long-term schemes of work, lesson-by-lesson planning, assessment and record-keeping were burdensome. The studies suggest that teachers' concern with planning and organisation impaired their teaching. Teachers described how lessons that were effective and occurred spontaneously had to be documented for the inspection.

Finally, regarding the effects that evaluation has on teachers, the theme of respect and respectful engagement is significant in the literature. When evaluators do not create a mutually respectful relationship with teachers, teachers are more likely to see the interactions as ineffective and are less likely to address the inspectors' advice and recommendations (Dean, 1995). More recent studies conducted by Dillon (2011) and Griffin (2010) here in Ireland have substantiated this finding, with teachers, parents, students and principals all reported experiencing evaluation more positively when inspectors promoted respectful engagement. Griffin (2010) has found that personality difficulties arose between inspectors and teachers, which reduced respectful engagement. This substantiated previous claims by Fidler and Davies (1998) who found that the interpersonal skills of the inspector have a bearing on how teachers experience inspection. Literature reveals that evaluation can also have positive effects on teachers and I identify some of these effects in the next section.

2.6.3 Positive Effects of Evaluation on Teachers and Their Students' Performance

Some theory and empirical research indicate that inspection positively affects schools' performance (Janssens, 2005, 2007; Luginbuhl et al., 2007; Matthews and Sammons, 2004; Ouston et al. 1997; Van Bruggen 2005). The researchers who conclude that inspections have a positive effect on schools observe that inspection reports provide feedback to schools about their strengths and weaknesses that can lead to school improvement measures being introduced in schools. Empirical studies have found that inspection positively contributes to school self-evaluation practices, school development planning, school monitoring and overall quality of education (Cuckle et al., 1998; McCrone et al., 2007; Scanlon, 1999). Luginbuhl *et al.*'s (2007) study of the effects of inspection on test results in primary schools in the Netherlands indicates positive effects on pupil performance. The pupils within the inspected schools obtained test results that were 2-3% higher than in the non-inspected schools in the areas of language, reading and information processing, with the results for Mathematics higher up to four years

later. Ehren and Visscher (2008) found that schools in the Netherlands used feedback from inspections to improve the quality of their schools. In Germany, a study by Dedering and Muller (2011) reports that a very high number of principals who participated in their research claim to have taken measures to improve their schools as a result of an inspection. Studies in the USA have found that the risks of penalties arising from negative inspection reports raised students' test scores (Chiang, 2009; Figlio and Rouse, 2006; Jacob, 2005; Rockoff & Turner, 2010). Penalties such as the lengthening of instruction time, increased planning time, professional development for teachers and changes to whole-school programmes were found to improve teaching and learning provision in schools that were deemed in inspections to require further development.

Other research shows different positive effects, including prompting reflection by broadening the perspectives of the school, pinpointing best practice, facilitating teachers to reflect on their performance and that of the school, and energising them to contemplate their professional practice (Dillon, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Ladden, 2015; Matthews and Sammon, 2004; McNiff, 2002). Sugrue (2006) found that, while the additional burden of paperwork for teachers in advance of an evaluation was of concern to teachers, evaluation supported reflection that improved standards, collaboration and planning. When school evaluations have been in place for a long time, composite reports from Inspectorates suggest an overall improvement in schools. The literature in this regard suggests that schools that perform poorly will either improve after evaluation (subject to the provision of extensive supports) or be closed. While some schools do not fall into the 'failing' category or are deemed not to provide a satisfactory quality of education, some of them remain 'stuck' or 'coasting.' The evidence shows that these schools generally serve lower socio-economic backgrounds. Matthews and Sammons (2005) found that schools classified as being the least effective were more likely to maintain improvement after an evaluation than those that were moderately more effective. According

to Ehren (2016), a small number of studies examined how school self-evaluation processes were developed within schools as a result of external evaluation and concluded that a school's overall ability to develop is improved as a result of an inspection.

Theory and empirical research by some researchers (Matthews & Sammon, 2004; Matthews & Smith, 1995; Ouston et al., 1997) have noted the substantial benefits of evaluation in schools in England. They highlight the fact that evaluation there has had a positive effect on staff morale since inspection and feedback affirm schools' strengths and successes. Ladden (2015) found that the evaluation process heightens teachers' morale and confidence since it provides them with affirmation and constructive feedback. Concerning inspection for improvement, Matthews and Smith have observed that evaluation helps to accelerate policy review and development. They identified that evaluation provides a strong incentive to school staff to focus on aspects of the school about which they had been concerned, and is, therefore, a catalyst for schools to improve the quality of educational provision. Empirical studies by Ouston et al. (1997) have found high levels of satisfaction among school management following evaluation. Schools made significant progress in implementing recommendations over three years and the areas for development identified in evaluation reports prompted improvements in schools. However, they later concluded that school evaluations only led to improvement when schools had received either a negative or slightly positive assessment from the Inspectorate. This finding prompts questions about the focus of this research such as the extent to which teachers implement recommendations and advice arising from evaluations when they experience positive or negative findings.

2.6.3.1 Factors That Need to be taken into Account for Positive Effects. The literature suggests that whether evaluation has a positive or negative effect on teaching practices and students' performance depends on several factors which I explore in this section. They include the nature of feedback and the recognition of school context in evaluations. There

is a strong connection between school improvement and contextual factors such as environmental, physical, socio-cultural, and individual considerations (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997; Gilroy & Wilcox, 1997; Law & Glover 1999; Lupton, 2005; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Wrigley, 2004). Wrigley states that 'the relationship between a school and its environment is complex, dynamic and reciprocal' (2004, p.234). Teddlie and Reynolds claim that there are, 'now a number of datasets across a variety of national contexts that suggest that family background and school quality may be related' (2000, p.332)

Sirotnik (2012) notes that multiple indicators including context are required to make judgements on schools. As previously mentioned, schools serving lower socio-economic backgrounds usually achieve poorer ratings of student attainment or attendance but do better in less measurable areas such as pupil welfare and spiritual, moral, cultural, or social development (Lupton, 2005). These less measurable aspects may not be regarded as highly by evaluation systems as the outcomes of national or international assessments. Lupton claims that context is extremely important and only school improvement measures that take into consideration what goes on outside the school will have any chance of improving education provision in schools (2005). Reezigt and Creemer (2005) also identify that contextual and schools factors need to be taken into account in any school improvement measures. Muijs (2004) maintains that teachers in disadvantaged schools have to work harder than their counterparts in more favourable socioeconomic areas. The historical and existing contexts of schools also influence their capacity to manage change (Lodge and Reed, 2003), as do previous cultural values and norms (Gordon and Patterson, 2008). MacBeath (2001) supports the idea of inspectors visiting the local community as part of the evaluation process to understand the specific context of a particular school.

2.7 Justification for Evaluation for Improvement as the Lens through which to Engage in this Research

I discussed in some of the preceding sub-sections (2.2.2 and 2.6.3) that numerous studies have shown that evaluation for improvement has a positive effect on school improvement (Janssens, 2005, 2007; Matthews & Sammons, 2004; Ouston et al. 1997; Van Bruggen 2005; Luginbuhl, Webbink & De Wolf, 2007). In certain cases feedback that emanates from school inspections leads to schools introducing school improvement measures. Inspection also improves school planning, staff morale, collaboration and self-evaluation practices, promoting best practice, raising standards and overall quality of education (Cuckle et al., 1998; Dedering & Muller, 2011; Dillon, 2011; Ehren, 2016; Griffin, 2010; Ladden, 2015; Matthews & Sammon, 2004; Matthews & Smith, 1995; McCrone et al., 2007; McNiff, 2002; Ouston et al., 1997; Scanlon, 1999; Sugrue, 2006). Evaluation has been shown to improve pupil performance (Luginbuhl et al., 2007) and test scores (Chiang, 2009; Figlio and Rouse, 2006; Jacob, 2005; Rockoff & Turner, 2010).

It is evident that the research that has been completed on evaluation and its impact centres at the school level. I have highlighted a gap in the literature that there is very limited known about evaluation impacts on teachers. The evidence that evaluation can often lead to school improvement (discussed above) would appear to be sufficient justification for evaluation for improvement to be pursued as an objective of evaluations. Working on the assumption that evaluation supports school improvement, I want to explore if it improves teachers' practice. It stands to reason that if evaluation supports improvement at the micro level (teacher) it will contribute to school improvement. I aimed to explore when, and if evaluation lead to improvement and to identify factors of effective evaluation practices that contributed to teachers' development and conversely, the elements of evaluation that did not support teacher growth.

I also chose the lens of evaluation for improvement for this study since evaluation for improvement is one of the core objectives of the Irish Inspectorate, the jurisdiction in which the study was carried out. In Ireland, one of the main aims of the Irish Inspectorate is school improvement, “we see ourselves as on a continuum with accountability and improvement on either end but we are more towards the improvement one than the accountability and I think this is not unusual in the international context’ (Hislop, cited in Brown et al., 2018, p. 83).

Finally, the literature shows (Ehren, 2016) that there is scope to contribute to this research and to further examine the purpose of evaluation for improvement from the perspective of teachers’ practices. This research aims to address this gap.

In sections 2.1 to 2.7 I focused on the literature on evaluation as it is one of the core concepts of the study. This research can also be understood as a study of teachers as the central mechanism for quality education. Teachers are a focal part of the study and the most powerful source of data and findings, hence, I deemed an exploration of what is understood from the literature in terms of teacher growth and development important. The relevant literature is discussed in the following section.

2.8 Teacher Growth and Development

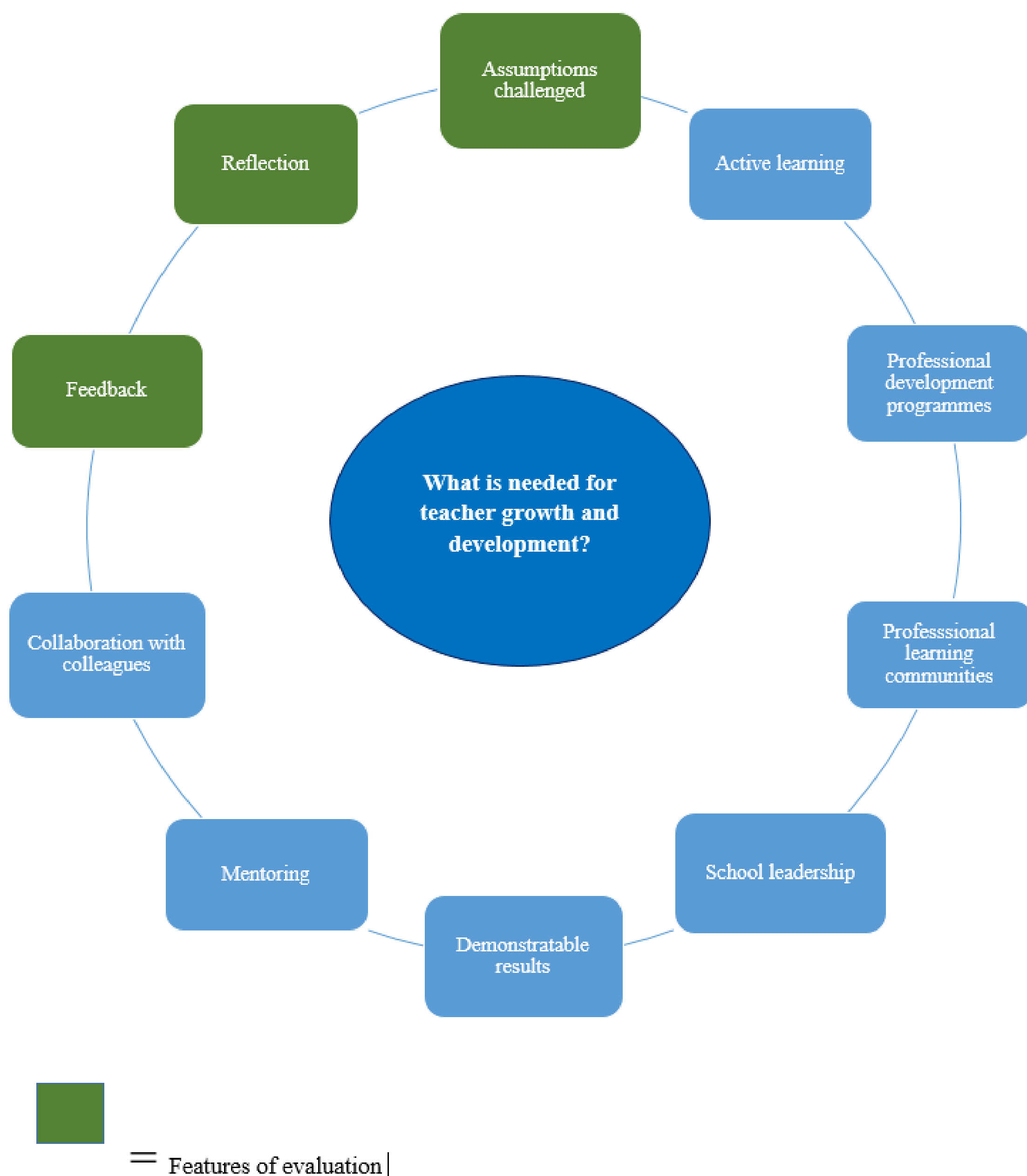
Section 2.7 put forward an argument for evaluation for improvement and that it is used as a lens for this research. Working on this assumption, inspection is positioned as a support structure for school improvement, specifically, the improvement of teacher’s practice as an aspect of school improvement within the context of this research.

The teacher change/development literature identifies numerous themes and factors which contribute to or impede teacher development. Figure 1 (below) provides an overview of these broad themes identified in the literature concerning the influences that lead to teacher change. The aspects in blue are discussed in general terms as they are important and necessary elements for teacher development. I’ve distinguished aspect in green that are directly relevant

to this study as they closely align with the features of evaluation; feedback, reflection and challenging of teachers' assumptions.

Figure 1

Interventions and Factors Necessary for Teacher Growth and Development



It appears from the literature that there is not a single factor that explains teacher change. The way they think and behave is entrenched in their professional lives, which include their school and classroom setting, their earlier experiences as students and teachers and the

learning opportunities they have come across. Any specific change in their practices or beliefs is most likely linked to numerous interacting factors (Girardet, 2018). I discuss some of the main factors impacting teacher change in this section.

The literature also offered definitions for teacher growth and development and professional development which supported me in understanding this area, analysing the data, discussing the findings and making the recommendations in relation to the effects of evaluation on teachers' practice. Definitions are offered in section 2.8.1 below.

Teacher change is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010) and it is well documented in the literature that teacher change and development is complex and not without difficulties both in terms of changing teacher beliefs and practices (Fullan, 2007; Pajares, 1992). The obstacles and challenges to change are also highlighted in section 2.8.3.

2.8.1 What is meant by Teacher Change and Development and Professional Development?

Sophisticated forms of teaching are required to progress students' critical thinking, complex problem solving, self-direction and successful collaboration and communication skills. Hence, teachers need to continually refine and extend their skills as they progress in their careers and effective professional development is required to support teachers learn and develop pedagogies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Teacher change and development has been defined as the continuing process of learning through the provision of activities intended to progress the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding of teachers in a manner that leads to changes in their thinking and classroom behaviour (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Fenstermacher et al., 1983; Postholm, 2012; Tam, 2015). Teacher change is understood as growth in which teachers learn through acting and interacting in professional learning communities, 'teaching practices are thus seen as fertile

sites of teachers to learn both to teach and innovate teaching in authentic, everyday situations' (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p.948). Teacher learning is often conceptualised as a shift in cognition (knowledge, belief, attitudes and emotions) that can lead to changes in practice through action (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010; Meirink et al., 2007; Postholm, 2012). In this cognitive viewpoint, teachers like their students, are seen as active constructors of knowledge who learn by interpreting events and their existing knowledge and beliefs (Putnam & Borko, 1997). It is with this these definitions and understanding of teacher growth and development I moved forward with the research. The many dimensions that support teacher change and development are now discussed.

2.8.2 What are the Factors and Interventions that Support Teacher Growth and Development?

There are numerous influences and interventions that facilitate teacher learning as illustrated in figure 1 above. I explore these individually in the subsequent sub-sections.

2.8.2.1 Collaboration with Colleagues and Professional Learning Communities. Teacher collaboration is known to be a significant contributing factor for teachers' professional development (Burko et al., 1997; Grossman et al., 2001 and Vescio, 2008). Collaboration is a core principle of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1971) which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter; adult learning theory is one of main theories underpinning this research. Teacher collaboration and professional learning communities (PLCs) are important themes for several researchers studying teacher learning and more and more research shows that teachers' participation in co-operative communities positively influences their practices and enhances pupil learning (Levine & Marcus, 2010; Postholm, 2012).

PLCs is a title given to a structure, a workplace or a culture that facilitates teacher change by providing teachers with the opportunity to share their ideas within a community and

engage in effective learning activities. Within the PLC, teachers overcome difficulties resulting in induced motivation and transformation (Grossman et al., 2001; Wenger, 1998).

Research on teacher professional development shows that teachers learn by getting to know colleagues' (experiences with) teaching methods. This knowledge and awareness of contemporaries' classroom methods and approaches are often the starting point for a sequence of learning activities teachers executed in collaborative settings. (Butler et al., Meirink et al*.;* 2007; Putnam & Burko, 2000). Teachers use the knowledge and expertise of colleagues to modify, expand or supplement their own beliefs and practices. In a study how teachers learn in the work place, teachers reported that they frequently learned from listening to the ideas and experiences of colleagues and subsequently trialling alternative ideas or methods in their own classrooms (Meirink et al., 2009). By working collaboratively, Darling-Hammond et al., (2017) posit that teachers can create learning communities that positively change the culture and teaching practices of a whole school. What implications does this learning have on evaluation practices?

2.8.2.2 Active Learning. Effective professional development involves learning by doing and active learning. (Darling-Hammon et al., 2017, Desimone, 2009). New approaches and innovative practices that are taught in teacher education programmes, professional development programmes or through collaborating with colleagues can be practically and actively implemented in teachers' own classrooms. This approach involves using authentic artefacts, interactive activities and other methodologies and approaches to afford deeply rooted, highly contextualised professional development. Such positive outcomes were found in studies by Martell (2014) and Putman (2009) whereby teachers practiced and trialled approaches learned in other situations. This learn-by-doing approach connects with self-efficacy theory which also underpins this research (explained in the forthcoming chapter); when a person experiences success in completing a task, they are more likely to overcome new challenges

when faced with the same or similar task. Active learning is also a principle of transformative learning which involves taking action on a particular issue based on reflection and previous assumptions. This suggests that for evaluation to be successful in prompting sustained changes in teaching practices, inspection feedback should focus on providing practical and manageable recommendations that enable a teacher to enact a particular approach and method that they can succeed with in order to prompt their self-efficacy and 'can do' approach through active learning.

2.8.2.3 Professional development programmes. Effective professional development programmes can be significant in inducing teacher change and development. Some research provides evidence that high quality professional development programmes can help teachers deepen their knowledge and transform their teaching (Beaver, 2009; Burko, 2004; Hein 2008). Literature in this area shows that programmes are successful when facilitators of programmes are researchers themselves and the participants are highly motivated volunteers (Fishman et al., 2003). Research also shows that professional development programmes can have minimal impact on teaching practices. When courses are not contextualised to the needs of the learner, are overly didactic in the style of delivery, incorporate poor teaching strategies and involve irrelevant learning activities they are less effective (Brookfield, 1990; Confessore & Confessore, 1994; Hiemstra and Brockett, 1994). Most successful professional development programmes combine the principles of adult learning: self-directed learning, active learning, utilise teachers experience, facilitate dialogue and contextualise the programme to the needs of the learner (Merriam, 2001). Three points are pertinent here in relation to evaluation. Firstly, while inspection is not classified as a professional development programme, evaluation for improvement does have a role in deepening the knowledge base of teachers. Through evaluation activities such as classrooms observations, feedback with individual teachers and groups of teachers, interviews and dialogues between inspectors and teachers throughout the

process, evaluators have opportunities to deepen teachers' knowledge about aspects of their practice. Secondly, evaluation presents a unique opportunity to work in an individual teacher's classroom whereby discussion, ideas and recommendations can be contextualised to the needs of the individual teacher. Finally the learning in this subsection highlights that those imparting knowledge should not be overly didactic in style which has implications for how feedback in managed during evaluations.

2.8.2.4 Demonstrable Results. In relation to teacher change, Guskey (1986) proposes that when teachers make specific changes in their practices and it results in tangible improvement in students' results and performance it has positive impacts on the endurance and sustainability of the new changes in their practice. The particular changes that Guskey refers to include a new instructional model, adjustments to teachers' approaches and methodologies or their use of new materials. This belief resonates with the findings in Girardet's (2018) review about the factors influencing changes in teachers' classroom management suggesting that people action what they believe in and what they know is successful. She claims that significant change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes is possible only after changes in student learning outcomes are evidenced. Adult learning theory posits that adults are more motivated to change when new approaches solve problems and result in internal payoffs (Knowles et al., 2015). The need for teachers to experience demonstrable results for a change in practice to be successful resonates with self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). In particular, self-efficacy theory describes how belief in one's capability to enact specific actions to achieve an outcome is shaped by one of four sources including physiological and affective states (this will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter). The literature suggests that when teachers see success in student results or performances, as a result of a change of approaches, it contributes positively to their self-efficacy and sustains changes in their practice.

2.8.2.5 School leadership. Leadership plays a role in supporting teachers to change, develop and learn. Desimone and Garet (2015) maintain that school leaders are pivotal in encouraging teachers to implement new ideas and strategies they learn from their colleagues and elsewhere. They developed a conceptual framework for effective professional development which identified leadership among four other features as being effective in improving teacher practice. Evidence for their study was drawn from cross sectoral studies, longitudinal studies and literature reviews of qualitative and quasi-experimental studies. Desimone and Garet put forward that supportive leaders foster good relationships between colleagues where innovation, risk and failure are allowed and invited as a fundamental aspect of supporting teachers to change and develop. Theory from Postholm (2012), claims that a supportive and creative culture is required for teacher learning and school leaders play an important function in creating such cultures. Opfer et al., (2011) and Rink and Valli (2010) refer to schools as communities of learning which include school leaders who are tasked with facilitating growth and development. In a study of teacher interviews, Kennedy (2011) found that it was very important for school leaders to generate a positive atmosphere within the school and build constructive relationships between colleagues in order for teachers to grow and develop. Kaasila and Lauriala (2010) further suggest that teacher change requires visionary leadership. By contrast, poor leadership has been shown in studies to act as an inhibitor of professional development (Fullan, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It would appear that leadership plays a significant role in fostering teacher change and develop, hence it is rational to propose that evaluation processes should enquire into how school leaders stimulate teachers' professional development as part of their role within schools.

2.8.2.6 Mentoring. Mentoring was identified in the literature as a key factor for teacher change to occur. Competent teachers attribute their knowledge and skills to learning from being paired with a mentor/exceptional lead teacher early on in their careers (Riley & Roach, 2006;

Whitebrook & Bellm, 1996). A range of empirical research findings highlight the significant role coaching and mentoring play as a teacher change and development tool (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Domitrovich et al., 2009; Zwart et al., 2007). Coaching and mentoring are listed as one of the key characteristics of effective professional development in Desimone (2009). A longitudinal study by Tam (2015) which examined the role of a professional learning community (PLC) in changing teachers' beliefs and practices found that mentoring was beneficial in promoting teacher change but that mentoring practices should be based on a collaborative culture which is characterised by openness and trust. Effective mentoring was found to increase teacher efficacy in implementing new initiatives. Findings from the current study further suggest that mentoring was only effective when it was part of a learning community that embodied trust and openness.

In addition to the more general features associated with teacher growth are those closely aligned to the components of evaluation (factor presented in green in figure 1 above). I review those in more detail in the next section.

2.8.2.7 Reflection. The use of reflective practice as a method to support teachers' growth in professional knowledge and skills has been explored by a number of scholars (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010; LaBoskey, 1994; Schon, 1987). Reflection is key to teachers' learning and development (Postholm, 2012). Meirink et al. (2009) concluded in their study that teachers learn in the workplace via individual or collective reflection. The literature suggests that when teachers engage in purposeful reflection it provides them with opportunities to highlight important actions and therefore creates cognitive change in both their beliefs and practices (Barnett, 1991; Thompson & Thompson, 1994; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010). Kaasila and Lauriala (2010) put forward the idea that developing teachers as reflective practitioners is one of the fundamental missions of teacher education

I discussed earlier in the literature on evaluation that reflection is one of the purposes of evaluation (section 2.2) and that the evaluation process is intended to enable professional reflection and development (DES, 2016b). Section 2.6.3 highlighted that reflection was reported in some studies as one of the positive effects of evaluation whereby it broadened the perspectives of the school, pinpointed best practice, facilitated teachers to reflect on their performance and that of the school, and energised them to contemplate their professional practice (Dillon, 2011; Griffin, 2010; Ladden, 2015; Matthews & Sammon, 2004; McNiff, 2002). The literature suggests that the feedback generated during the evaluation process helps this facilitation.

2.8.2.8 Feedback. I discussed feedback in section 2.4 in the context of evaluation. It is revisited here as an important factor in facilitating teacher growth and development. Feedback is regularly identified as a characteristic of effective professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Tam, 2015). TALIS reports (2009, 2016 and 2019) which are teaching and learning international surveys administered in a wide range of education systems and survey teachers and principals about their backgrounds, work environments, professional development, beliefs and attitudes about teaching found that feedback has a positive impact on teachers. Teachers reported that feedback had contributed to their development and was linked to job satisfaction and self-efficacy. Feedback has been found to develop professional knowledge and skills, deepen understanding of instructional issues followed by suggested solutions and support the construction of teacher identity in determining their roles (Kaasia & Lauriala, 2010; Manouchehri, 2002). Riley and Roach (2006) claim that teachers grow as part of a collaborative community which encompass teacher relationships with trusted confidants whom they receive feedback from and engage in conversations about their practices. As part of their theory towards a model of staff development, they propose that training models for staff development only work after a trusting relationship between the trained specialist and the

teacher is established. Within a trusting relationship, a teacher will share their understandings, doubts and hopes for their classroom during dialogue and feedback sessions, with trusted experts or the experienced teacher. As outlined in section 2.4, feedback has been found to be a crucial aspect of the external evaluation/inspection process (Ehren & Visscher, 2006; Matthews & Sammon, 2004) and a powerful influence on learning and achievement that plays a critical role in individuals' learning success (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 2009). However, the section highlighted that for feedback to be effective it needs to meet certain criteria: it needs to be detailed; specific and actionable; contextualised to the needs of the teacher; balanced to include both strengths in teachers' practice and areas for development; and delivered by credible experts with relevant knowledge and skills. Trust in the relationship is not only essential to the feedback process, it sets the stage for meaningfully challenging assumptions and beliefs that may prove problematic for teaching.

2.8.2.9 Assumptions challenged. A review of the literature reveals that for teacher learning to occur it requires teachers to explore and questions their own ideas and opportunities for others to interpret their practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Liberman & Miller, 1994). This posits that teachers learn by challenging their assumptions and identifying important areas of their practice. Teacher change requires change in both cognition and behaviour (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Tam, 2015). In broad terms, teacher cognition refers to a collection of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions and attitudes. It is about teaching, subject matter, pedagogy and self (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Teachers have to be challenged to think about these cognitive areas (Tam, 2015). Professional learning communities offer opportunities to teachers to challenge individual beliefs and assumptions where they hear multiple perspectives of others and gain new understandings about their practices (Placier & Hamilton, 1994). From my experience as an inspector, features of evaluation involve teachers and schools being challenged regarding their

practices. Evaluations involve observation of teaching practices and follow-up feedback and discussion (at individual and collective teacher level) which allows the inspector and the teacher to discuss the practice observed and for further dialogue and discussion to tease out practices.

2.8.3 Barriers to Teacher Growth and Development

The literature reviewed for teacher growth and development identifies that teacher growth and development is not a simple process; in this section I highlight some of the main obstacles regarding teachers' development. The degree to which a teacher is connected to a prior belief can hinder their willingness to take on board new beliefs. Change in a belief depends on the amount of thought teachers have given to a particular belief. When old beliefs are deeply rooted and not questioned, they are difficult to change (Girardet, 2018; Martell, 2014).

Studies show that teachers' lack of willingness to change is also connected to self-efficacy beliefs, that is, a teacher's view of their abilities to bring about required improvements (Aelterman et al., 2016; Gregoire, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Aelterman (2016) found in a study regarding teachers' classroom management skills that a change in teachers' self-efficacy was connected to teachers' intentions to implement proposed classroom management strategies. Gregoire (2003) suggests that teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs think of change as threatening, which can lead to them processing minimal amounts of information required for change and hence reject proposed strategies and ultimately avoid change. While professional development courses offer resources, strategies and ideas, they are useless unless the teacher takes action. Gregoire (2003) maintains that increasing teachers' self-efficacy could increase their will to change.

Teaching contexts and school cultures can also act as barriers to teacher growth and development (Girardet, 2018). Schools are organisations where teachers work collectively and

the beliefs of the school leader and teaching colleagues can influence teachers' beliefs. The teaching context can limit teachers to highlight specific aspects of a curricula or to focus on certain approaches that are emphasised by a particular school. This was found in studies by Arora et al., (2000), Cady et al., (2006) and Swan and Swain (2020) whereby pressure from school leadership and the system regarding performance standards shaped teachers' classroom management strategies and general pedagogy.

Finally, the literature suggests that some factors that are beyond teachers' control impact on their capacity to implement change in their practices. Buczbyski and Hansen (2010) and Girardet (2018) claim that even when teachers are enthusiastic to employ new knowledge and skills they can face hurdles beyond their control such as lack of time to think and reflect on a daily basis, a system's emphasis on mandated curricula and programmes, lack of resources and the diverse range of pupil needs requiring expert skills in specific school environments.

2.8.4 Teacher Growth and Development and School Evaluation

Evaluation for improvement is used as a lens to explore evaluation in this study. It can be used as an important tool in prompting teacher growth and development and in turn is an instrument for school improvement. In this section, I explore some of the main factors that support teacher growth and development and it would appear that teacher learning is not down to any one element identified above but it can be attributed to a variety of factors. Section 2.2 identified the many purposes of evaluation including, the development of knowledge and teacher, school and learning improvement. Based on the literature reviewed for this section it would appear that if evaluation is to play a role in teacher growth and development, evaluation polices and frameworks need to take account of the many factor that are associated with teacher growth and development and be cognisant of the barriers to teacher growth. Research regarding these factors is thus both pressing and timely. It is hoped that I will shine a light on some of these factors in this study.

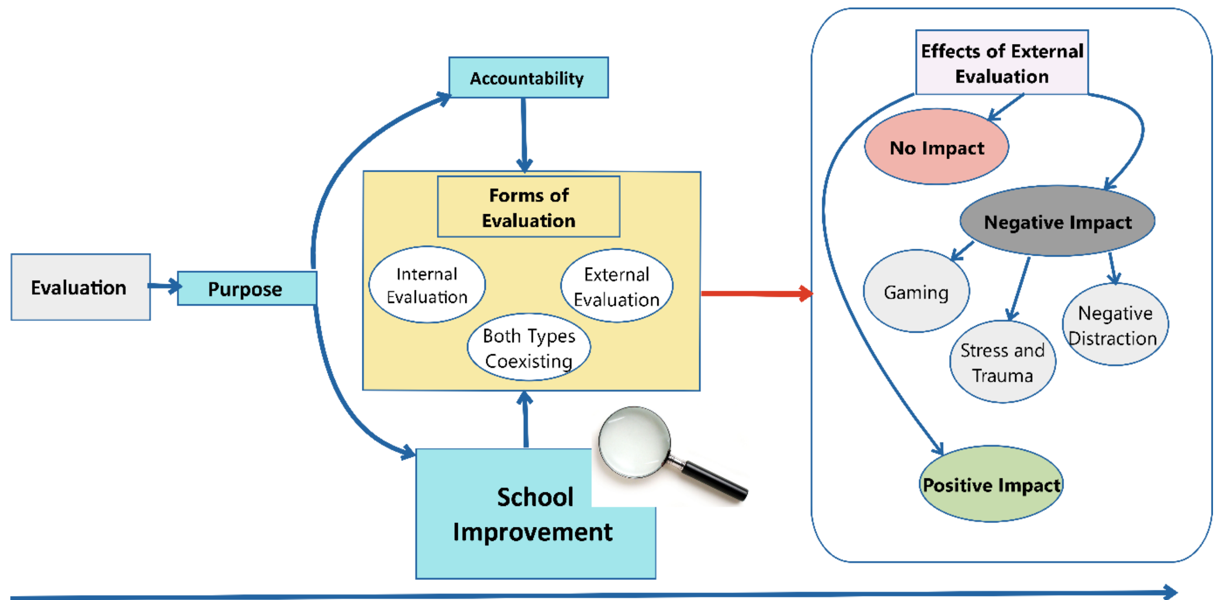
2.9 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided a selection of main themes on which to base a study on the effects of external evaluation on teachers' practices in a cohort of primary schools. To organise my thinking about the various contributions from the literature, I created a graphic identifying the theoretical links among the themes for evaluation. It represents how I made sense of and interpreted the literature within the context of the study. Figure 2 (below) shows the conceptual framework arising from the literature review on evaluation. It should be read from left to right, with the arrows helping to make the connection between the various themes.

The first theme covered the purpose of evaluation. This theme is well documented in the literature and shows that evaluation serves two main purposes: accountability and school improvement. A critique highlighting the issues that critical researchers have with the conceptions of 'good', 'progress' and 'improvement' in education was discussed in section 2.2.3. When evaluation was explored in the literature under the two purposes (accountability and school improvement), varying effects (no effect, negative effect, and positive effect) on teaching practices and pupil learning outcomes became evident. Theory and empirical research on each form of evaluation suggest conflict within the literature. Some studies contend that each form of evaluation has it benefits and positively affects schools, teachers and the education system generally. However, the research showed that each model has its limitations, and, in some cases, had negative effects, or even no effect, on teaching practices. There was a general consensus in the literature that the two forms of evaluation–internal and external–can profitably coexist and that many systems reflect this model. The forms of evaluation are represented together below. The literature available (for the most part) mainly covers the effect of evaluation on schools and there remains a gap in understanding regarding its effect at a micro level (on teachers).

Figure 2

A Conceptual Framework Drawn from the Literature



The final theme is fundamental to the nature of this study: effects of external evaluation. The literature that is available on the impact of evaluation on teachers emphasises that it has effects on teaching practices and, by extension, on pupils' performance. There are some findings from empirical research and theoretical views that evaluation brings about change, prompts action for improvement, supports teachers' individual and collective efficacy, and develops pupils' learning outcomes. However, these findings have been contradicted. The literature shows that evaluation has some negative effects on teaching practices and pupils' performance. It causes teachers to engage in strategic behaviours, distracts them from their work and has a profound emotional effect on them. This theme's position in Figure 2 is significant – it is the largest and the arrows of the three themes point in its direction, illustrating its connection with them. It signifies that evaluation, regardless of its purpose, form, or features, has effects. The visual for the final theme is adapted from Penninchx et al.'s (2016, p.2) overview of the effects of inspection).

It can be interpreted from the visual and the literature that evaluation affects teachers, and that it is a complex issue that warrants further investigation. The precise effects evaluation has on teachers and how it impacts changes in their practice within the primary sector in the Irish context, is the research gap that I seek to address in the study.

As this study can also be understood as an enquiry into how teachers grow and develop (and the role {if any} evaluation plays in that development) I also reviewed literature within this area in this chapter. Figure 1, in section 2.8 provided a summary of the factors that are necessary for teacher learning. I discussed that there are a range of elements that are necessary for teachers' professional development and that it can require a variety of elements to change and progress their practice. Among these elements are, reflection, feedback and the challenging of teacher assumptions. These particular elements are a central feature of evaluation and I hope that this study investigates whether these elements and the other factors outlined in Figure 1 are significant in the development of teachers' practice within the context of evaluation.

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I address the methods and tools I used for data collection and analysis and the research philosophy which is based on a mixed-methods approach is outlined. Data were collected across two samples. Sample one involved the analysis of 71 published follow-through reports as well as the administration of on-line surveys to teachers and principals in the schools who were the subject of these reports (schools that had experienced a WSE and a follow-through evaluation between September 1 2016 and September 1 2019 in a specific geographical area within Ireland). In sample two, 21 teachers and eight school principals were interviewed in eight schools; these schools were selected from the 71 schools in sample one (table five in section 3.5.2.1 below provides a detailed overview of the types of schools and school personnel involved in the interviews). I highlight the possible limitations I encountered that may have limited the scope of research (Kumar, 2019). This study aimed to examine the effects of external evaluations by Department of Education inspectors on teachers' practices in a cohort of primary schools. Specifically, it proposed to answer the following four research questions to fulfil its aim:

1. What is the nature of recommendations regarding teachers' practices in sample schools?
2. What progress do schools make in addressing the recommendations relating to teachers' practices in sample schools?
3. How do teachers experience the evaluation process?
4. How does the experience of evaluation affect teachers' perceptions of their practices, and, by extension, the practices themselves?

Being an inspector as the practitioner-researcher gave me specific insights during the research process, and I discuss these (where relevant) in this chapter. The aims of this research

were achieved by adopting a mixed-methods approach (a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including follow-through inspection reports, online surveys with quantitative and qualitative data, and interviews with teachers and principals on an individual basis). I adopt an interpretivist approach as the research paradigm which is explored in this methodology section. Furthermore, within this chapter I specify the target population and sampling strategy applied in recruiting an appropriate respondent population. It also presents the research instruments utilised in the study. The chapter outlines the study's credibility, trustworthiness, rigour/reliability and relatability. I also highlight the ethical considerations. These elements are addressed to ensure the applied methodological criteria for the study are appropriate.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

In this research, I employ two overarching theories - Adult Learning Theory (ALT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and their associated theories of Transformative Learning Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. These theories provide the theoretical bridge between the two phenomena in the study; evaluation and teacher growth and development (Figure 4 below).

I considered a number of other theories at the outset of the reseach including Foucault's theory or power, Haberma's theory of communicative action and school effectiveness and school improvement theory. The reseach could have been understood through anyone or a mixture of these theories. I chose not to pursue these theories and provide a rationale for my final choice of theories in section 3.2.4 below. Foucault's theory of power was not progressed as I wanted to understand evaluation through a more collaborative model such as SCT. I wanted to undertand the inspection model as it is designed for use by Department inspectors i.e. a model that is designed to foster improvement, partnership and collaboration and respect. My chosen theories mapped onto the Irish evaluation model. Evaluation is often considered with a power dimension and I wanted to explore it in a new and unique way by using alternative theories. Some of the literature reviewed in chaper two showed that there can be negative

impacts for teachers when there is a power differential between inspectors and schools. It was learned from the literature on teacher growth and development that teachers can make most progress when they collaborate and work in partnership with each other, mentors and specialists. The chosen theories involve an understanding of mutual interactions between people and environments and I considered that studying evaluation through power theory would not enable such an exploration. In addition, Haberma's theory of communicative action was discarded as I did not want to understand evaluation as a control mechanism and wanted to be open to exploring other aspects of evaluation's limitations and possibilities. The writings of Bandura, Knowles and Mezirow appealed to me and I enjoyed engaging with their work. Finally, school effectiveness and improvement theories were set aside as I felt they were too general to explore evaluation with a focus on teachers' practice. I did not want to loose the emphasis on teachers' practice by introducing the many other facets of school improvement and school effectiveness such as leadership, communication, governance and paretnal and learner involvement etc. I wanted to keep the emphasis soley on teachers and evaluation. In section 6.3 I outline some limitations with regard to my chosen theories and in section 6.3.1 I make recommendations regarding the seletion of future theories when researching evaluation and its impacts.

In the forthcoming sub sections (3.2.1 – 3.2.4) I define ALT and SCT (and associated theories: Transformative Learning Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory), discusses the sources and foundation of the theories, identify their core principles and explain the rationale for the choice of theories in this reseach.

3.2.1 Theories Defined

The following four subsections provide a definition for each of the four theories.

3.2.1.1 Adult Learning Theory (ALT). ALT is a set of guiding principles and best practices for teaching adults and has been used as a lens in studies on adult learners, teachers

and student learning (Branham, 2018; Mews, 2020; Wiseman, 2022; Zepeda, 2014). Its successful use in these studies suggests it is applicable to my research and for studying adults and teachers. In its broadest meaning, adult learning describes a process – the process of adult learning. It involves all experiences of mature adults by which they gain new knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, interests or values. Adults use it for their self-development, both alone and with others. It describes a set of organised activities by a wide range of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives (Knowles, 1971). A method and practice of teaching adult learners was formalised by Knowles (1978) and became known as andragogy (Kelly, 2017).

3.2.1.2 Transformative Learning Theory. Transformative Learning theory is connected to ALT (Kelly, 2017; Mezirow, 2000). It is defined by Mezirow as 'becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations, and those of others, and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation' (2000, p.4). It involves learning occurring when new knowledge becomes integrated into existing knowledge where learners maintain their original frame of reference but continue to challenge and change some of their perspectives (Mukhalalati &Taylor, 2019). I considered it apt for my study as evaluation involves sharing new knowledge between inspectors and teachers (and visa versa) and hence I wanted to explore it as a theory for understanding evaluation and teacher growth and development.

3.2.1.3 Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). SCT theorises that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). The interaction between these three factors is not one directional but reciprocal and all influence each other. This relationship is referred to as the reciprocal causation model (RMC) (Bandura, 1986). SCT posits that the self is relational and intertwined with significant others and that this has implications for self-evaluation, self-regulation and

personality functioning (Anderson & Chen, 2002). This overarching theory is appropriate for my study as interactions between inspectors and teachers is a fundamental aspect of evaluation and I wanted to use the theory to explore the people (teachers and inspectors), environments (schools) and behaviour (of teachers and inspectors) within the context of evaluation and their relationship with teacher growth and development.

3.2.1.4 Self-Efficacy Theory. This theory refers to 'beliefs' in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment' (Bandura, 1977, p.3). In Bandura's opinion, the sense of self-efficacy is a prerequisite for behaviour change (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave (Girasoli & Hannafin, 2008). I was interested in using this theory to explore if there was a connection between evaluation and teacher self-efficacy and subsequent change in teacher practice as part of evaluation.3.2.2 Sources of the Theories

The term 'andragogy' was conceptualised in the early 1830s by a German teacher, Alexander Kapp and was later linked to the work of Knowles in the United States during the 1960s when he developed an associated framework and authored many books describing the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1975; Mews, 2020; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019 & Smith, 2020). The word, andragogy, has Greek origins, 'andr' meaning 'man' and 'agogus' meaning 'leader of' and contrasting with pedagogy, from the Greek 'paid' meaning 'child' (Peterson, 2017). Knowles argued that adults are differently experienced, motivated and oriented than children. He is known as the father of andragogy and focused much of his life and work between the 1960s and 1980s on andragogy and the adult learning movement (Knowles, Swanson & Holton, 2012).

Mezirow researched ALT and established there was a characteristic of the theory that other researchers had not accounted for – transformative learning. He concluded that reflecting on knowledge would have the desired effect on future action, based on the intended and

unintended learning that occurred while he was working within the perimeters of adult learning (Kelly, 2017). Mezirow recognised that learning could occur from the elaboration of existing knowledge or the input of new knowledge, but he established that when knowledge is completely changed, a significant transformation occurs for the learner that may result in a totally different perspective of an experience. This was a significant development in ALT as it considerably transformed our understanding of deep learning that may occur later in life when assumptions, beliefs and values are more in-grained through a lifetime of reinforcement (Kelly, 2017; Merriam & Bierema, 2014 & Mezirow, 2000).

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) started as Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. It developed into the SCT in 1986. Within his research, Bandura strived to better understand that most human behaviour is learned through observation, imitation and modelling. SCT is rooted in the perspective that teachers' beliefs in their abilities to motivate and promote learning impact on the types of learning environments they create and the level of academic progress their students achieve (Bandura, 1993). In exploring self-efficacy, SCT guided research in the area and it is regarded as the foundational base for understanding the concept of self-efficacy.

3.2.3 The Core Principles of the Selected Theories

In this section I provide an overview of the principles of ALT and its associated theory of Transformative Learning Theory and SCT and its connected Self-Efficacy Theory.

3.2.3.1 Adult Learning Theory. ALT and Knowles' andragogy framework has evolved into six distinct principles of adult learning (see table 3 below) which I discuss in this subsection. The principles identify the key assumptions about adult learners and the foundation stones of ALT (Knowles, 1978). Table 3 below provides summary details of principles of ALT. The first principle of adult learning is, prior to adults engaging in learning, they need to know

'why', understand the 'value' of what is proposed in new learning and how it applies to their situation. Adults need to be engaged in a collaborative learning process for their learning and need to be involved in decisions regarding their learning (Knowles et al., 2015). Studies show that learners who had a choice about attending training, and received their choice, had higher pre-training motivation and learning. There were worse results for those who were offered a choice but did not get it (Baldwin et al., 1991).

The second principle shows that adults are self-directed learners. When adults are allowed to work together and collaborate it supports a self-directed environment which helps increase the maintenance of key information and problem-solving abilities. Adults like to have a sense of ownership for their decisions regarding their development and want to be seen by others as being capable of self-direction. The prior experience of the learner is the third key principle. Adults build up a significant amount of experience which is an invaluable resource for learning. Using prior experience is a very helpful way adults can learn for themselves and collaborate with others. Experience helps to shape new learning but Knowles warns that it can also inhibit new learning. I brought to light in the previous chapter that engrained teacher beliefs can act as an obstacle to teacher growth and development.

The readiness to learn principle describes that adults generally become ready to learn when their life situation creates a need to know basis. It follows that the more adult learning professionals can anticipate and understand adult's life situations and readiness for learning, the more effective they can be. Closely related to the principle of prior experience is the principles of orientation to learning. Adults tend to prefer a problem-solving approach to learning rather than subject-centred learning (Knowles et al., 2015). They learn best when information is presented in a real life context. As a result, the experiential approach to learning has become firmly rooted in ALT. Finally, the andragological model of adult learning makes some significantly different assumptions about what motivates adults to learn. Adults tend to

be more motivated towards learning that helps them to solve problems in their lives or results in internal payoffs (Knowles et al., 2015). Wlodowski (1985) suggests that adult motivation to learn is the sum of four factors:

1. Success – Adults want to be successful learners
2. Volition – Adults want to feel a sense of choice in their learning
3. Value – Adults wants to learn something they value
4. Enjoyment – Adults want to experience the learning as pleasurable.

Table 3

Principles of Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) (Mews, 2020, p.66)

Andragogy Framework	
Principle	**Description**
Learner's Need to Know	Creating a sense of why for adult learners is essential in education and leadership. Adults need to understand the value in what is being presented and how it can apply to their current life objectives (Sang 2010). Correlating short-term objectives with long-term goals is likely to yield higher sustained interest in learning and progress.
Self-Concept of the Learner	As a person matures, his self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one that is self-directed. Adult learners often have a sense of responsibility for their own decisions and want to be treated by others as being capable of self-direction (Knowles, et al. 2012). Allowing adults to learn together through collaboration and autonomy helps create a self-directed environment that may increase the retention of core information and problem-solving abilities.
Prior Experience of the Learner	An adult accumulates a growing wealth of experience, which is a rich resource for learning. Drawing on prior experience and knowledge is another way adults can learn for themselves and collaborate with others (Sang 2010). Educators and administrators should incorporate learning experiences that account for similarities and differences among the group, utilizing activities such as collective discussions, case studies, and simulation exercises (Knowles 1976). Introducing concepts through discussion may open adult learners to new ideas that may challenge or solidify existing biases as they comprehend the information (Knowles, et al. 2012).
Readiness to Learn	The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental- and life-related tasks of his or her social role. Adults tend to know when they are ready to learn based on the content and how useful it is at the time (Sang 2010). Educators and administrators can identify this level of readiness by exploring areas of interest and experiences through group discussion and other assessments and then relating back to program- and course-specific goals and outcomes (Knowles, et al. 2012).

Orientation to Learning	There is a change in time perspective as people mature—from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Therefore, adult learners are more likely to embrace and commit to problem- and life-centred methods than subject-centred learning. Rather than concentrating on subject matter for future implications as the sole orientation to learning, adults prefer having information as it pertains to real-life application (Knowles, et al. 2012).
Motivation	The most potent motivations are internal rather than external. Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs, interests, and benefits that are satisfied through learning. Factors such as career needs, advancement opportunities, family obligations, setting standards for children, and overall self-satisfaction are some of the various reasons that adults further their education (Park and Choi 2009). These factors are often the driving force that keeps adult learners motivated to progress and achieve (Knowles, et al. 2012). Educators and administrators should be aware and respectful of these motivators as they are unique and often personal, with ties to self-esteem and quality of life.

3.2.3.2 Transformative Learning Theory. The key principles of Transformative Learning Theory involves experiencing a confusing issue or problem and reflecting on previous perspectives about the event. It is about making meaning about one’s experience. An experience can cause people to examine how they think about something. A person might question their assumptions and go through a reflective process which may lead to a perspective transformation (Kelly, 2017; Mukhalalati &Taylor, 2019). Transformative learning happens when people ‘critically examine their habitual expectations, revise them, and act on the revised point of view*’*. (Cranton, 2006, p.19). A second aspect of transformative learning involves engaging in critical evaluation and self-reflection, this requires metacognitive thinking. Transformative learning involves taking action about an issue, based on self-reflection and previous assumptions which leads to a transformation of meaning, context and long-standing propositions (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Finally, according to Mezirow (2000) transformative learning takes place when one transforms their frame of reference. Frames of reference are described as a meaning perspective in the areas of assumptions, expectations, values and beliefs which result in ways of interpreting experience. Transformative learning can be a highly emotional experience due to the feelings connected to reframing one’s knowledge.

The challenging of assumptions was identified as a key factor in facilitating teacher growth and development in the previous chapter also.

3.2.3.3 Social Cognitive Theory. A key principle of SCT is that learning occurs in a social context with a vibrant and mutual interaction of the person, environment and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). The connection between these three factors is not one directional but reciprocal and all influence each other. SCT is composed of four processes of goal realization: self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reaction and self-efficacy (Redmond, 2010). Self-efficacy is focussed upon in this research and the rationale for this is explained in section 3.2.4 (below).

3.2.3.4 Self-Efficacy Theory. This theory has four sources and encompasses enactive mastery, verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1987). Within this research, I was interested in studying evaluation and its impacts on teachers through these sources. As each of the four sources are important for my study they are expanded upon separately below and represented in Figure 3 below.

Enactive Mastery. A mastery experience is when a person is convinced that they have what it takes to succeed because they have completed the task successfully in the past. This is significant because when a person knows they can succeed at a specific task, they will persevere in the face of adversity and quickly recover from setbacks (Girasoli & Hannafin, 2008). When a person experiences success in a task, they are more like to overcome new challenges when faced with the same or similar task. Learning takes place when a person experiences success.

Verbal Persuasion. Verbal persuasion suggests that people are more likely to believe in themselves if others believe in their abilities as well, this can be offered in the form of verbal persuasion (Kran, 1985). People who are influenced orally that they have the skills to achieve particular briefs are likely to mobilise greater effort and sustain it than if they embrace self-

doubt and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulties arise (Bandura, 1997. p101.) In the verbal persuasion source learning occurs through feedback.

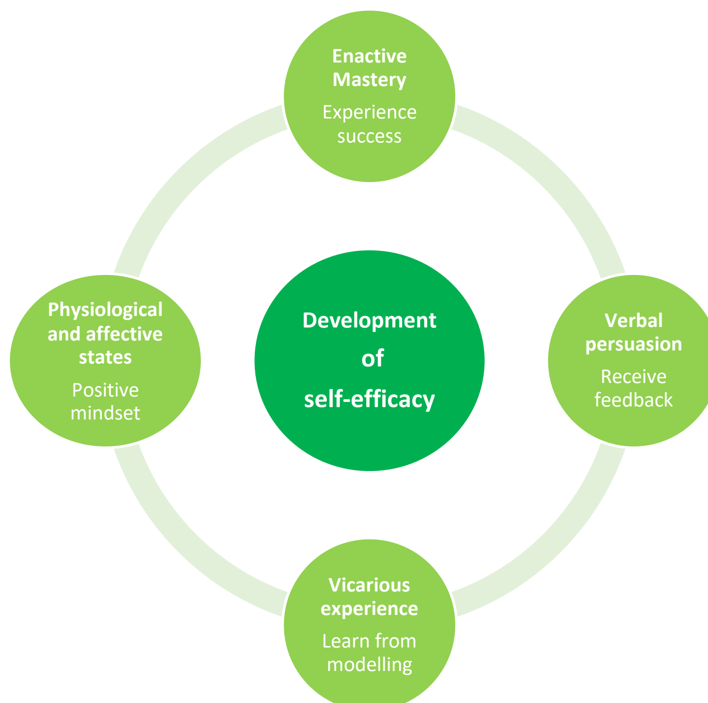
Vicarious Experience. This experience involves being able to learn through the actions of others; this is regarded as modelling (Kram, 1985). Self-efficacy beliefs can be reinforced if a person observes another person's behaviour and compares it to their own. According to Bandura, 'People appraise their own capabilities in relation to the attainment of others' (1997, p.86). People compare themselves to others to help determine their success or failure in a particular attainment and the learning takes place through modelling.

Physiological and Affective States. Self-efficacy can be shaped by physiological and affective states. If people feel stressed, they may relate these feelings to poor performance, which eventually impacts on self-efficacy. Hence, a person's mindset and mood are factors of self-efficacy related to physiological and affective states. Bandura posits, 'Positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy and a despondent mood diminishes it' (1994, p.72).

Self-efficacy impacts whether people think optimistically or pessimistically in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways. Consequently, as maintained by Bandura (1977), self-efficacy plays a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through set goals and expected outcomes. Through this source, learning occurs because of a positive mind set. In essence, self-efficacy lies at the centre of SCT and shows that beliefs about one's ability will influence current and future behaviour. Figure 3 displays the four primary sources that influence a person's self-efficacy and identifies how learning takes place through each source.

Figure 3

The Four Sources of Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1997)



3.2.4 Rationale for the Choice of Theories Underpinning this Research

In this section, I provide the rationale for choosing the theories to underpin this research. Adults (teachers and principals) were the focus of this study and the research centred on their experiences of evaluation and whether it impacted on their practice. Adult learning theories provide helpful theoretical guidelines for interpreters who work with adults (Yamada, 2005). Working on the assumption that the purpose of evaluation is for improvement and development (section 2.2 and section 2.7), I wanted to explore evaluation through the lens of an adult learning process and ascertain if teachers (adults) gained new knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, interests or values through their experience of inspection.

This study puts forward the argument that inspection can play a crucial role as a catalyst for change and that it provides schools with a starting point from which to work towards improvement and development (Fidler et al., 1996; Matthews and Sammons, 2004 and Van

Bruggen, 2005). When evaluation is thought of from this view point the principles of transformative learning theory apply. In using this theory within the research I was interested in finding out if evaluation facilitated teachers in questioning their assumptions, reflecting on their practices, revising them and acting on ‘the revised point of view’ (Cranton, 2006, p.19). I considered whether teachers critically evaluated, self-reflected and transformed their frame of reference as an impact of evaluation. The use of Transformative Learning Theory was apt in this regard as it involves reframing one’s knowledge (within the context of this research, teachers refashioning or reconsidering their practices as an outcome to evaluation) and challenging of their assumptions which is a factor in prompting teacher growth and development.

Having been an inspector for over fifteen years I am very aware that evaluation is very much a human endeavour and involves multiple interactions with teachers as part of the evaluation process. This is done through in-class observations, feedback sessions, meetings with individuals and groups to gain information and more informal encounters throughout the course of the inspection. It is a social undertaking involving interactions between people, environments and behaviours. The inspector and teachers are intertwined with each other. All these interactions influence each other and align with the principles of SCT. Given that inspectors work so closely with teachers during evaluations I was interested in using self-efficacy theory to explore how teachers experience evaluation (before, during and after the process) and how they feel, think, behave and are motivated. Self-efficacy theory provided a useful framework for:

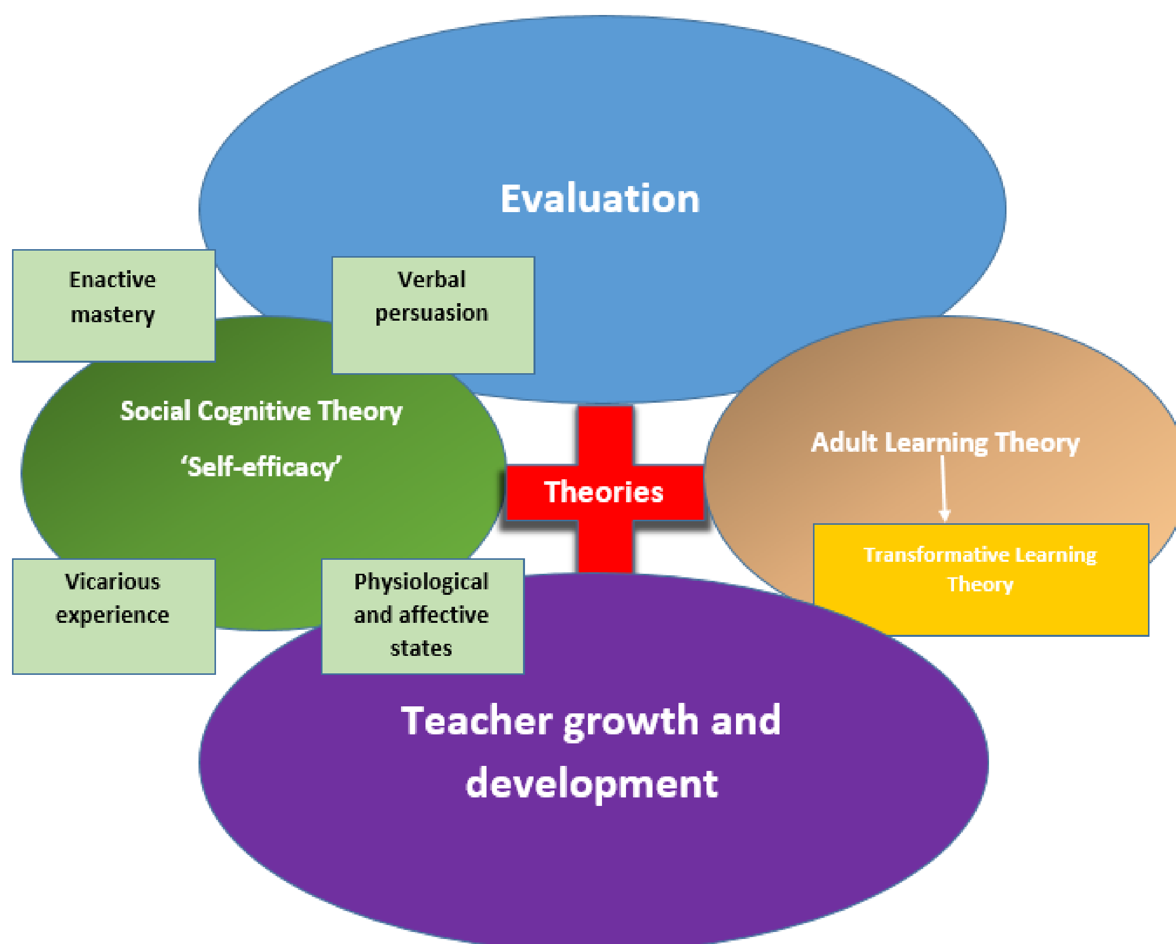
- considering teachers’ experience of the encounter with the inspector,
- analysing and discussing teachers’ experience of feedback,
- exploring teachers’ mind-set after their experience.

Figure 4 below provides a visual representation of the theoretical underpinnings for this research. My use of ALT and the related Transformative Learning Theory enabled me to apply the principles of these two theories to adult learners (teachers) while engaging with the literature, carrying out the fieldwork, analysing and discussing the data. The focus on SCT and more specifically on Self-Efficacy Theory enabled me to think about the process of evaluation (interactions, inspection activities, environment, and relationships) and how it impacted on teacher growth and development.

A combination of these two overarching theories (ALT and SCT) have never been combined in previous research to fuse the two phenomena of evaluation and teacher growth and development. I hope that by marrying these two theories together it provides a unique way of exploring evaluation and teacher development and contributes to knowledge in a unique way.

Figure 4

Theoretical Underpinnings for the Research



3.3 Research Approach - Mixed-Methods

I chose a mixed-methods approach for this study, from three possible approaches for conducting research – qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this section, I provide the rationale for a mixed-methods approach. Use of a mixed-methods approach involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Advocates of quantitative and qualitative research methods have debated and questioned each other's approaches for some time, with purists emerging on both sides (Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004). Exponents of each approach have criticised their counterparts not only for their worldview but also their methods, the rigour of their procedure and the validity of their findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Opponents

of quantitative methods have criticised what they believe to be a simplistic and mechanical view of the world using quantitative methods which, they maintain, underestimates life and mind (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2012). Conversely, qualitative methods have been criticised for lacking scientific rigour and objectivity and for the lack of generalisability of the result obtained by its methods. In recent times, however, researchers keen to take a more pragmatic and far-reaching approach to scientific enquiry have begun to integrate the two approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) to better answer research questions.

I chose a mixed-methods approach as it was the most appropriate to the aims and objectives of the study and for addressing the complex questions within this study (Cresswell, 2006). A mixed-methods approach has been identified as reliable and valid; it is widely adopted in research in the social sciences, the area in which this study was conducted (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). There are many advantages associated with a mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Clark, 2017) for this study. As Johnson et al. (2007, p.113) noted, mixed- methods research is an approach to knowledge that seeks to consider many viewpoints and perspectives. In the context of this research, I was interested in acquiring more knowledge about evaluation and its effects on teachers' practices from the perspectives of teachers and principals. By using a mixed-methods approach, I ensured a more integrated and comprehensive use of the data that was gathered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Christensen et al. (2011), the accuracy of data collection and data analysis is enhanced using this approach. By collecting both qualitative and quantitative data I ensured that accurate information from FT reports, teachers and principals about the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices was collected, enabling the generation of insightful findings through analysis of the data (Talanquer, 2014).

I considered a mixed-methods approach suitable for gathering the various perspectives of inspectors, principals and teachers concerning the research questions and the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices. Another reason for my use of a mixed-methods approach was

because combining quantitative and qualitative research has acquired strong support in evaluation, which is the focus of this research (Bryman, 2006). When planning the research design, I read similar studies while focusing on research methodology and noted that mixed-methods had been used within many of these studies, such as that of Smyth (1999, p13) in her research in the Irish context of key schooling processes associated with improved academic and development outcome among pupils in secondary schools. She used quantitative data (questionnaires, examination data) and qualitative data (in-depth interviews) to identify the complexity of school organisation and the features of schools that varied in their effectiveness. I chose a similar approach partly because Smyth notes that a mixed-methods approach enhanced understanding of school effectiveness in her research; while quantitative data identified the average or general effects, the qualitative data took account of the practical and human complexities. I felt this approach would be suited to this research, using quantitative data mainly to explore research questions one and two and provide contextual information, and qualitative data to explore research questions three and four to get to the root of teachers' experiences of evaluation. A mixed-methods approach permitted me to answer questions that could not be answered by qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Crewell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). I also use a mixed-methods approach to validate the qualitative and quantitative data sources (Creswell, 2006). This enabled me to compare quantitative data with qualitative data and vice versa, supporting me to reach a better understanding of the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices. The analysis and comparison of quantitative and qualitative data enabled the corroboration of results, thereby providing me with valid and well-substantiated conclusions (Creswell, 2006).

Table 4 (below) provides an overview of the two research methods I used with the mixed-methods approach. It illustrates the type of data set for each method, the source (primary or secondary) and the type of knowledge each method offered (Creswell, 2013).

Table 4

Research Method and Types of Knowledge Offered by Each Method

Research method	**Data set**	**Source**	**Type of knowledge each method offered**
Quantitative method	Data extracted from published follow-through reports	Secondary data source	Types of recommendations made to teachers regarding teachers' practices (Research question one)
Quantitative method	Data contained within teacher and principal online surveys	Primary source	Quality of evaluation experiences reported by teachers and principals (Research question three)
Qualitative method	Data contained within follow-through reports	Secondary data source	Types of recommendations made to teachers regarding teachers' practices (Research question one)
			Progress schools made in implementing recommendations regarding teaching

			practices (Research question two)
Qualitative method	Data contained within teacher and principal online surveys (open text boxes)	Primary source	Teachers and principals' insights into, and perspectives of, their experiences of evaluation and its effects on their practices (Research questions three and four).
Qualitative method	Data contained within teacher and principal interviews	Primary source	Teachers and principals' insights into, and perspectives of, their experiences of evaluation and its effects on their practices (Research questions three and four).

To provide a context for this research, and to establish an informed picture of the recommendations regarding teachers' practices and the progress schools made in implementing those recommendations, I sourced and analysed published follow-through reports and extracted qualitative and quantitative data to research questions one and two. The secondary data utilised

in this study, including the follow-through reports and quantitative data, identify gaps that need to be filled in further research (Greenhoot & Dowsett, 2012) - in the case of this study, how teachers experience evaluation and how the experience affects their practices. To get a sense of the experience and its effects on their practices, I surveyed and interviewed teachers and principals. It involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. I adopted a partially mixed concurrent dominant status design as Leech and Onwuegbuzie described (2009). Leech and Onwuegbuzie put forward a typology of mixed-methods research designs recognising that there was a plethora of available designs that left researchers with the considerable challenge of selecting the optimal mixed-methods research designs. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) proposed a three-dimensional typology of mixed-methods research that amounted to an integrated typology of the numerous mixed-method designs, illustrated in Figure 5, below. The boxes on the last row of the Figure represent the eight mixed-method research designs into which they distilled the many designs.

Figure 5

A Typology of Mixed-Methods Research Designs (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009, p.269)

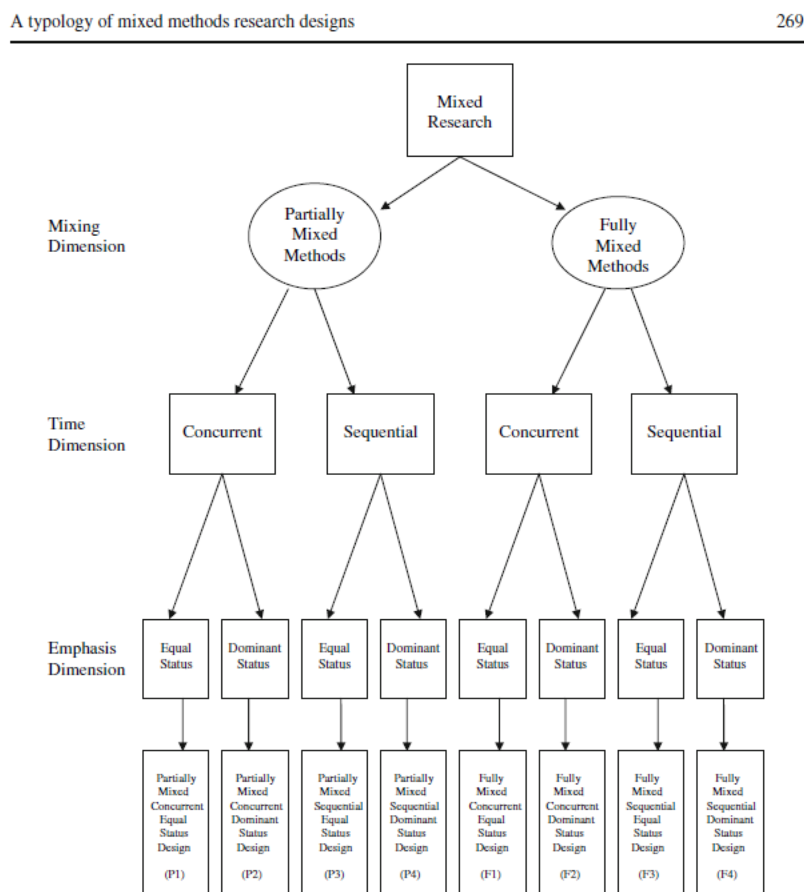


Fig. 1 Typology of mixed research

I chose P2, a partially mixed concurrent dominant status design, as it best suited this study's research aims and questions. This design is a mix of quantitative and qualitative research in a single research study. The qualitative and quantitative phases run concurrently. The mixed-methods design used here reflects the triangulation design Creswell et al. (2003) suggested. The purpose of this design is to obtain varied yet complementary data on the same topic. I wanted to discuss quantitative results (aspects of the follow-through reports and teachers and principals' surveys) with qualitative data (interviews) and to validate and expand upon both data. Although the overall approach mirrored the triangulation approach, less weighting was afforded to the quantitative data in the study; aligning it to P2 in Figure 5. I emphasised the use

of qualitative data in the present study to ensure that the findings would give full voice to the rich experiences of teachers. The quantitative data were used to provide contextual information and compare results from the quantitative and qualitative data sets. This approach allowed me to examine the research problem from several perspectives and address it in various ways since results from one perspective that supported results from another would increase confidence in the findings. Results that differed, on the other hand, would give me and the reader an insight into the nature of the phenomenon (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011).

Adopting P2 as the research approach provided me with the latitude and capacity to explore the recommendations made in many follow-through reports regarding teachers' practice. It provided the opportunity to calculate the number of recommendations in these reports regarding various aspects of teachers' practice and to categorise them. Analysis of the reports enabled me to establish the progress schools had made in addressing recommendations made regarding teaching practices. Meanwhile, engaging in qualitative research through interviews with teachers and principals provided the opportunity to gather data relating to their experience of evaluation.

For the most part, the quantitative data informed the answers to research questions one and two. These answers helped provide the context for the study and the findings of research questions three and four. A comprehensive understanding of the recommendations made regarding teaching practices was appropriately sought from an analysis of published, follow-through reports. Teachers' and principals' experiences of evaluation processes were more suitably investigated by interviewing teachers and principals. The decision to give weighting to qualitative data enabled the teachers' voices to be articulated and reflected in the study (Mays & Pope, 2020). It gave them prominence in the research which was an important consideration in the study. It allowed for their observations on, and insights into, the various aspects of the inspection process including feedback, emotional responses and perceptions on its effects on

their practices. Thus, it ensured that the findings of the study would be grounded in the experiences of teachers and principals. Although the mixed-methods approach is generally considered to be an effective approach for such research, there were some challenges that I had to face while conducting the study, such as the transforming of the data into a comprehensible pattern so that both types of data were appropriately integrated (Morse, 2016).

3.4 Research Philosophy and Paradigm

Within this section I address the research philosophy and paradigm behind this study. Paradigms have been conceptualised in a variety of ways, including world views, epistemological stances, and shared beliefs (Bergman, 2010; Bryman, 2007; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Morgan, 2007). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), philosophical ideas are embedded in any piece of research and affect how the research is conducted. Therefore, it is important to identify an appropriate research philosophy for the study. The research philosophy helps to identify and justify the reason for choosing the selected research approach. The research philosophy involves identifying the beliefs and philosophical assumptions about the world that the researcher brings to the study and how the researcher forms opinions and views about certain things (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). According to Bergman, paradigms, 'determine the kinds of questions researchers ask, how these questions are to be understood, what data to collect, and how to interpret research results to derive answers to these questions' (2010, p.172).

A variety of paradigms exists (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Those commonly used in social research include the post-positivist, constructivist/interpretivist, critical/transformative and pragmatist paradigms (Shannon-Baker, 2016). I chose the interpretivist paradigm as the research philosophy for this study. Within this approach, while an external reality is thought to exist, it is believed that it cannot be portrayed accurately by scientific research (Willis, 2007). The aim of interpretivist research, according to Schwandt, is to, 'understand the complex world

of lived experiences from the viewpoint of those who live it' (1998, p.221). According to Creswell (2007) the interpretivist researcher is inclined to depend on the respondent's perspective of the issue being studied and recognises the impact on the research of his/her own background. The interpretivist paradigm highlights the formation of knowledge through social interaction (O'Donoghue, 2007). The focus on social construction interested me, as did the idea that knowledge was being mutually constructed in the interpretivist approach through negotiation and that the knowledge was very specific to the situation being investigated. The interpretivist paradigm underpinned a desire for me to concentrate on the effects of evaluation on teachers' practice that would build on knowledge. The reality of each teacher and respondent's experience is within the individual and each person was subjectively involved in their own experiences. In social science the purpose of research is to acquire entry to peoples' understanding of their own situation (Bloomer & James, 2003).

A fundamental principle of the interpretivist paradigm in relation to conducting research is that it begins with the individual and sets out to understand their interpretation of the world (Cohen et al., 2007). Teachers' lived experiences of evaluation in their schools were the main subject of interest in this study. The predominant purpose of the study, however, was not to present teachers' assessments of the evaluation process it was instead to explore and understand how they experienced and responded to an evaluation in their school and how the experience brought about changes in their practices. This focus was consistent with the interpretivist view that understanding instead of explaining or critiquing is the basic aim of research (Willis, 2007). The study was intended to bring an understanding as to what personal characteristics and what features of evaluation affected their teaching practice. This focus consciously aligned itself with the interpretivist stance whereby 'the situatedness' of knowledge (Willis, 2007, 99), rather than the search for universal laws, was prioritised. I wanted to give voice to the teachers and principals so that I would understand their experiences

of evaluation. Through conversation with them, I engaged with the real world of practice and took from them a personified sense of knowing that is based on their experience of evaluation in primary schools. This is an important difference from the natural science researcher who employs a more ‘mechanistic and reductionist view of nature’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p.17). Hence, researchers who use this paradigm, for the most part, do not commence with a theory as a backdrop to research, rather, they begin to develop a theory as their research proceeds.

Those who promote this paradigm understand not only does the study impact on the sample population but the sample population influences those conducting the research. Based on this principle, it is clear that respondent’s experiences are fundamental to this paradigm and that the reality is not viewed as an external phenomena waiting to be discovered as truths but a concept in which people understand reality in other ways (Morrison in Briggs & Coleman, 2007). I was very involved in the research as I am an inspector. I was conscious that the teachers (the subjects of this research) had an impact on me as I conducted the research. The interpretive paradigm accepts the idea of subjectivity and the personal involvement of the researcher in the study (Bassey, 1995). Reflexivity meant I had to be very aware of my own positionality within the research and have a critical-self-consciousness towards the collection and analysis of the data. My positionality is discussed in section 3.7.1 while section 3.7.2 follows with the steps I took to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, rigour and validity were maintained within the study.

While this study uses a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative components, the decision to use a single paradigm is based on arguments from various scholars. Some researchers contend that, if the paradigm suits the study’s purpose, any of the theoretical perspectives can then make use of any of the methodologies (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Thus, it appears acceptable to carry out a mixed-methods study involving both

qualitative and quantitative methods in line with a single research paradigm. The decision to use a single paradigm in mixed-methods research is not new and has featured often in other social research studies (Alise and Teddlie, 2010; Giddings, 2006; Denzin, 2012).

3.5 Target population and sampling

Within this section I explain the target population and sampling process. A population is a term that refers to the entire group that a researcher intends to draw a conclusion about, whereas a sample refers to a particular number of participants from which the data are collected. The sample size is always definite, and fewer in number than the population (Mujere, 2016). Purposive sampling allows for 'the selection of specific participants' so that the sample is satisfactory to the needs of the research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). It is a non-probability sampling that results in the selection of participants whose number is assumed to be representative of the population (Suen et al., 2014). I employed a purposive sampling strategy in the research for the selection of schools. Purposive sampling facilitates the inclusion of a targeted population of participants from which relevant data can be collected.

Two samples were used. Sample one involved the collection of data from published follow-through (FT) reports and online surveys to teachers and principals. The data from FT reports was required to answer research questions one and two:

1. What is the nature of recommendations regarding teachers' practices in sample schools?
2. What progress do schools make in addressing these recommendations?

The purpose of these questions and the data from the sample is to provide the context for this research. Specifically I wanted to get a picture of the nature of inspection from the perspective of the Inspectorate in order to contextualise the data related to the teachers and principals' experience. I deemed it necessary to understand what is reported to teachers regarding teaching practices within schools as part of evaluation and to ascertain from inspectors' viewpoint what progress teachers and schools make in addressing recommendations relating to their practices.

While the data from follow-through reports provides school-based information regarding the status of teaching practices within the school it does not generate a picture of how teachers experience the process. The gap in this information provides the contexts for research questions three and four. The data from on-line surveys helped to answer research questions three and four:

3. How do teachers experience the evaluation?
4. How does the experience of evaluation affect teachers' perceptions of their practices, and, by extension, the practices themselves?

The second sample involved the collection of interview data from a specific target group of teachers and principals who have been involved in WSEs. Teacher and principal respondents in this sample fulfilled the criterion that respondents should have enough detailed information to answer the research questions (Langdridge, 2007). Their responses were deemed necessary to answer research questions three and four also.

3.5.1 Sample One (Follow-Through Reports and Online Surveys)

Seventy-one schools were included, incorporating approximately one thousand teachers, in the distribution of the online surveys to teachers and principals and for the analysis of published FT reports on the schools following a follow-through evaluation by the Department's Inspectorate.

3.5.1.1 Selection. Inclusion and exclusion principles are the criteria applied to ensure that only relevant data and a target population of participants are included in the study (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). I selected primary schools that had experienced a follow-through evaluation on a previous whole-school evaluation (WSE) by the DES Inspectorate between September 1 2016 and September 1 2019 in a specific geographical location for this research. I chose schools that had both a WSE and a follow-through evaluation as they would have experienced the WSE process and also a subsequent follow-through evaluation to establish the

level of progress the schools had made in implementing the recommendations arising from the original WSE pertaining to teachers' practice. Published reports were available with this information and I surveyed teachers and principals within this sample also as they would have the necessary knowledge and experience to contribute to the research questions. This data was necessary as I wanted to depict what areas of practice evaluation was focussing on from the inspectors' perspective.

Being an inspector was very beneficial in selecting schools. I was very familiar with how the country was divided up regionally for inspection and so was able to target a particular geographical area (with which, as an inspector, I had no association) and select schools in a very efficient and timely manner. The Inspectorate is divided into five geographical regions/business units for planning and carrying out evaluations. All primary schools that had a follow-through evaluation within the specific time period (September 1 2016 and September 1 2019) in one of the five geographical regions/business units were included in the research. Each of the five regions/business units of the Inspectorate are almost identical to each other in terms of the profile of schools in which they operate. Like all business units of the Inspectorate, the business unit I chose schools from contains a wide variety of primary schools including small country schools with teaching principals, middle and large town and city schools with administrative principals, single-sex and mixed schools, schools participating in DEIS (the Department of Education and Skills initiative for educational inclusion), those operating through the medium of Irish, special schools, and schools operating with a variety of patrons. The schools within the chosen geographical area are thus representative of all primary schools in the country.

The three-year timeframe was chosen to ensure there would be enough follow-through evaluations conducted within the chosen location to enable engagement with a wide variety of

schools for both the surveys and interviews and to ensure a good sample of published reports would be analysed. I also chose this timeframe to ensure teachers and principals would have had sufficient time to have considered how evaluation impacted on their practices. The schools that had a follow-through evaluation within business unit three for the specified time were identified through the Inspectorate's Information Management Inspection System (IMIS), which maintains a list of all evaluated schools during a given period for all business units. As a practitioner-researcher I was aware of such information being held on IMIS and alert to how useful a tool it would be for assessing information about evaluation, such as:

- Numbers and types of evaluations completed within a particular timeframe
- Names and locations (on a county-by-county, regional or national basis) of schools that had evaluations conducted.

While it would have been possible for any researcher to establish which schools had a follow-through evaluation within a particular county or region by consulting www.gov.ie, such an approach would have been cumbersome and the use of the IMIS system was a more time-efficient approach to identify the schools within Sample One. The gatekeeper for permission to use the IMIS data was the Assistant Chief Inspector with responsibility for the Evaluation, Support and Research Unit (ESRU) of the Inspectorate. I sought permission for use of the system for my research from the Assistant Chief Inspector with responsibility for ESRU. There was no gatekeeper for the follow-through reports since they were publicly available (Denscombe, 2002). The data from surveys were collected over three months from mid-March 2020 to mid-May 2020.

All teachers and principals working in the 71 schools were invited to complete the online survey. I sourced schools' contact details (phone number and email address) which are publicly available through the website, www.schooldays.ie. I also chose to inform the principal of the school that the contact details had been accessed through a publicly accessible website

and to reinforce the message that I was conducting this research as a student of Maynooth University and not in a professional capacity with the Department of Education. I sent an email to each school's email address requesting the recipient of the email to forward it to each teacher and the principal of the school (Appendix A). The email detailed the research objectives, the rationale as to why the school had been chosen, my profile as a researcher, details of ethical considerations to be adhered to, and a link to the online survey. I followed up with a phone call to the school secretary to ensure the email had been received and to request that it be brought to the attention of the school principal and teachers.

3.5.1.2 Response. There were approximately 1,000 teachers employed in the 71 schools. I estimated this number by visiting the website of each of the schools (where such a website existed) and checking the context paragraph in the published WSE report for the school to establish staff numbers. While this did not give a precise number, it offered a good estimation of staff numbers. I followed up my initial email to each school with a phone call to each principal, drawing his/her attention to the email and requesting that it be sent to all teachers in the school since I could not be at all sure how many teachers had received the email with the link to the survey. The profile of the schools was varied and included small rural schools, large urban schools, schools participating in DEIS, single-sex schools, mixed schools, denominational and multi-denominational schools, English medium schools, Gaelscoileanna, and special schools. One hundred and thirty-one responses to the online surveys were received from the 71 schools.

3.5.2 Sample Two (Interview Participants)

In this section I describe how I selected schools and teachers for interviews.

3.5.2.1 Selection of schools. From the cohort of schools selected within sample one, eight schools were selected to take part in semi-structured interviews. The principals in all eight schools were selected for an interview and selected teachers within each school were also

interviewed. Data from these interviewees were deemed necessary to answer research questions two to four since teachers and principals could provide valuable insights into the progress they made developing teaching practices in their schools, how they experienced evaluation, and how (if at all) the experience of evaluation brought about changes in their teaching practices. The eight schools were selected systematically using the application of specific criteria, as described below.

I wanted to choose a good selection of schools to provide variety and richness within the data. Firstly, the profiles of the 71 schools were categorised as follows:

1. Schools with teaching principals
2. Schools with administrative principals
3. School ethos - Catholic
4. School ethos - Educate Together Schools (There were only two patron bodies within the list of 71 schools; Catholic schools and Educate Together Schools)
5. School location - Urban
6. School location - Rural
7. Pupil composition – single-sex (boys)
8. Pupil composition – single-sex (girls)
9. Pupil composition – co-educational
10. Schools with classes for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
11. School operating under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education).
12. Special Schools
13. Gaelscoileanna

Using the Excel application on Microsoft Word, each category listed above was assigned a column. If a school from the list of 71 identified with that category, it was listed in

one or more of the 13 categories listed above. There was predictable duplication since schools had multiple features – for example, those that had administrative principals, Catholic schools, urban schools, mixed schools, or schools participating in DEIS. Each of the thirteen columns were shuffled using the random selection option on Microsoft Excel. Since small schools with teaching principals represent approximately 60% of primary schools in Ireland, I decided that half of the schools selected should have a teaching principal, and the other half should be from the schools that had administrative principals. The first four schools on the list for 'teaching principals' and 'administrative principals' were selected. To ensure variety within the final list, the eight schools chosen were reviewed to ascertain whether the remaining 11 categories of schools were also represented in the final list. If one category was overrepresented, for example, co-educational within the 'schools with an administrative principal', I chose the next school on the list that was not co-educational. I repeated this approach to ensure the inclusion of a variety of schools.

Table 5 (below) provides a profile of the schools from which the principals and teachers were interviewed. It was not possible to include a special school or a single-sex girls' school as there was only one school in each of these categories and both of them declined to take part in the research.

Table 5

Profile of Schools Selected for Semi-Structured Interviews

School	**School Size**	**Description/Context**	**Number of School Personnel Interviewed**
School one	582 pupils enrolled Administrative principal 22 mainstream class teachers 2 special education teachers 6 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational, Catholic school that provides a class for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a class for pupils with moderate general learning difficulties (MGLD)	Principal + 3 teachers
School two	100 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream class teachers 2 support teachers (1 shared with a neighbouring school)	Small, rural, co-educational Catholic school.	Principal + 2 teachers
School three	370 pupils enrolled Administrative principal 15 mainstream class teachers 1 special education teacher 6 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational school operating under the patronage of Educate Together. It provides a special class for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Principal + 4 teachers
School four	400 pupils enrolled Administrative Principal 21 mainstream class teachers 3 special education teachers 11 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational, Catholic school that provides three classes for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The school operates under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education)	Principal + 3 teachers
School five	650 pupils enrolled Administrative Principal and Deputy Principal 28 mainstream class teachers	Large, urban, co-educational, Catholic school, which provides seven classes for pupils with Autism	Principal + 2 teachers

	7 special education teachers 11 support teachers	Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The school operated under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education)	
School six	96 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream class teachers 2 support teachers (1 of them shared with a neighbouring school)	Small, rural, single-sex (boys') Catholic school.	Principal + 3 teachers
School seven	100 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream classes	Small, rural, co-educational Catholic school. The school operates under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education)	Principal + 1 teacher
School eight	100 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream classes 1 special education teacher 2 support teachers (1 of them shared with a neighbouring school)	Small, rural, co-educational Catholic school, which provides one class for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).	Principal + 3 teachers
Total			21 teachers and 8 principals across 8 schools

3.5.3 Selection of Principals and Teachers

I contacted the relevant schools by phone and explained to the principal the research process and invited the principal and a selection of teachers to take part in a semi-structured interview. I followed up this initial phone call with a detailed email (see Appendix B) detailing the particulars of the research and what the interviews with the participants involved. The principal, chairperson of the school's Board of Management and the teachers were invited to consider the request. I requested the principal to inform me within a few days of his/her

decision whether to participate in the research. The email included consent forms to be signed by the chairperson of the Board of Management, the principal and the teachers.

In cases where a school indicated that it was willing to take part, I sent an email to the principal to be forwarded to each teacher. This email (see Appendix B) invited each teacher to reply directly to me as to whether they wished to participate. To ensure the teachers would not feel, or be, coerced into being involved, the email to the teachers emphasised that they were free to discard the email if they wished and, for that matter, not even to respond to it; the email also informed them that participation was entirely voluntary and that, irrespective of their decision, they would not receive a follow-up email. Of those who wished to reply and participate in the research, I requested that they provide some contextual information in order to get the perspectives of as wide a variety of teachers as possible about their experiences of evaluation Prospective participants were asked to provide the following details as a result:

1. Male/female
2. Years of service as a teacher
3. Years of service in the school in question
4. Whether they were a member of the in-school management team

I informed teachers in the original email that not all who expressed interest in participating would be selected. This was necessary to ensure that I would get a variety of teachers within the sample, for example if a high number of teachers from the in-school management team volunteered, or, a high volume of teachers with less than five years' experience expressed interest I would try to choose a teacher from each of the groups rather than selecting from a single category and ignoring another. A sufficient number of emails containing expressions of interest were received. All the principals within the eight schools agreed, and were selected, to participate. To ensure the selection of a cross-section of teachers from various backgrounds and contexts for the research, the following selection criteria were applied:

1. Junior and senior infant level teachers
2. First and second class level teachers
3. Third and fourth class level teachers
4. Fifth and sixth class level teachers
5. Special education teachers
6. Teachers teaching in the school during both evaluations (WSE and FT)
7. Newly-appointed teachers not on staff at the time of the evaluations
8. Teachers with less than ten years' teaching experience
9. Teachers with more than ten years' teaching experience
10. Teachers who were members of the in-school management team (the researcher was interested to know whether the evaluation affected these teachers from the perspective of their management role within the school).

For each of the four larger schools, a column was assigned in the Microsoft Excel document to each of the above ten categories of teachers who expressed interest in participating. In some instances, no teacher could be assigned under a particular category; in others, more than one teacher was included in some of the categories. On occasions where there was more than one teacher within a category, I used the random selection option in Excel and the teacher on the top of that list was identified for selection. There was also some overlap between teachers in each column, for example, teachers with greater than ten years' experience and those who were members of the in-school management team. I selected at least one teacher from each of the categories one to ten above (where such existed) to include a variety of teachers in the sample.

While it was possible (to an extent) to apply these criteria in the larger schools (schools one, three, four and five), the smaller number of teachers in the smaller schools (two, six, seven and eight) meant that it was not possible to get a sample of teachers across the range of the criteria listed above. In such cases I selected all the teachers who had expressed interest.

3*.5.3.1 Response*. In total, I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews, comprising one interview with the principal in each of the eight schools and an interview with a group of teachers within each of the eight schools. The groups varied in size from two teachers to four teachers; 29 participants were interviewed in total.

There was a good variety of teachers interviewed, which supported the purpose of this study. They included:

- Fourteen class teachers (various class levels), three special education teachers and four support teachers.
- Teachers who were members of in-school management teams (two deputy principals and six assistant principals).
- Two teachers newly qualified at the time of the original evaluation.
- One teacher who was not on the teaching staff for either of the evaluations.
- Teachers whose length of service varied from three to more than 20 years at the time of the research.

I conducted the interviews over two months from April to June 2020. This was an 'adequate' time to collect the data so that they data became 'saturated' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.259).

3.5.4 Data Accessed in the Research

The total number of participants across the two samples in the study, including online surveys and semi-structured interviews, was 160. I deemed the inclusion of this population of participants sufficient to answer research questions two to four. In addition, I selected 71 follow-through reports to answer research questions one and two.

3.6 Data types

This section outlines the various date types I employed in the research. For this study, I used online surveys to gather quantitative data, and some qualitative data, from teachers and principals. I also used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from teachers and

principals. In addition, I accessed published follow-through reports available on www.gov.ie. As well as deciding which data type was the most suitable to answer the research questions, three data types were used to support the study's credibility, validity and trustworthiness. These three data sets were triangulated: 'triangulation, in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's blinders' (Patton, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.245). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), within the interpretivist/constructivist perspective (the paradigm on which this study is based) triangulation is important to ensure validity and reliability. The following three subsection discuss each data type.

3.6.1 Follow-Through Reports

I analysed seventy-one published follow-through (FT) reports from region three of the Inspectorate. FT reports describe a school's progress in implementing the recommendations from a previous evaluation. The FT reports in this research refer to a school's progress in implementing recommendations from Whole School Evaluations (WSEs) that had occurred within three years before the date of the FT report. The FT reports include an inspector's judgement(s) on the degree to which the school has implemented the main recommendations of the previous evaluation (WSE) conducted in the school. The following qualitative scale was utilised in all reports to assess the progress the schools made in implementing the recommendations in the original report:

Very good progress	Good progress	Partial progress	No progress

The FT reports also include commentary to describe the level of progress for each recommendation and conclude with the main findings and any further recommendations (where necessary).

Analysis of these reports was necessary to respond to research questions one and two (the nature of recommendations regarding teachers' practices and establishing what progress schools had made in addressing recommendations relating to teachers' practices). I considered the analysis of FT reports (both qualitative findings and narrative sections) essential to this research as they comprehensively describe, from the Inspectorate's perspective, the effects of evaluation on various components of teachers' practices, including:

- Pedagogical knowledge
- Capacity to create effective learning environments for teaching and learning
- Planning, preparation and assessment practices
- Selection and use of teaching approaches and methodologies for teaching and learning
- Awareness of pupils' individual learning needs and teaching practices to help overcome individual challenges of pupils.

3.6.2 Online Surveys

Data were also collected via online surveys, with questionnaires being distributed among the target population of participants (see Appendix C). Online surveys are widely used by researchers for the collection of large amounts of quantitative data. I chose online surveys for the following reasons:

- Accessibility: they were accessible to most of the target participants, regardless of where they were (Chang and Vowles, 2013).
- Cost-effectiveness, flexibility and overall effectiveness: they were free to use, provided flexibility in terms of their design via the JISC programme (described below), and were a convenient source of data that prompted an appropriate response rate (Bryman, 2017).

- Credibility and reliability: their use did not require my presence and therefore meant I could not influence the research participants and survey fraud was less likely (Powney & Watts, 2018).
- Efficient data handling was possible due to the automation of data input and handling.

I was conscious that there were certain limitations associated with the online surveys. They included the fact that participants might not have been fully engaged in contributing to the data if they were completing it for more than 8 to 10 minutes (Powney & Watts, 2018). With this limitation in mind, I designed the survey to ensure that it could be completed within that timeframe.

I included consent to take part in the survey as a mandatory requirement of the survey to ensure I complied with ethical considerations. The survey was designed not to collect any personal data such as names, dates of birth, address, phone numbers, etc. I contacted the school secretary and invited her to forward the email with the survey link to the principal and teachers. The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed questions (Appendix C). The closed questions elicited responses from which quantitative data was extracted. I provided a five-point scale for responses. They included ‘Strongly disagree,’ ‘Disagree,’ ‘Neutral (no opinion),’ ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly agree.’ The questionnaire also provided some open/free text boxes for participants to expand on their answers or to provide additional perspectives or opinions, which also provided qualitative data.

Two of the research questions in the study refer to teachers’ experience of evaluation and how (if at all) it influenced changes in their teaching practice from their perspective; the use of the survey was deemed appropriate as one of the means of collecting this data because it enabled the researcher to:

- Gather teachers' and principals' perceptions of evaluation from a greater number of respondents in the targeted population than would have been possible with interviews (Snelson, 2016) and increase the response rate (Bryman, 2017).
- Interweave and triangulate rich data from the surveys with the other data types in the study (semi-structured interviews).
- Gather both quantitative and qualitative data; the use of open-text boxes allowed respondents to provide a rich detailed contextual description critical for interpretivist researchers (Willis, 2007).

The questions contained within the survey were included to help to answer research questions three and four. For example, Question 13 sought to garner teachers' perspectives on what aspects of their practice improved because of evaluation, while question 14 aimed to ascertain whether changes to their practice were sustained. Question 19 was intended to gather the principals' perspectives on whether progress had been made in addressing the Inspectorate's recommendations regarding teaching practices.

To address research questions three, several questions (nine, 10, 15 and 16) were put to teachers. These questions obtained their perspectives regarding their overall experiences of the evaluation process. Meanwhile, questions 11, 12, 13, 14 and 18 provided teachers' perspectives regarding research question four, i.e., how the experience of evaluation affects teachers' perceptions of their practices, and, by extension, the practices themselves. Questions 20 to 24 ascertained the views of principals regarding how teachers experienced evaluation and how the experience influenced changes in their practices. While teachers were the most appropriate participants from whom to obtain views of how they experienced the evaluation, I considered it important to seek the views of principals to triangulate the data to contribute to the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

I developed the surveys via JISC, available at www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk. I utilised JISC for its ease of use, and it was recommended by Maynooth University from the perspective of data protection. JISC is an online survey mechanism that enables researchers to create a survey form and collect data through a secure server (Housewright, Wulfson & Schonfeld, 2014). It provides a flexible design with multiple formats and question types and was used to design various kinds of questions. It also provides an option to analyse data, and this assisted me in collating the data and exporting them to other programmes (JISC, 2021). JISC was beneficial for this study in that it helped me to conduct the survey, collect the data and organise them efficiently in a way that might not have been possible using more conventional methods.

Questionnaires raise questions about their validity and reliability. Belson (1986), Cohen et al. (2018) and Fowler (2009) query their validity based on whether respondents answer them accurately, honestly, and correctly. The issue of respondents misunderstanding questions has been raised as a possible risk affecting their validity and trustworthiness (Fowler, 2009). Belson (1986) questions whether respondents who failed to return their questionnaires would have given the same answers as those who returned theirs. To address these challenges and strengthen the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of questionnaires, I:

- Piloted questionnaires among six participants who were not involved with the study (three teachers and three principals). I sought their feedback regarding the online survey’s clarity of questions and asked them for any further insights regarding how to make the survey more effective.
- Sought advice about the questionnaire from my supervisor and made any necessary changes to it on foot of the supervisor’s recommendations.
- Informed participants of the anonymity and non-traceability of their responses, thereby reducing the risk of inaccurate responses (Cohen et al, 2018, p.278).

I also adopted strategies suggested by Hudson & Miller (1997) to bolster responses. This involved informing the prospective participants of the importance of the survey and the possible benefits of being involved, including having their voices heard regarding evaluation and the possibility of the findings being used to improve policy in this area. They were also given several reminders of their impending participation to better ensure their participation.

3.6.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the online surveys, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants. There are various benefits associated with the use of semi-structured interviews (Plowney & Watts, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest that qualitative research investigates people's constructions of reality. Just as there can be many eye-witness accounts to an event, there can also be many constructions of how someone has experienced a particular phenomenon and how they make meaning of their lives. As human beings are valuable sources of insight and data in social science research, their perceptions of reality are accessed directly through interviews and observations. For me, there was great value and relevance in the use of interviews among teachers and principals. The selection of interviews as a research instrument in this study provided me with the opportunity to:

- Hear first-hand from teachers and principals about their experiences of evaluation and how those experiences influenced changes in teaching practices.
- Openly discuss the participants' perceptions about evaluation and talk about sensitive issues relating to it (McKim, 2017).
- Acquire qualitative data that could be compared with previous research and other data obtained in the study.
- Ask opened-ended questions that helped to acquire insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions (Roulston, 2019) and allow them the flexibility to respond

openly and authentically. Open-ended interviews allow participants to portray their unique way of understanding the world (Silverman, 1993).

I also chose interviews because they allowed participants to respond to questions as they wished. Open-ended questions were used (Appendix D) since they did not offer participants fixed or pre-determined options, which aided the collection of a comprehensive range of observations and insights. They allowed the teachers and principals to describe their experiences in their unique way (Silverman, 1993). They enabled important yet unanticipated issues to be raised (Silverman, 1993) about their experiences of evaluation and how it influenced their practices, thereby adding to the validity of this study.

A crucial way to achieve greater validity in interviews is to reduce bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Examples of researcher bias that can influence the interview include attitudes; opinions; an inclination by the interviewer to view the interview participant in the interviewer's image; a bias by the interviewer to pursue answers that facilitate their preconceived notions; and a the respondent misunderstanding a question (Maxwell, 2005). Oppenheim (1992) mentions other manifestations of bias:

- A poor rapport between the interviewer and respondent(s)
- Ineffective prompting
- Inconsistent coding
- Poor handling of difficult questions

Morrison (1993) suggests that leading questions pose a significant risk of bias in interviews. To mitigate against the risk of bias and to contribute to the validity within interviews, I ensured that:

1. Questions were carefully formulated so as to make their meaning clear (Fowler, 2009); a trial interview was conducted with a teacher, who provided feedback regarding the clarity of the questions.

2. I knew the subject matter of the interviews thoroughly to ensure an informed conversation (Kvale, 1996).
3. I sought to structure and managed the interview well; even though it was a semi-structured interview I intended to make each stage of the interview very clear to the participants (Kvale, 1996).
4. I made every effort to be sensitive and empathic toward the participants while actively listening to how something was said (Kvale, 1996).
5. I would keep to the point and steer the interview where necessary to check for reliability, validity and consistency in responses.
6. No leading questions would be asked (Morrison, 1993).

The interviews included questions that were predetermined, while others unfolded as the interviews proceeded. I developed a range of potential follow up questions per area of enquiry so that I could respond to statements the participants may give. These additional questions allowed me to explore and identify effectively further information about participants' experiences of evaluation (Cachia & Millward, 2011). Appendix D contains a schedule of questions used to guide the interviews with teachers, while Appendix E contains questions that were used during interviews with principals.

Face-to-face interviews are always considered more effective and productive than other research instruments (Opdenakker, 2006). They help to overcome errors and misunderstandings and to clarify statements that are not quite clear. Due to the pandemic, people were restricting their movements and were advised not to meet others except for essential purposes. I, therefore, chose to conduct all interviews virtually.

There were limitations inherent in this approach, which have previously been identified elsewhere. In some instances, low internet speed caused interruptions on the line and thereby negatively affected the quality of the engagement and the recording (Snelson, 2016). Such

technical issues resulted in some relevant information being missing, reducing the quality of responses (Powney & Watts 2018). On these occasions, I stopped the interview until normal connectivity was restored. In some instances, the presence of visible social or non-verbal cues was reduced as I did not have a full view of the participant's face, body, or hand gestures (Opdenakker, 2006). Online interviews can restrict the creation of a comfortable ambiance for the interview (Opdenakker, 2006). I endeavoured to overcome this difficulty and make the participants as comfortable as possible by chatting with them at the beginning of the interview, inviting them to bring along a coffee, or discussing current events in Ireland and abroad just before the interview.

I used the software applications Microsoft Teams to plan, conduct and record the online interviews. This application also created an automatic transcript of the interview. This facility enabled me to play back the audio recordings and search for the important points in the transcript (Ilag, 2020). This application not only facilitated automatic transcribing of the interview; it also ensured the accuracy of the data that I collected. The application also allowed me to edit the transcription, which supported rigour in the data. I rectified any anomalies between the audio recordings and the transcript by listening to the recordings a second time. A copy of the transcript was provided to each participant for 'respondent validation' (Cohen et al., 2018, p.247) once I had cleaned up and edited. I chose to do this as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Cohen et al. (2018) all suggest that the researcher takes data back to the participants for 'member check' to verify for accuracy, contributing to the trustworthiness, validity and rigour of the research. No changes to the transcripts were recommended by any of the participants.

3.6.4 Data Analysis (Thematic Analysis)

In this section I outline the process I engaged in for analysis of the data. Data analysis refers to the process where statistical or logical strategies are systematically applied to describe,

condense, and evaluate the collected data and information (Judd, McClelland & Ryan, 2011). I used thematic analysis to analyse the data. While some authors, such as Boyatzis (1998) and Ryan and Bernard (2000) as cited in Braun and Clarke (2006), argue that thematic analysis is a tool rather than a method of research, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it is a method in its own right. I used it as a method, for the following reasons:

- Its compatibility with the interpretivist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the paradigm on which the research is based.
- It supports the analysis of experiences, meaning and the reality of participants (Braun &Clarke, 2006), which are significant in the present study.
- It offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data; it is a relatively easy and quick method to learn and so it suited a new researcher.
- Thematic analysis supports the identification of themes or patterns across an entire data set and not just a single data item (Braun & Clarke, 2006). (This study had multiple items and two data sets (to respond to research questions three and four).
- It supported the identification of similarities and differences across the data sets, which was important for gaining a deep understanding of teachers' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I applied three analytic techniques to the data: a low level quantitative analysis by percentage of data contained within the surveys and FT reports to answer research questions one to three, a deductive analysis of the FT reports to answer research questions one and two, and an inductive analysis approach of surveys and interviews to answer research questions three and four.

JISC provide me with the facility of exporting the answers to particular questions in the teachers and principals' survey in percentage/frequency format. The data containing percentages are incorporated into chapter four of this study in the format of tables and figures.

Given the manageable number of FT reports analysed I was able to manually count various parts of the data to form percentage tables, for example I counted the total number of recommendations contained within all reports and subsequently counted the total number of recommendations pertaining to teachers' practice and expressed the latter as a percentage of the overall number of recommendations. This process was repeated to support the analysis of quantitative data that could be extracted from the FT report.

The deductive approach was used to identify the recommendations inspectors had made in their evaluations regarding teaching practices and the progress made in addressing those recommendations (Research questions one and two). This approach is discussed in Section 3.6.5 (below). To respond to research questions three and four, I analysed data from the surveys and interviews using an inductive approach (explained in Section 3.6.6). The reporting of the analysis integrated the quantitative and qualitative data – on occasions this was presented in a single Section and, in other instances, outlined in subsequent paragraphs. Where possible, opportunities were exploited to integrate both quantitative and qualitative results. This reflected Bryman's interpretation of mixed-methods research, wherein the quantitative and qualitative findings are mutually informative (2007, 21). Analyses and the mixing of quantitative and qualitative findings were supported by the interpretivist acknowledgement that the teachers', principals', and inspectors' accounts (both quantitative and qualitative) and the patterns identified throughout them reflected teachers, principals' and inspectors' construction of meaning and not the complete, objectively observable truth about the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices.

I used MAXQDA to support thematic analysis of the data contained within the open-ended text boxes of the surveys and the transcripts of the interviews.

3.6.5 Deductive Analysis (Follow-Through Reports Surveys and Interview Data)

This section explains how deductive analysis was used to analyse the follow-through reports. Each dataset is discussed separately in the three following subsections.

3.6.5.1 Follow-Through Reports. To examine the recommendations in evaluations regarding teaching practices and the schools' progress in addressing those recommendations (research questions one and two), I analysed 71 FT reports. This analysis was conducted in two parts. Firstly, quantitative data were extracted to ascertain:

- The total number of recommendations that were made in the original WSE across all aspects of schooling including leadership and management, school planning and school self-evaluation, teaching and learning and support for pupils within the 71 reports.
- The total number of recommendations regarding teaching and learning.
- The schools' overall progress in addressing teaching and learning recommendations based on the published continuum (no progress, partial progress, good progress, very good progress).
- The sub-categories within the teaching and learning recommendations (planning and preparation, teaching approaches and methodologies, teachers' assessment practices and teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs).
- The schools' overall progress in addressing the recommendations within the sub-categories.

Secondly, I analysed the descriptive, main findings and recommendations sections of the FT reports, applying a deductive or top-down approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). This approach used the four components of teachers' practice as described in LAOS (DES, 2016c) as the starting point for looking at the texts. Each component (teachers' planning and preparation, teaching approaches and methodologies, teachers' assessment practices and teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs) were used as the lens for the

analysis of the texts. I reviewed the descriptive aspects of the reports carefully for content and text that related to each of the components. As I have written many of these types of reports, I was very aware of the language that pertained to each of the components and efficiently identified text that related to teachers' practices. I was able to identify within the reports what was being identified as a strength in teachers' practices and what further recommendations were being made. While this should be apparent for all readers of reports, my familiarity with the reports supported efficient analysis at this stage in the process.

3.6.6 Inductive Analysis (Surveys and Interview Data).

I chose the inductive approach of the thematic analysis method for the analysis of data to answer research questions three and four since it meant that the themes identified regarding each question were strongly linked to the data themselves (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and I wanted the voices of teachers and principals to be central to the analysis. The use of inductive analysis is one of the principles that support validity in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2018). The application of thematic analysis allowed for various themes to be elicited from the data to answer the questions (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). I chose this approach as it allowed me to code the data with an open mind, without trying to tailor it to a pre-existing coding frame or my preconceptions. This approach allowed me to mitigate any biases. The themes that emerged were relevant to the study as they captured important data and patterned responses regarding teachers' experiences of evaluation and how their experience of it influenced changes in their teaching practices. These themes are defined, explored and discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this study. This was an insightful stage in the process, deep engagement with the vast amount of text from the transcription of interviews (approximately 16 hours of interviews and text from open-ended text boxes in questionnaires) allowed for deep, rich and robust data. The challenge was overcome by using a software package which is discussed below but most

importantly by apportioning myself a significant amount of time for this crucial aspect of the research.

I applied the six stages of data evaluation outlined by Braun and Clarke (Figure six). They comprise familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining, and naming the themes, and producing the report.

Figure 6

Phases of Thematic Analysis - Braun and Clarke (2006)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

I used MAXQDA to support me in this process. MAXQDA is widely used for mixed-methods and qualitative research and is an effective, user-friendly, and innovative software tool (Verbi Software, 2017). It is compatible with various research design types, including mixed-methods research (Morse, 2016). MAXQDA was supportive in analysing the data as it was able to work with both types of data (surveys and interviews). I used it to sort the data, generate codes (Figure 7) and create helpful visualisations (Figure 8) to help to make sense of the data.

3.6.6.1 Six-Step Process of Analysis. In this subsection I provide an overview of how I applied the six step process by Braun and Clarke (2006) within the research.

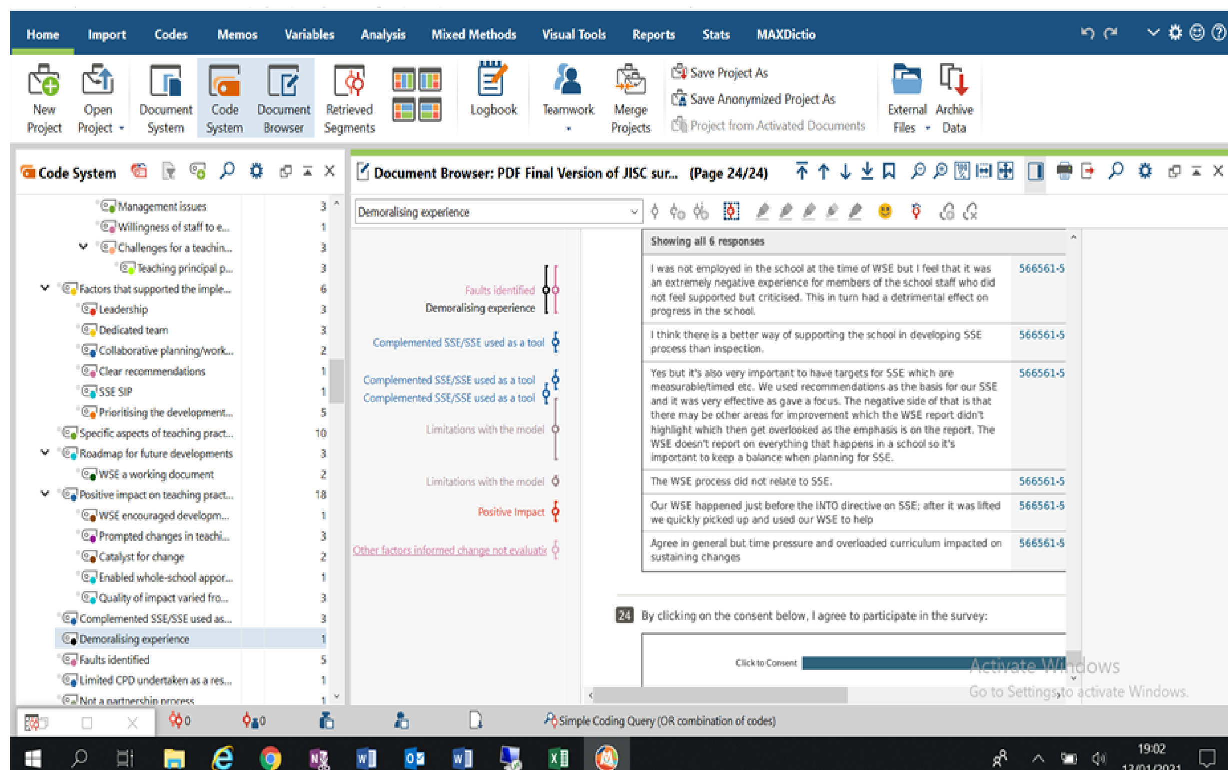
1. I familiarised himself with the raw data by listening to the recordings of the interviews and by reading and re-reading the texts to search for patterns and meanings and to log ideas. Due to connectivity issues at the time of recording the interviews, some of the transcripts that were generated through Microsoft Teams were either incomplete or

inaccurate. All transcripts had, therefore, to be checked and edited to ensure that they matched the recordings. This process was very beneficial in becoming familiar with the data.

2. I imported all interview transcripts and text from open-ended questions to MAXQDA and text that was of interest was highlighted and assigned various codes (Figure 7, below). To avoid poor coding, care was taken in the coding of text, which supported validity (Cohen et al., 2018, p.267). On completion of this phase, I had 256 codes generated (1,215 coded segments of text across seventeen documents; 16 interview transcripts, and one document with all the qualitative responses from the open-ended text boxes in the surveys).

Figure 7

Phase Two – Generating Initial Codes



3. In searching for themes, I revisited the 256 codes and condensed them to 194 codes by merging similar and duplicate ones. I then reviewed the codes to find potential themes

relevant to research questions three and four. Four themes were identified from the variety of codes that related to research question three, each of them containing a selection of sub-themes (Figure 8 below). Two themes were considered relevant to research question four (Figure 9, below). The MAXMaps function in MAXQDA was used to create a thematic map and support the organisation and visualisation of the themes and subsequent sub-themes (Figures 8 & 9).

Figure 8

Phase Three – Identification of Themes Using MAXMaps (MAXQDA) for Research Question Three

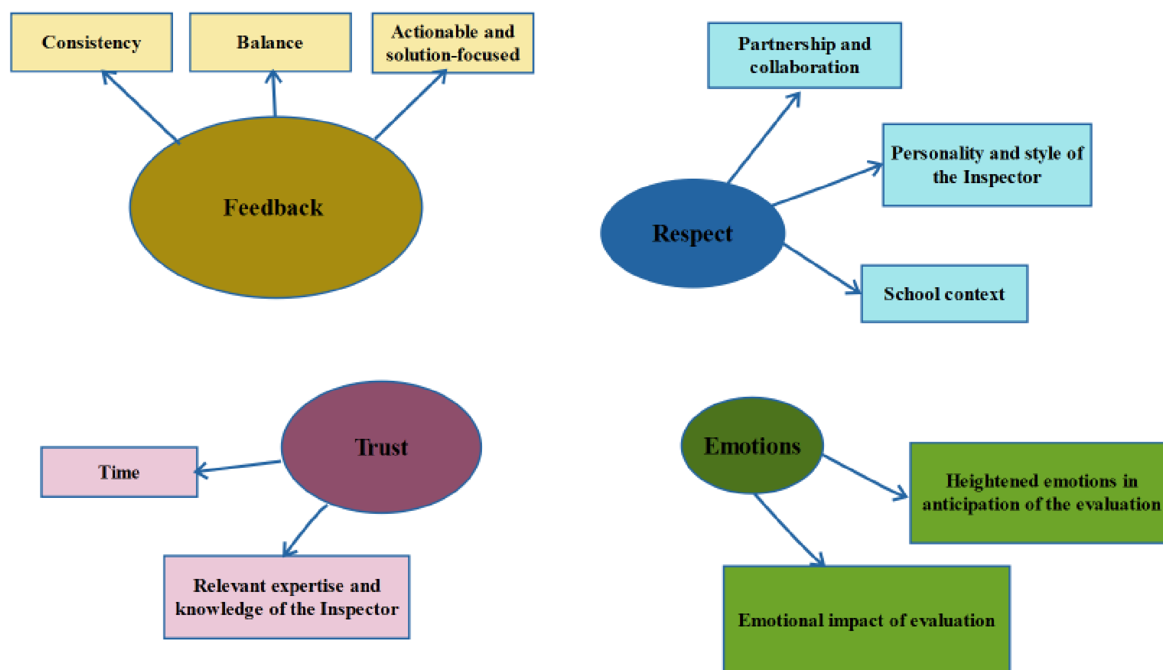
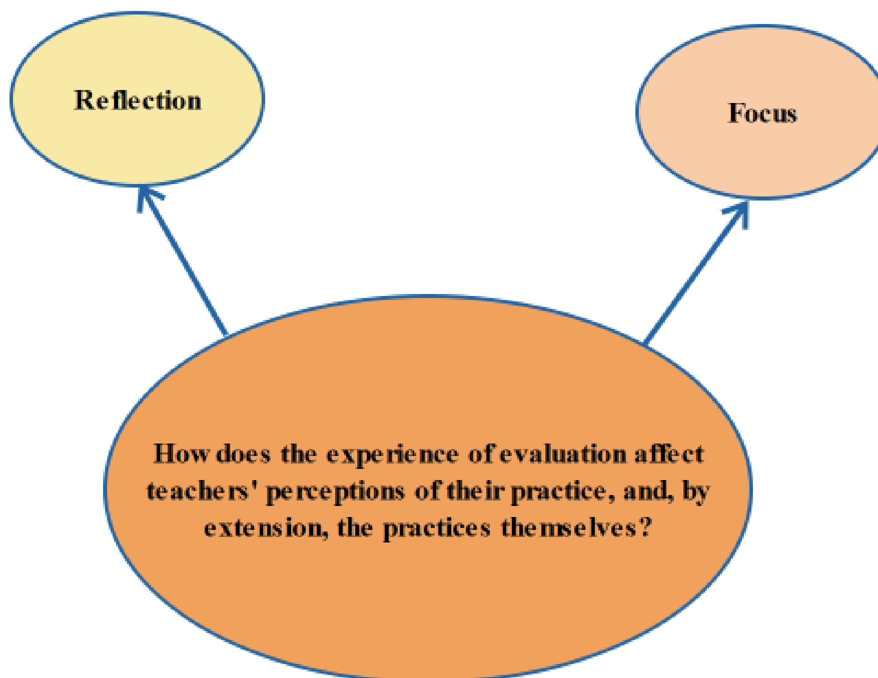


Figure 9

Phase Three – Identification of Themes Using MAXMaps (MAXQDA) for Research Question Four



4. I reviewed the themes to ensure they worked in the context of the coded extracts.

5. Each theme was defined (as outlined in Chapter Four)

6. The themes were utilised to produce the report, while the maps served as an effective tool to guide the analysis. They enabled a range of highlighted texts to be efficiently accessed and included along with relevant codes under each sub-theme and theme.

Throughout the steps I checked my positionality and reflexivity at regular intervals. I was checking in my personal positions in relation to particular codes and themes as I was aware they could influence the research (Homes, 2020). I endeavoured to be honest and explicit about my position and the influence it could have on the analysis. I attempted to be neutral when analysing the data but at the same time I was very conscious that it is difficult for anyone to be completely neutral or objective (Homes, 2020). I engaged in a range of checks to support

quality in the research and to take account of my positionality so that I could present my findings and interpretations with confidence; both research quality and my positionality are discussed in the next section.

3.7 Research Quality

Quality research refers to the scientific process that involves all aspects of the research design. It reflects the amalgamation between the research questions and the selected research methods, subject selection, measurements of results, and protection from bias and inferential errors (NCDDR, 2003; Spooner & Browder, 2003). Research is conducted so that items of effective and helpful information about the topic are put into their respective fields. The research must contribute effectively so that it can be used by students, teachers, and other researchers for further studies. Hence, the quality of the research must be given considerable attention.

Some indicators that helped me in keeping this research quality consistent, and which were considered during the research, were trustworthiness, credibility, rigour (reliability), validity (see Section 3.7.2), and ethical considerations (Section 3.7.3) (Johnson et al., 2020). Acknowledgement of my positionality and identity (Section 3.7.1) was also crucial in maintaining research quality. The methods I systematically adopted to ensure research quality and to deal with any possible biases resulting from my positionality are dealt with in Section 3.7.2 (below).

3.7.1 Positionality

Positionality is an important consideration in research. It influences how the research is carried out and determines the outcomes (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The researcher is regarded as the main research instrument in qualitative research (Dressman, 2008; McCartan et al., 2012). Biases in the researcher interfere with internalising and analysing information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, these biases should not be classed as a flaw but as

another layer of complexity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Bias needs to be rigorously accounted for (Butler-Kisber, 2010). The steps I took to minimise the risk of bias(es) are included in Section 3.7.2.

During this research, I was working full time as an inspector with the Department of Education. This is a position with perceived power and therefore I was very conscious of how I navigated my way through the research while working with teachers and analysing the data. I took a number of steps to address this aspect of my positionality. From the outset, and in line with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning this research the rights of the participants (i.e. teachers and principals) took priority over my interests. Participants were provided with detailed information regarding the aims of the research, my identity and background and their prospective commitment had they chosen to become involved in the research study. Participants who chose to become involved were informed in advance of engaging with interviews and throughout the interview that they could choose to remove themselves from the study at any point. A partnership approach was adopted with the participants throughout the period when interviews were taking place. Times to engage in interviews were chosen to suit them. I informed participants that while I was an inspector I was engaging in this research in a private capacity and that any information I collected could only be used for the purposes of the research and could not be used to inform my work in the Inspectorate. Teachers and principals were made aware that I was not working in their geographical region and that it was unlikely that I would evaluate in their setting in the future. All interviews were conducted online, I had never met any of the participants in advance. To help allay any fears or anxieties participants may have had I emailed all teachers and principals twenty four hours in advance to thank them for taking the time to meet and to provide them with an opportunity to phone me if there was anything they would like to query or talk about. Participants were encouraged to bring a cup of coffee to the online meeting and I used fifteen minutes at the start of the interview session to

get to know the participants and telling them about myself, my area and family. This significantly supported the teachers in easing them into the interview.

Throughout the interview I did not over react to any answers. I followed up with open ended questions such as, ‘can you tell me more?’, ‘why do you think that was the case?’ ‘What would you like to have experienced?’. As a means of addressing the power differential that may exist between me as an inspector and the participants I also positioned my engagement with them as one of support, partnership and development. I presented the research as an opportunity for them to have a professional conversation with a researcher who understands the process and schools. It was an opportunity for them to voice their experiences. In outlining the aims of the research to the participants I explained that the findings and recommendations could be used to inform evaluation policy for the benefit of teachers and learners into the future. This significantly contributed to teachers’ comfort levels in speaking openly to me as a researcher as they felt their contributions may impact on future evaluation experiences for themselves and their teaching colleagues. My positionality as an inspector was also important from the perspective of my responsibility and duty to the Department. I was very conscious that I should not comment on confidential matters with teachers or provide an opinion on how an experience should have occurred during an evaluation in a participant’s school. I was interested in finding out the particular context to a specific experience, how the teacher felt about the particular experience and what impact it had on them. I did not provide an opinion or a judgement on what should have happened after a participant’s description of a particular experience.

In this research, I positioned myself as neither insider nor outsider, but somewhere in between (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Mercer, 2007). As a senior inspector with the Department of Education, I have a great deal of pedagogical expertise and knowledge of evaluation models and of how schools and classrooms operate that would take an outsider a long time to acquire.

I have 15 years' experience of evaluating in hundreds of primary schools, meeting with, observing, providing feedback to, and interviewing, numerous teachers.. I am also a former teacher, having worked in a variety of school types including a large urban school serving a lower socio-economic school population and a small rural school. Before joining the Inspectorate, I worked as a CPD provider with the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP).

As a relative outsider working with the chosen schools, I was unaware of and impartial toward the politics and cultures of the eight schools in which the participants were interviewed. This enabled the participants to speak freely in the knowledge that they would not have any further work involvement with me after the interview. I was aware that my role as an inspector and my identity – age, ethnic origins, sex, age, accent and 'all aspects of self which for practical reasons cannot be changed' (Denscombe, 2002, p.170) – would have a bearing on the amount of information participants would be willing to share and their levels of honesty in what they would divulge. My experience as an interviewer within the Inspectorate was advantageous as I was using my skills to try to make the participants as comfortable as possible. This involved creating a safe and comfortable space to talk, taking an informal and friendly approach, and remaining neutral and non-committal throughout the interviews. I was there to listen, not to preach or put the interviewee on the defensive (Denscombe, 2002).

As I am an inspector with many years of experience in the role and serving with the Department's Inspectorate, I naturally have a significant connection to my role and care about the value of inspection. This means I have a personal stake in the process of evaluation; I was very aware that this positionality could impact my ability to engage in various stages of the research and potentially skew my perspective. As a result, I aimed to adopt reflexivity by ensuring my own personal views and experiences of evaluation were not made known to the participants in the interviews. Section 3.7.2 below, and within it table 6, summaries the steps I

adopted to support trustworthiness in the study including the actions I undertook to ensure reflexivity. To uphold reflexivity throughout the study I remained committed to developing an extensive and thorough account of the research area by analysing the participants' views and behaviours to understand how evaluation impacted on their practices. I was cognisant of reciprocity throughout the interviews in which all the participants were teachers who had experienced evaluation with an inspector, and the need to avoid sharing my own experiences and perceptions in case these affected the participants to make contributions aimed to please me (Creswell, 2008).

When talking to participants, I could ask direct questions about their experiences because, as an outsider to their school, there was no reason why I would know the answers about the participants' experiences of evaluation or its effects on their practices within the school (Starkey et al., 2014). Another reason teachers were forthcoming with information throughout the interviews was that they were aware that I would not be evaluating within their setting and had no professional or personal connection with me.

Nonetheless, there were some challenges. As a teacher, former CPD provider and an inspector I was aware that I had some preconceptions about the effects of evaluation. Despite my efforts outlined above and repeated in section 3.7.2, I was still very conscious of my positionality and that there were limits to how far researchers can disguise their views during the collection and analysis of data and that personal attributes cannot be changed. However, I endeavoured to collect and interpret data in a way that counteracted the effects of my biases by putting in place a range of validation measures. These are outlined in the forthcoming section.

In section 2.2.3 earlier I critiqued literature in relation to what counts as progress in education and outlined the major concepts in measuring and accessing quality in education. Within that section it suggests that for some stakeholders in education significant attention is afforded to achievement in particular curricular areas such as languages, science and

mathematics and hold high value in high stakes testing as a measure of quality. Others hold the view the quality education is recognised as developing the learner holistically and developing their social, emotional, spiritual, academic development so that they are prepared to be good citizens in their immediate and wider world. I position and align myself with the latter system of measuring quality in education. Having worked as a teacher in a variety of schools, provided CPD to teachers and as an evaluator who has worked with high numbers of schools and teachers I remain deeply committed to working within an education system that promotes the holistic development of each child in the system. All models of inspection within the Irish Inspectorate focus on the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement across the wide range of curriculum areas. While a school's standardised assessment data is reviewed as part of the evaluation it is only a part of the evidence base in supporting the inspector in reaching a judgement on the quality of education provision within the school.

3.7.2 Trustworthiness, Credibility, Rigour/Reliability and Validity

In this study, trustworthiness, credibility, rigour/reliability and validity were enhanced by adopting strategies outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p.259) and which are summarised in Table 6 (below).

Table 6

Strategies for Promoting Validity and Reliability Adapted from Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p.259)

	Strategies	**Description**
1.	Triangulation	The use of many sources of data to confirm findings.
2.	Member checks/respondent validation	Bringing emerging findings back to the sources of the data and asking whether they are plausible.
3.	Adequate engagement in data collection	Spending enough time on data collection that the data would become 'saturated'.
4.	Researcher's position or reflexivity	Self-reflection by the researcher regarding biases, assumptions, worldviews and relationships with the study that might affect the study.

5.	Peer review/examination	Discussion with colleagues regarding the stages of the process and using the feedback to analyse the data and reflect on the emerging findings.
6.	Audit trail	A comprehensive record of the methods, procedures and decision points throughout the research.
7.	Rich, thick description	Including enough description of respondents to contextualise the study so that the readers of the research could ascertain the degree to which their situations compared with the research contexts, and, hence, whether findings could be transferred.
8.	Maximum variation	Intentionally planning variation in the sample selection to enable a greater range of application of the findings

Creswell (2013) recommends that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of the strategies listed in Table 6 (above) in any study to validate the research.

While engaging in this study, I took steps to implement all the suggested strategies by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, rigour and validity in his research. Some of these strategies are addressed, where appropriate, in the relevant Sections of this chapter. A summary of the steps the researcher took is contained in Table 7 (below).

Table 7

Summary of Steps Adopted within this Research to Support Trustworthiness, Credibility, Rigour and Validity

Strategy	Description
Triangulation	I collected evidence from various sources to shed light on the effects of external evaluation on teachers' practices in primary schools. Triangulation involved: • The analysis of data from two of the three data sets to answer research questions three and four. • The inclusion and analysis of data from a variety of perspectives, i.e., teachers' and principals,' and from a variety of school types within the sample.
Member checks	A copy of the transcripts from each interview was individually emailed to the participant in question. Each participant was asked to check for accuracy and to revert to me if they had any feedback or comments. A copy of the draft findings was emailed to each participant to solicit their views regarding the credibility of the

	findings and interpretations (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Five participants provided brief insights and observations; these additional insights were incorporated into the Findings Chapter.
Peer review	This study was carried out under the supervision of an MU lecturer. Engagement with this individual kept me honest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). He asked hard questions about the methods of collecting and analysing the data. The supervisor reviewed several drafts of questionnaires, interview schedules, and study chapters. Written accounts of meetings were maintained and used to critique subsequent chapters. To further enhance the research quality and to critically analyse the draft findings and my analysis, I presented the research findings to fellow doctoral research students for peer review, to two colleagues in the Inspectorate, and to two friends who are teachers and have completed doctoral studies.
Researcher's position or reflexivity	Section 3.7.1 of this chapter sets out the my position and any biases or assumptions that might influence the enquiry (Merriam, 1988). Section 3.6 and 3.7.2 also include the steps I took to mitigate these risks. I provide commentary on past experiences and orientations that are likely to have effects on the interpretation of, and approach to, the study. I carefully planned this study, and adhered to the strategies that promote trustworthiness, validity and rigour.
Adequate engagement in data collection	I devoted considerable time to gathering a comprehensive range of data. To ensure the credibility of the study, 71 FT reports were sourced and analysed. These provided the Inspectorate's perspective on the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices. Sixteen interviews were held with individual principals and groups of teachers. Teachers in the 71 schools were invited to complete surveys. The collection of these data from teachers and principals added to the study's authenticity, accuracy, and believability (Chowdhury, 2015) since these participants had experienced evaluation. This prolonged engagement (Cresswell, 2013) meant that adequate time was spent collecting the data and the researcher was 'saturated' with it. I heard the same things repeatedly towards the end of the interviews from teachers and principals; no new information emerged from them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
Maximum variation	I deliberately sought variation in the school types within the interview sample, making sure to include a broad mix that featured large schools, small schools, mixed schools, single-sex schools, schools serving disadvantaged communities, and those with varying patronages (see Table 5 within this chapter for a profile of each school).

	I included teachers with vast experience alongside those who were newly qualified. I mixed gender and roles within the sample and included teachers who had experienced evaluation, along with those who had not.
Audit trail	During the study, I maintained a handwritten reflective journal of key decisions regarding methods and analysis in a notebook. I also recorded voice memos after each interview to acknowledge and manage my bias. The journal and voice memos were helpful in writing the methodology chapter and reflecting on my approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
Rich, thick descriptions	Chapter Four of this study includes a comprehensive range of quotations and descriptions from a wide selection of participants (from both interview transcripts and open-text boxes gleaned from surveys) which contributes to the value and accuracy of the study.

3.7.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a moral code or set of principles regarding conduct that govern what people do (Wellington, 2000); ethical considerations are of great importance (Ryu, 2020). This set of moral principles is integrated with legal and ethical steps that must be followed by the researcher to maintain and ensure the quality of his research (Ryu, 2020). In planning and carrying out this study, I consulted the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and closely adhered to Maynooth University's Ethics Policy. As I collected the primary data, it was necessary to seek ethical approval from Maynooth University's Ethics Board. The respondents of the study, whom I approached via email regarding their possible participation in online surveys and semi-structured interviews, were required to provide informed consent. Any possible participants who did not provide such consent or did not reply to my email were excluded from the study.

Significant ethical considerations, regarding whether the teachers were truly willing participants, had also to be considered (Greene & Harris, 2011; O'Kane, 2000; Todd, 2012). I was aware of the disparities of power and status between myself and participants, due to my work as a school inspector (Coyne, 1998; Flewitt, 2005; Harcourt & Sargeant, 2011). To

minimise the risk of any teachers being coerced by the principal or other member of school management into participating in the survey or interviews, I communicated directly via email with the prospective participants (Trochim, 2002). The email included the research aims and objectives, as well as information on what was required to participate in the survey and interviews. Teachers could choose either to ignore the email or, if they were interested in participating, to contact the researcher. Any teacher or principal who consented to participate was informed that they could withdraw from the process at any stage.

To further diminish a perceived power differential between myself and participants during the interviews, I:

- Took particular care regarding my use of language, tone, speech, and dress. An informal approach was taken, along with a friendly conversational tone; I wore casual clothing.
- Informed participants just before the interview that, while I was a school inspector, the research was being conducted under the supervision of Maynooth University, independently of the Department of Education and Inspectorate.
- Assured the participants that the data would not be shared with a third party or the Inspectorate and that I was not acting in an evaluative role.
- Ensured that none of the participating schools were within my region of work within the Inspectorate
- Reminded participants that they could withdraw from the process at any time.

Confidentiality is one of the important ethical aspects (Kaiser, 2012). Hence, the participant’s data were never used or mentioned in the study. Individual pseudonyms were assigned to each of the participants. Ethics also require that the participant’s data protection rights are maintained. I adhered to Maynooth University’s data protection policy in this regard.

No participant of a study must be harmed during the study (Kaiser, 2012). I ensured that no participant of the present study was harmed, either physically or verbally, during the data collection. Participants were invited to contact a colleague or friend after the interview if they felt upset either by the content of any of the questions or while responding to any of them. Ethical norms for both primary and secondary data were followed. The identity of the schools within the FT reports nor the individual inspectors who wrote them were disclosed.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the methodology used in this study for data collection and analysis. It also described the various processes in data collection and analysis to support the study's trustworthiness, validity, and overall research quality. This chapter explained that I adopted a mixed-methods approach, involving both the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, to respond to research questions one to four. Deductive analysis of FT reports, was used to address research questions one and two, while inductive analysis of surveys and interview transcripts, incorporating thematic analysis, was used to answer questions three and four. I discussed the sampling strategy to select participants for the two samples used in the study. A mixed-methods approach was considered most suitable for the research questions and for collecting data to get an informed picture regarding teachers' experiences of evaluation as it was a reliable and valid method of gathering data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). I chose the interpretivist paradigm as the research philosophy for this study as it is most suitable to 'understand the lived experience of the viewpoint of those who live it' (Schwandt, 1998, p.225). I was interested in understanding the lived experiences of teachers in this research. Finally, in this chapter I presented the theoretical framework underpinning this research. It includes two overarching theories, ALT and SCT which are used to bridge the gap between the two phenomena in the study, evaluation and teacher growth and development.

Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the data which are organised according to the research questions guiding the study, these are:

1. What is the nature of recommendations regarding teachers' practices in sample schools?
2. What progress do schools make in addressing the recommendations relating to teachers' practices in sample schools?
3. How do teachers experience the evaluation process?
4. How does the experience of evaluation affect teachers' perceptions of their practices, and, by extension, the practices themselves?

Three datasets were used to answer the questions: published follow-through (FT) evaluation reports, questionnaires answered by principals and teachers, and interviews they participated in. Responses to questions 1 and 2 reveal the nature of recommendations made in WSE reports regarding teachers' practices and the degree to which these practices improved in the sample schools between the first evaluation and the FT evaluation. Quantitative and qualitative data from FT reports inform the answers to research questions one and two. The answers to these first two questions provides a general overview of the types of recommendations made to schools regarding teaching practices and their progress in addressing the recommendations from the perspective of inspectors in follow-through reports. These are generalised findings and their purpose is to serve as contextual information to help understand findings related to research questions three and four - how teachers experience the evaluation and how the experience leads to changes in their practices. The initial questions focus on the 'what' of the study, i.e., what effects does evaluation have on teachers' practices?

The rich and meaningful data provided by the respondents in surveys and interviews were the main datasets used to respond to questions three and four. Answers to these questions present the 'how' of the research study; how does evaluation affect teachers' experiences and practices? Four broad themes emerged that illustrated teachers' experience of the evaluation. These themes were feedback, respect, trusting the process and emotional response. Similarly, two themes surfaced regarding how the experience of evaluation affect teachers' practice: focus and reflection.

4.2 The Nature of Recommendations Regarding Teachers' Practices in Sample Schools

In this section I report on what the published FT reports reveal regarding the nature of recommendations concerning teachers' practices, which were made in evaluations of the sample schools. Table 8 (below) provides an overview of the nature of recommendations within the reports relating to teachers' practices.

To answer this first research question, I extracted relevant material from the 241 recommendations made in the 71 FT reports that referred specifically to teachers' practices, and discounted recommendations that did not. The recommendations were presented in one simple sentence; I selected the relevant (189) recommendations and identified four broad categories, which are identified in Table 8.

The language used in the inspector's recommendations meant that it was straightforward to sort them into the four categories. These recommendations identified areas of teachers' practice such as planning, assessment, use of approaches and methodologies, and of teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs. Highlighting the nature of recommendations within the FT reports sets the context for the research since it focuses on aspects of teachers' practice that had been highlighted for development in the original evaluation. Table 8 (below) illustrates the connection between the evaluation process and teachers' practices and demonstrates the focus and attention that evaluation placed on teachers' practices.

The recommendations in the FT reports regarding teachers' practices were informed by the evaluation observations within their classroom and formed the basis of feedback sessions between the inspector(s) and individual and collective groups of teachers. It is important to identify the nature of recommendations within the evaluation reports regarding teachers' practices to fully understand how teachers experienced the evaluations and how the recommendations affected them. How teachers experience such feedback is identified later in the chapter regarding research question three.

Table 8

The Nature of Recommendations Regarding Teachers' Practices within Sample FT Reports

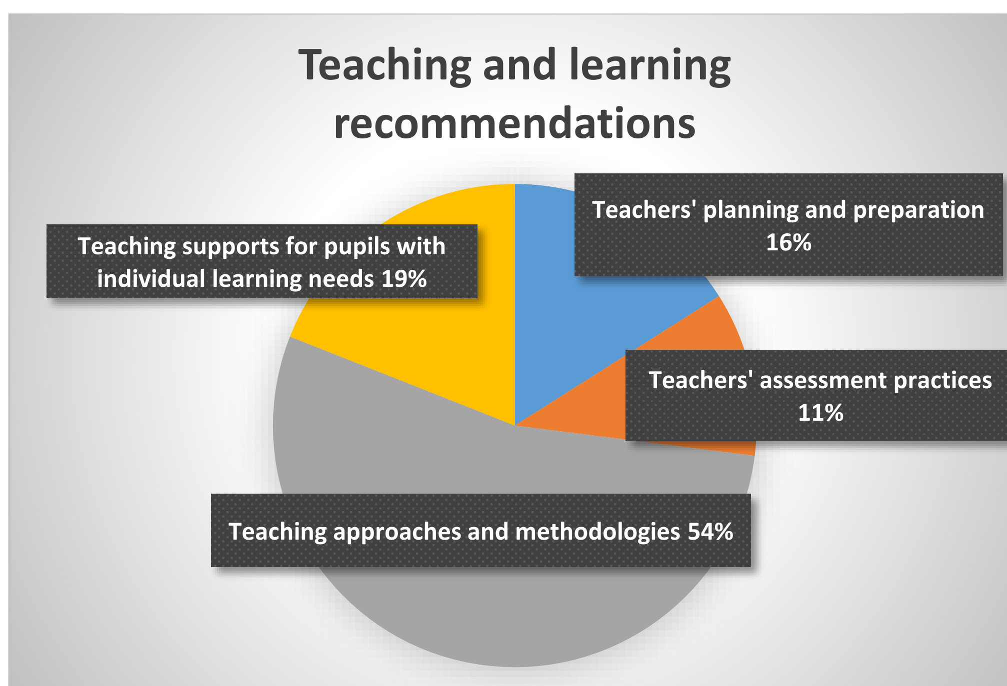
Category of recommendations regarding teachers' practices	**Specific nature of the recommendations** **The need for schools or teachers to:**
Teachers' planning and preparation	Develop and extend their whole-school plans to guide teaching and learning within classrooms - for example, a whole-school oral language programme or the need for a broad and balanced Physical Education programme.
	Make greater provision for specific curriculum objectives, learning tasks, activities and learning outcomes, and targetting language across the curriculum in their short-term plans.
	Plan differentiated learning objectives, outcomes and tasks to meet the learning needs of pupils in their short-term plans.
Teachers' assessment practices	Extend the use of assessment tools and approaches within their schools and classrooms.
	Engage in greater analysis of whole-school, classroom and individual pupil assessment data to inform differentiation in planning and teaching.
	Implement more peer and self-assessment strategies within their classrooms.
Teaching approaches and methodologies	Expand teaching methodologies to include collaborative and co-operative learning, active learning approaches; development of problem-solving skills among pupils and use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum generally.
	Develop their approaches to teaching specified curriculum areas, most notably in literacy (English and Irish, writing, reading and oral language) and to a lesser extent in Social, Scientific and Environmental Education (SESE), Music, Mathematics and Physical Education.
	To acquire and utilise additional resources to support the teaching practices.
Teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs	Use a wider range of assessment data (including diagnostic assessments) to inform target setting within individual and group learning programmes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
	Implement differentiated teaching in mainstream contexts to provide for pupils who have varying levels of ability.
	Review and develop provision for pupils with SEN by implementing a variety of models including in-class support, team teaching and individual and group withdrawal interventions.

This significant percentage of relevant recommendations supports the claim in Chapter Two that the WSE-MLL model focuses on teaching and learning, and suggests that strong weighting was afforded to teaching practices in evaluations in the sample schools.

Recommendations and commentary within the FT reports on areas such as school leadership, management, governance and supports for pupils were not extracted as part of the deductive analysis. Figure 10 (below) provides an overview of the percentage of such recommendations in the four categories of recommendations regarding teachers' practices.

Figure 10

Recommendations as Percentages of the Four Categories Regarding Teachers' Practices within Follow-Through Reports



The highest percentage of recommendations were made regarding teaching approaches and methodologies (54%). Inspectors recommended to schools and teachers to expand their use of methodologies, including collaborative and co-operative learning, active learning methodologies and problem-solving tasks. The need for the greater use of information and communication technology (ICT) was also frequently recommended.

Just under a fifth of the recommendations concerned teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs (19%). Recommendations in this category referred to the need for teachers to use a wider range of assessment data to inform target setting for individual, or

groups of, pupils receiving additional supports. Regarding mainstream classes, it was recommended to implement differentiated teaching to provide for pupils of all abilities.

Recommendations regarding teachers' planning and preparation accounted for 16% of total recommendations. Recommendations in this category referred to the need for teachers to make greater provision in planning for specific curriculum objectives, learning tasks and activities that the pupils would engage in, and to target language across the curriculum. As in the previously mentioned category (recommendations regarding teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs), teachers were recommended in their planning and preparation to plan differentiated learning objectives, outcomes and tasks for pupils of varying abilities.

There were recommendations regarding teachers' assessment practices in 11% of the reports. The need for teachers to extend the use of assessment tools and approaches within their schools and classrooms and to use assessment data in planning and teaching to facilitate differentiation for pupils of varying abilities were the prevalent patterns in the recommendations regarding assessment practices.

For the most part, across the four categories of recommendations relating to teachers' practices, the language of the recommendations suggests existing practices within the schools are progressing and that schools and teachers are being encouraged to improve further. The following language selected from extracts in the 189 recommendations relating to teachers' practices suggests that improvement has taken place in the schools:

> should continue to explore…should continue to develop…a more deliberate focus on expanding…it is recommended that teachers differentiate their lessons and activities more effectively…a more structured approach to teaching the writing process is recommended…assessment for learning strategies should be developed further…a wider range of participatory methodologies should be implemented.

The selection of language from inspectors is positively phrased, with the recommendations suggesting the existence of effective teaching practices within the schools. The language here supports the theory of evaluation for improvement. On occasion, the language is more direct and the recommendations do not provide any evidence that any existing teaching practices could be extended within the school. Examples of such language within the recommendations include:

All teachers should ensure that skills development is central to pupils' learning.

Teachers are recommended to include collaborative learning opportunities, and problem-solving approaches in lessons across all subjects

Teachers should use methodologies that promote pupil-led talk and discussion, co-operative tasks and activity-based learning, in order to challenge pupils and to increase their participation levels

The language of recommendations regarding teachers' practices in the reports that were analysed is directed specifically to teachers and so it is clear that, while the reports were written for a wider audience, it is the teachers who need to implement the recommendations.

4.2.1 Summary – Findings Related to Research Question One

It is learned from research question one that the follow-through evaluations and the reports arising focus on the fundamentals of teachers' practice, i.e., planning and preparation, assessment, approaches and methodologies and support for pupils with individual learning needs. It was evident that recommendations regarding teachers' practices could be placed in four categories. Recommendations relating to teaching approaches and methodologies received the most attention in reports (54%) followed by recommendations that concentrated on teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs (19%). Analysis of follow-through reports showed 16% of reports recommended that teachers' planning and preparation practices

be progressed and that improvements regarding teachers' assessment practices be developed in 11% of the reports.

4.3 What Progress do Schools Make in Addressing the Recommendations Relating to Teachers' Practices in Sample Schools?

The progress schools make in addressing recommendations relating to teaching practices is explored by research question two. Data from FT reports is used to answer this questions. The answer to research two provides the necessary context for research questions three and four and it serves to contextualise the data related to teachers' experiences of evaluation.

To answer this question, I counted the recommendations in each of the four categories (as outlined in Table 8, above) in FT reports that aligned with one of the four points of the Inspectorate's quality continuum for FT reports that show the inspectors' evaluation of how much progress the school has made in addressing the recommendations in the original evaluation. The continuum's four points of progress (previously discussed in Chapter Two) are: very good, good, partial or no progress. I then reviewed the reports to select specific extracts that typified inspectors' descriptions of teachers' practices in selected schools for each of the four points (see Table 9, below).

Figure 11 (below) shows the percentage of schools meeting each of the four points of progress set out in the FT reports. On a general, whole-school level, the data here suggested that the Inspectorate considered that the sample schools had, between the original evaluation and the FT inspection, made significant progress implementing the recommendations relating to teaching practices.

Figure 11

Schools' Progress in Implementing Teaching Recommendations, According to Follow-Through (FT) Reports

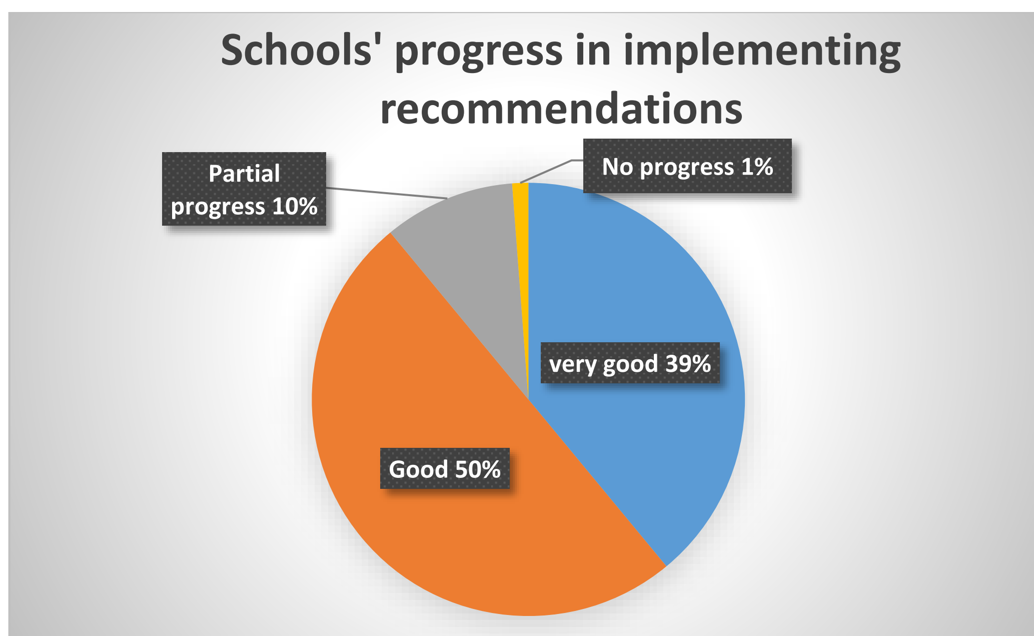


Table 9 (below) delves further into the data. It shows the sample schools' level of progress in each recommendation category: teachers' planning and preparation, assessment, teaching approaches and methodologies; and teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs (aka SEN).

Table 9

Schools' Progress in Implementing Recommendations Relating to Teachers' Practices in Each Category of Recommendation, With Extracts from FT Reports Providing Examples of Each Level of Progress in Each Category

Recommendation category and level of progress in its implementation			Extracts from FT Reports that give representative examples of inspectors' observations of teachers' implementation of recommendations regarding teaching practices
Teachers' planning and preparation **16% of recommendations**	**Very good**	**44%**	*"The whole-school planning process has been developed so that curricular plans now inform teachers' classroom planning. Planning at whole-school level is no longer linked exclusively to textbook topics. All teachers record learning objectives, assessment and differentiation strategies in their short-term planning"*
	Good	**37%**	*"Good progress has been made in this area. Work ensuring consistency across planning and monthly progress records is ongoing. Curriculum objectives are used very effectively to inform most teachers' planning in most curricular areas. However, there is a need to further incorporate curriculum objectives into planning for the delivery of English and Gaeilge"*
	Partial progress	**19%**	*"While all teachers make some reference in their short-term planning to differentiation, many [references] are general. In a minority of classrooms, the teachers plan very specific approaches to differentiation by identifying pupils to be assisted and the teaching approaches to be used. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to all classrooms"*
Assessment **11% of recommendations**	**Very good**	**28%**	*Teachers have adopted … a detailed analysis of assessment data and are using the information gained to inform, and, where necessary, modify learning outcomes.*
	Good	**61%**	*A comprehensive, whole-school plan for assessment has been devised…there has been much discussion on developing assessment practices and some very good practice was observed in the senior classes.*
	Partial progress	**11%**	*Teachers undertake a limited range of assessment approaches. Records of learning have scope to clarify the specific learning outcomes achieved by pupils…The quality of teacher monitoring and correction of work is excellent. Further diagnostic assessment should be undertaken.*
Teaching approaches and methodologies **54% of recommendations**	**Very good**	**43%**	*Very good progress has been made extending teaching methodologies to include pair work and group work. Initiatives such as Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and in-class support have supported the provision of increased collaborative and independent learning opportunities for pupils. Teaching methodologies such as collaborative tasks and purposeful pair work were observed in the lessons evaluated.*
	Good	**50%**	*A wide range of teaching methodologies was observed during the evaluation with pair work, group work and station teaching in evidence. Pupils were active participants in the learning process and the methodologies used were well-thought-out and developed.*

	Partial progress	**6.7%**	*The school has developed some strategies to support problem-solving, including the use of individual whiteboards and the introduction of dedicated problem-solving periods in Mathematics. While literacy stations are a feature of the junior classes, whole-class teaching approaches are regularly employed across the school.*
	No progress	**0.3%**	*There has been no improvement in the implementation of this recommendation. Whole-class and teacher-directed approaches were in evidence during the evaluation in all settings.*
Teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs **19% of recommendations**	**Very good**	**44%**	*Overall, the targets in planning for pupils with SEN are specific and based on diagnosed needs and assessment evidence.*
	Good	**44%**	*In-class support models are now well-established within teaching practices, with sessions provided daily to each class from junior infants to 4th class and regular provision to 5th and 6th class. Provision is made for both station teaching and team teaching.*
	Partial Progress	**12%**	*A member of the learning-support team works with the infant teacher to provide early intervention in the form of station teaching three times each week. Some learning support is provided in classrooms but mainly takes place in withdrawal settings. Whilst this is appropriate to the needs of some pupils, further consideration should be given to the provision of in-class support programmes throughout the school.*

Table 9 (immediately above) demonstrates that the inspectors determined that schools had made very good or good progress overall in implementing the recommendations across the four categories of teachers' practice. In the following sub-sections (4.3.1 to 4.3.4) I briefly discuss the progress that schools made implementing the recommendations in each recommendation category.

4.3.1 Teachers' Planning and Preparation

It appears as though substantial progress was evident in the FT reports in terms of teachers' planning and preparation. Extracts from these reports confirm that teachers advanced their classroom planning practices to include specific learning objectives and tasks and that teachers improved their plans and preparations for pupils of varying abilities. Where inspectors noted partial progress had been made, they also noted that, in a minority of classrooms (19%), teachers had identified pupils who needed assistance and planned their teaching approaches accordingly. The inspectors recommended that this practice be extended.

4.3.2 Assessment

The FT reports suggest significant progress by teachers in implementing inspectors' recommendations regarding assessment. Teachers were shown to use a wider variety of assessment data at whole-school and classroom levels to inform teaching and learning. In cases where inspectors noted partial progress had been made, such progress showed teachers using a limited range of assessment approaches.

4.3.3 Teaching approaches and methodologies

Evidence from the FT reports implies that the recommendations regarding teaching approaches and methodologies were the ones that were most successfully implemented. The reports describe extended use of approaches and methodologies in lessons, including pair work and co-operative group. Lessons also included a wide range of resources to support learning. These experiences were reported in the context of specific curriculum areas and, more generally, across the curriculum.

4.3.4 Teaching Supports for Pupils with Individual Learning Needs

The FT data proposes that selected schools made good or very good progress implementing the recommendations with regard to teaching supports for pupils with individual learning needs (Table 8). The schools had devised and implemented a variety of interventions including team teaching and in-class support. Inspectors noted that plans for pupils with individual needs included more specific and measurable learning targets.

4.3.5 Summary – Findings Related to Research Question Two

This question explored what progress the sample schools had made addressing recommendations regarding teachers' practices. The data describe the development in teaching practices at a whole-school level. Exploration of the progress schools made in the implementation of recommendations regarding teachers' practices is necessary to provide a

context for research questions three and four. It provides some indication of whether progress in teaching practices is evident or not.

Evidence from the FT reports and the Inspectorate's observations show that schools made very good progress implementing the recommendations regarding teachers' practice (Table 8). While FT data reported on teaching practices at a whole-school level and cannot account for individual teachers' practices, they do suggest that teachers are now more aware of how to improve their practices since some or all of them have tried out certain approaches identified in the recommendations.

Notwithstanding the very positive story that FT reports present regarding the developments schools and teachers have made in progressing the various recommendations, the purpose the exploration of this data and research question two is to provide a general overview and context for the research. In addition, the follow-through reports should be interpreted with caution, keeping some limitations in mind. In medium- and large-sized schools (approximately 29% of the FT samples in total), not all teachers were evaluated by inspectors. Those who were received up to two days' notice that the evaluation was about to take place, and may have planned their lessons accordingly. For the most part, data from the principals in questionnaires and from interviews support the positive findings contained in the FT report.

The findings from this question leave us with a substantial question: why did a significant minority of teachers, and a small number of schools, not make progress in teaching practices following evaluation? It prompts the question how teachers experienced evaluation and how exactly the experience influences changes in their teaching practices. Some insight into these questions is necessary so that aspects of the evaluation process that need improvement can be identified. These questions are discussed in the forthcoming sections.

4.4 How do Teachers Experience the Evaluation Process?

This question is posed to address the gap in the research. Chapter Two referred to the lack of research on the effects of evaluation overall and noted that it is even more limited in the Irish context and even sparser when it comes to how evaluation affects teaching practices. The exploration of this question aims to address this gap by focusing explicitly on how teachers in an Irish context experience the evaluation process. Some of the literature and research discussed in Chapter Two found that inspections prompted improvements in schools, teachers and learners; the chapter also disclosed that other research concluded that it did not stimulate growth, improvement or development in schools. In this chapter, research question two found that many teaching practices were improved significantly in schools between the initial evaluation and the FT inspection. It also highlighted that a significant minority of teachers within the sample schools had not improved their teaching practices. It is hoped that answering the question about how teachers experience evaluation will shine a light on why some teachers improve their teaching practices subsequent to evaluation while others do not.

In presenting the findings I used pseudonyms to contribute to the anonymity of principals and teachers involved in the research. In answering research questions three and four I wanted to include a high number of quotes from teachers and principals to ensure their voices were represented within the research. Table 10 (below) is presented to support the reader in identifying who is speaking (principal or teacher) and the context in which they are working in.

Table 10

Pseudonyms used to Understand the Context in Which Teachers/Principals Were Working Within

School	School Size	Description/Context	School Personnel Interviewed	Pseudonyms and Profile of School Personnel Interviewed
School one	582 pupils enrolled Administrative principal 22 mainstream class teachers 2 special education teachers 6 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational, Catholic school that provides a class for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a class for pupils with moderate general learning difficulties (MGLD)	Principal School One	**PS1**
			Teacher One/School One Class Teacher >5 years' experience	**T1S1**
			Teacher Two/School One Class Teacher AP II* >5 years' experience	**T2S1**
			Teacher Three/School One Teacher in ASD class AP II >5 years' experience	**T3S1**
School two	100 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream class teachers 2 support teachers (1 shared with a neighbouring school)	Small, rural, co-educational Catholic school.	Principal School Two	**PS2**
			Teacher One/School Two DP*** SEN Teacher >5 years' experience	**T1S2**
			Teacher Two/School Two Class Teacher	**T2S2**

			>5 years' experience	
School three	370 pupils enrolled Administrative principal 15 mainstream class teachers 1 special education teacher 6 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational school operating under the patronage of Educate Together. It provides a special class for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Principal School Three	**PS3**
			Teacher One/School Three Class Teacher >5 years' experience	**T1S3**
			Teacher Two/School Three Class Teacher >5 years' experience	**T2S3**
			Teacher Three/School Three Class Teacher AP II >5 years' experience	**T3S3**
			Teacher Four/School Four Class Teacher NQT < 5 years' experience	**T4S4**
School four	400 pupils enrolled Administrative Principal 21 mainstream class teachers 3 special education teachers 11 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational, Catholic school that provides three classes for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The school operates under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education)	Principal School Four	**PS4**
			Teacher One/School Four SEN Teacher >5 years' experience	**T1S4**
			Teacher Two/School Four Teacher in ASD class >5 years' experience	**T2S4**

			Teacher Three/School Four Class Teacher AP I >5 years' experience	**T3S4**
School five	650 pupils enrolled Administrative Principal and Deputy Principal 28 mainstream class teachers 7 special education teachers 11 support teachers	Large, urban, co-educational, Catholic school, which provides seven classes for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The school operated under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education)	Principal School Five	**PS5**
			Teacher One/School Five DP SEN Co-ordinator >5 years' experience	**T1S5**
			Teacher Two/School Five ASD Class Teacher >5 years' experience	**T2S5**
School six	96 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream class teachers 2 support teachers (1 of them shared with a neighbouring school)	Small, rural, single-sex (boys') Catholic school.	Principal School Six	**PS6**
			Teacher One/School Six Class Teacher >5 years' experience	**T1S6**
			Teacher Two/School Six SEN Teacher >5 years' experience	**T2S6**
			Teacher Three/School Six Class Teacher NQT < 5 years' experience	**T3S6**

School seven	100 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream classes	Small, rural, co-educational Catholic school. The school operates under DEIS (the equality of opportunity action plan of the Department of Education)	Principal School Seven	**PS7**
			Teacher One/School Seven Class Teacher AP I >5 years' experience	**T1S7**
School eight	100 pupils enrolled Teaching principal 4 mainstream classes 1 special education teacher 2 support teachers (1 of them shared with a neighbouring school)	Small, rural, co-educational Catholic school, which provides one class for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).	Principal School Eight	**PS8**
			Teacher One/School Eight Class Teacher NQT < 5 years' experience	**T1S8**
			Teacher Two/School Eight Class Teacher >5 years' experience	**T2S8**
			Teacher Three/School Eight Class Teacher AP I >5 years' experience	**T3S8**
	Total		21 teachers and 8 principals across 8 schools	

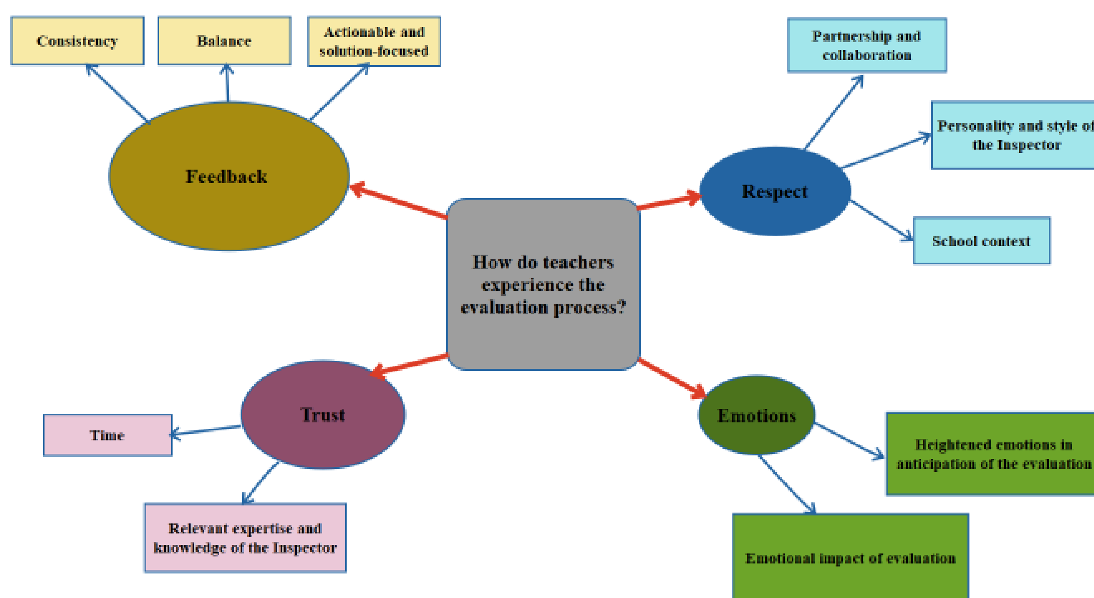
4.4.1 How the data were analysed for research questions three and four

The survey and interview data gathered among teachers and principals inform the answers to research questions three and four. I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis and an inductive approach was utilised, using MAXQDA to identify codes and to search for themes. Figure 12 (below) provides a thematic map for the four themes that were evident within question three, and which I will discuss in this section.

The themes that emerged regarding question four are discussed in Section 4.5. The descriptions under each of these themes includes a discussion as to how teachers experienced evaluation in both helpful and destructive ways.

Figure 12

Thematic Map for Research Question Three



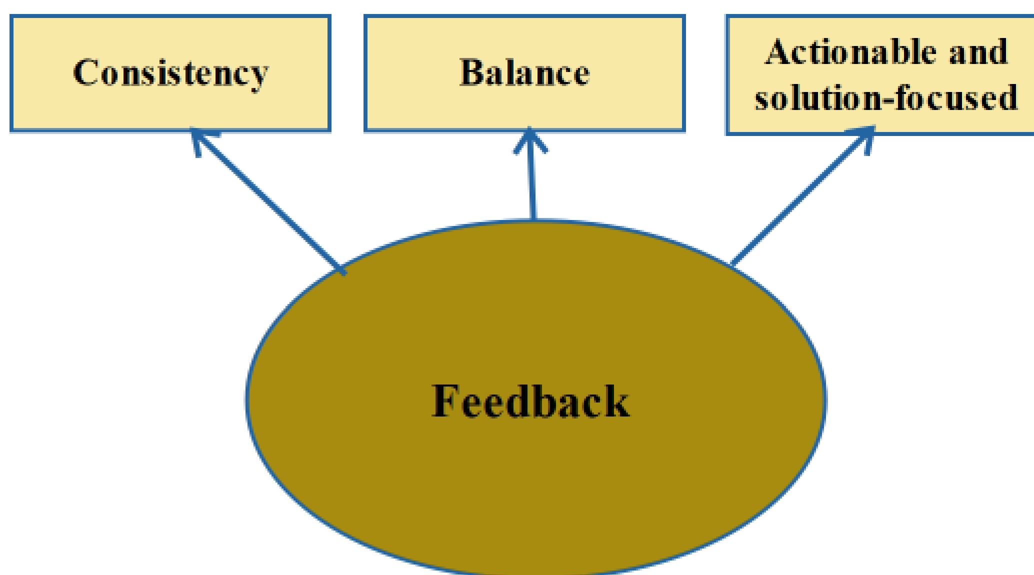
4.4.2 Feedback

In describing how they experienced evaluation, teachers mentioned feedback in every interview. Feedback was also prominent in their survey responses. This theme refers to teachers' experiences of oral feedback that inspectors gave to individual teachers or groups of teachers, as well as written feedback given to groups of teachers as part of the evaluation process. The type of feedback that teachers experienced had a bearing on how they experienced

the overall evaluation process. This theme has three aspects: consistency, balance and actionable and solution-focused as shown in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13

Theme of Feedback with Three Dimensions



4.4.2.1 Consistency. This aspect refers to teachers' experiences of consistency between what was orally reported to them during evaluation (i.e., feedback) and the eventual written report. It also includes consistency between the feedback teachers received from the various members of the inspection teams.

The data show that some teachers interviewed or surveyed in this research felt there were inconsistences in feedback and that these inconsistencies had negative effects on them. One of the inconsistences they reported related to differences between what was orally reported to them individually during the in-school phase of the process and/or to the school staff in the

post-evaluation feedback meeting and the written report they received some weeks later (which was subsequently published).

Teachers interviewed in School Two (a small, four-teacher school) explained that receipt of the written report badly affected them. The two teachers who had been interviewed (whose work represented half of the mainstream classes within the school) explained that the inspector had given them positive oral feedback regarding many areas of their teaching practice both during the in-school inspections and at the post-evaluation feedback meeting with the school staff. They also noted that the inspector had also provided developmental feedback. Consequently, they were not expecting the written report to be as negative as it was. The teachers explained that it was inconsistent with the oral feedback. T1S2 stated:

> The inspector reported at the post-evaluation meeting that there were some good teaching practices in the school. She proceeded to list a range of good examples she had seen in classes… We understood what areas needed to be addressed… When the written report came it recorded that teaching practices showed scope for development [but not] that some good teaching practices were evident. (T1S2)

The teachers feared that the entire community would read the published report. They felt the report did not reflect the school in which they worked or the positive observations the inspector had orally provided to the school. These teachers felt ashamed and feared for the school's reputation. The experience prompted emotions of fear and shame (the theme of emotion permeates throughout the teachers' experiences of evaluation and is discussed separately). The teachers made the point that, had the exact wording of the report been used during the post-evaluation meeting they would have had the opportunity to query it or to provide additional relevant information.

Another teacher in a small rural school also recalled (albeit to a more limited extent) this experience of inconsistency between feedback and the written report. T2S6 recounted that

the inspector had observed during the in-school phase of the evaluation a comprehensive list of teaching methodologies and resources that were evident to him, but that they were not apparent in the final written report. She explained:

> The inspector used a slide show at the post-evaluation meeting. I remember how she bullet-pointed all the methodologies and resources she had seen…that was very positive…she talked at length about how they worked so well…none of those very good examples were in the final report. In fact … the written report was far more reserved than how she orally presented to us as a group. (T2S6)

Here again, this example suggests a lack of consistency experienced by teachers between the good practice highlighted in oral reports and their omission in the written, published reports. While the datasets did show evidence of teachers reporting that evaluation reports and inspectors did highlight examples of good practices in schools, these examples refer to occasions where there was a lack of consistency between what was orally reported and the final written report. The finding in these two schools was reflected by a small number of teachers (3) who were surveyed online. They outlined:

> …I feel the report we received orally from the inspector onsite was very different to the largely negative feedback that was published online…
>
> …the positive feedback that was received at the post-evaluation meeting was diluted [in] the written report
>
> …The oral feedback on the day was positive and the inspector complimented a lot of my teaching; other teachers appeared confident as individuals based on their feedback; however, this positivity wasn't reflected in the overall school report.

The other inconsistency in feedback that teachers spoke about was how there were differences in the judgments of inspectors within the inspection team when reviewing the same approaches

to planning and assessment in different classrooms This frustrated teachers, as a teacher in a very large school (T2S5) explained:

> Two inspectors in our school had two different opinions on planning and assessment approaches - my partner teacher and I have the same planning template and approaches. My planning was judged to be very good while the other inspector slated [my partner's] planning content and format. They were completely at variance with each other, which left us quite confused and frustrated about what is expected in certain areas. We did not know the best approach to these areas at the end of the process. (T2S5)

A teacher in a very large urban school explained that she plans all lessons and activities with the other sixth class teachers. He explained that two inspectors had visited two sixth classes as part of the evaluation process. Identical lessons in Mathematics were delivered, using the same resources and learning tasks. There was a large degree of similarity between the two classes in terms of pupil profile, and the two teachers had planned the same activities to suit the needs of pupils of different levels of ability. The teacher described the feedback scenarios for both classes:

> The content of the feedback was different in both settings, which really surprised us as we plan so well together and things are almost identical… both inspectors were lovely and very kind but had different things to say that were definitely at odds with each other. One inspector told my partner teacher that she had delivered a perfect lesson, she called it a model lesson; my inspector found a good few faults…she said the lesson should have had more problem-solving activities, that my oral Maths activities should be more age-appropriate and that I should make greater use of IT in the lesson. This baffled me as I used the same IT programme as my partner and the maths environment was the same as [hers], we did them together. (T1S1)

The limitations inherent in this example must, of course, be acknowledged: the fact that the account of the feedback the teacher's partner teacher received is a second-hand one, and, more importantly, that two teachers in different settings could very possibly have delivered the content of the two lessons differently. Nonetheless, the account does suggest a lack of consistency between the feedback the two inspectors delivered to the two teachers. The example points to three comparisons between how the lesson was delivered in the two classes and the extract provides strong evidence of a lack of consistency between what the two inspectors perceived that the components and content of an effective mathematics lesson should amount to. This conflict was apparent in the feedback the two inspectors provided. The lack of consistency between the feedback experiences of the teacher and her partner teacher caused frustration and confusion as to the necessary components of an effective Mathematics lesson.

Teachers in School Six alluded to similar inconsistences in feedback between inspectors working together on inspection teams. One inspector praised certain approaches to planning and teaching Irish while the other's advice and recommendations conflicted with the former's observations. The teachers outlined that the feedback received from the two inspectors was contradictory and they were dissatisfied with these mixed messages.

This sub-section shows that some teachers experienced inconsistencies in feedback – both between the oral feedback and the written report and between inspectors working together on inspection teams. The teachers felt these disjunctions were unhelpful and that they provoked negative emotions. The teachers' dissatisfaction also suggests that feedback did not progress teaching practices since it left teachers unsure as to what effective teaching practices should be sustained and developed.

4.4.2.2 Balance. In this subsection I refer to balance which represents teachers' experiences of feedback and whether it was balanced in terms of identifying strengths in

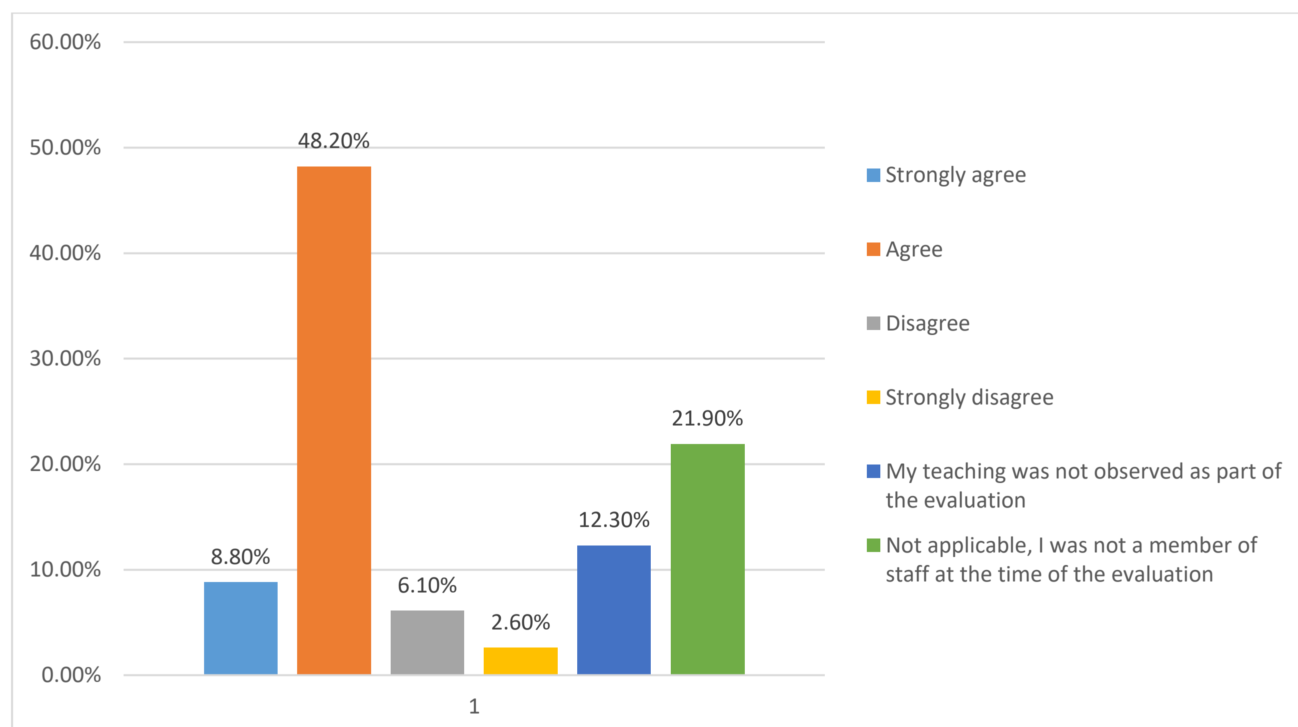
teachers' practice and outlining areas for its development. This aspect explores both how feedback made the teachers feel affirmed and how they felt it was too critical, negative, or overly emphasised developmental advice. The effects of these experiences are also discussed. Balance in feedback also refers to the approach taken to provide feedback in the form of individual, face-to-face feedback and conversational approaches.

Some teachers felt affirmed by the feedback in that strengths in their practices were recognised and areas for development were positively identified. When they felt affirmed, respondents attributed the experience to the personality and style of the inspector and his/her use of a conversational approach. They also reported the feedback having been delivered in a respectful and complimentary manner and considered it to be a fair assessment of their practice. Teachers also spoke about such feedback and how it motivated them in their practice.

Responses to the teacher and principals' surveys show that well over half of the respondents (57%) agreed or strongly agreed that the feedback they received during the WSE effectively identified strengths in their teaching practices. A minority (8.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (see Figure 14, below).

Figure 14

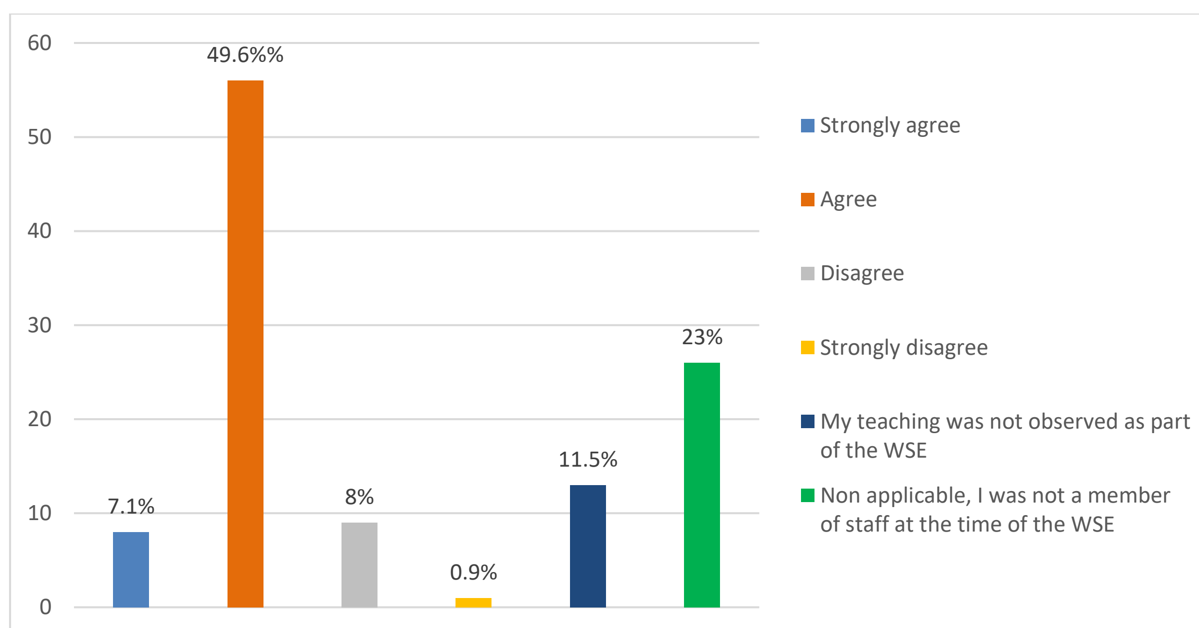
Feedback Provided by the Inspector during the WSE Effectively Identified Strengths in My Teaching Practices



Approximately the same number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that feedback effectively identified areas for development within their practice (see Figure 15, below).

Figure 15

Feedback Provided by the Inspector during the WSE Effectively Identified Areas for Development in My Teaching Practices



While acknowledging and affirming strengths in practice during feedback, one teacher in the questionnaire observed that the inspector:

> was very positive and complimentary, strengths and good practices were acknowledged and affirmed

Similarly, another teacher who was surveyed was positive about their feedback:

> Areas of success were acknowledged and recommendations for future development were made

A survey response from a further teacher revealed that they liked the personal nature of the face-to-face meeting with the inspector after the evaluation. The teacher reported:

> The face-to-face meeting with the inspector … was most valuable for feedback. Strengths and good practices are acknowledged and affirmed and areas for improvement can also be discussed

In another instance in which positives were identified, another teacher added that they liked how the feedback addressed their individual practice:

> I felt the oral feedback was very valuable; the inspector complimented a lot of my personal teaching; other teachers appeared to feel confident as individuals based on their personal inspections

These examples from various teachers surveyed portray how inspectors' affirmations positively affected the teacher(s). When feedback was positively delivered, teachers valued the conversational approach some of the inspectors took. A teacher in School Four (large urban school) recalled very positively the experience of her feedback with the inspector:

> It was much more of a conversation and I remember it being a very pleasant experience, but I also remember it being quite reflective and talking about how I could develop areas (T2S4)

Similarly, a teacher in School One found the experience of feedback, during which her strengths were highlighted, as very conversational, complimentary and positive. She added that, while there were areas identified for development, the discussion addressed how she would approach that development. Equally another teacher in School One noted that the inspector had praised the school's ethos and atmosphere. From the extract below it is evident the feedback was affirming for the teacher:

> One of the loveliest things you can be told is that the ethos and the atmosphere in your school is wonderful - for people to walk in the door and see all the evidence of teaching and learning. It is lovely to hear that there are successes in teaching and learning; we want the kids to be happy; they will not learn unless they are happy and it is very reassuring to know that the atmosphere supports teaching and learning (T3S1)

A teacher in School Three stated that he had found the feedback a fair and affirming experience and added that teachers had been encouraged to give their opinions and contributions to it.

A different teacher in School Three complimented the inspection team for the way they engaged with her and all members of the school community. She reflected that the experience of feedback was quite respectful and that it was an affirming experience overall. While another teacher in this school also recalled having found the experience of the written feedback motivating:

> It was a bit of motivation for the staff. The positives identified in the report struck a chord with us...having been praised and our strengths identified we were eager to get moving with the recommendations, to make the school even better (T4S4)

However, the experience of feedback was not helpful for all the teachers surveyed or interviewed; a cohort of respondents found it destructive and unhelpful. Figure 15 (above) illustrates the fact that almost 10% of teachers disagreed that feedback effectively identified strengths in their teaching practices. Almost the same percentage disagreed that feedback effectively identified areas for development in their teaching practices. They cited a number of reasons for this, including the content of the feedback being overly critical and that it was excessively focused on their faults and inconsistencies.

Comments in the survey reveal that some of the feedback was overly focused on developmental feedback, faults or criticisms, as indicated by the following sample of quotes:

> I found the whole process completely demoralising and no strengths in my teaching were identified…criticism only was offered…the inspector focused all of her time on what I was doing wrong…with every positive there was also a suggestion of a different way that would work better. I felt the inspector only looked for faults and I cannot remember her pointing out anything particularly positive…my strengths were not

identified and the inspector focused entirely on the negatives. I feel [feedback] was an extremely negative experience for members of the school staff who did not feel supported but criticised. This had a detrimental effect on progress in the school

The principal in School One noted that he could not recall teachers coming back to him at the end of the inspectors' observations and reporting that it had gone very well. According to the principal, they reported that the feedback focused largely on what could or should be done in classrooms. He said, 'they remembered the criticisms as opposed to the positives, which is a shame.' (PS1)

This sub-section on *Balance* (4.4.2.2) suggests that, when feedback was balanced by including a mix of strengths and areas for development, and when it included one-to-one feedback using a conversational approach, teachers experienced it positively. However, when it was overly weighted in criticism and faults and therefore incorporated a one-sided approach by the inspector(s), it represented a negative experience for teachers.

4.4.2.3 Actionable, Solution-Focused Feedback. I discuss the dimension of feedback in this sub-section. The data revealed that teachers described their experience of feedback in terms of how actionable and solution-focused it was. They variously described instances where they found it useful as well as unhelpful.

Actionable feedback refers to the inspectors' advice having been practical, specific and solution-focused. Teachers reported that, when the feedback was actionable, it had encouraged them to change their teaching practice. However, almost an equal number of teachers reported such feedback as unhelpful.

Some teachers in Schools Three, Four and Eight mentioned how helpful the feedback had been. They recalled how easily transferrable and practical the inspector's advice was in terms of encouraging them to take immediate actions after the feedback to change their practice. A teacher in School Four reported that the individual feedback the inspector had

provided offered suggestions that the teacher could start implementing immediately in her classroom, specifically, strategies regarding pupils working in pairs for language activities:

> During the feedback, the inspector explained how to play a few different types of language games with the children in pairs and how easily they could contribute to the lesson…she gave me a few sources for the activities…after some independent research I adopted these strategies and use them regularly (T1S4)

Similarly, in the same school another teacher explained that the feedback session identified areas for improvement in her practice that were accompanied by suggested practical solutions. For this teacher, solution-focused feedback was beneficial in supporting changes to her practice. T2S4 said, 'it was easy to see the wood from the trees…I knew what I needed to do, the advice was clear and I could get on with making some simple changes.' In School Eight the teachers explained that their classrooms were outdated and in need of refurbishment, which meant challenges for them in displaying work. The inspector suggested alternative approaches to displaying pupils' work other than on walls. One teacher was advised to display compilations of pupils' written work in booklet formats, while another was recommended to use the school website to display their work. Both teachers agreed that these helpful nuggets of advice were what stood out after the evaluation. They said that on these occasions the advice was so practical that it had an instant effect on their practice.

Similarly, in School Three, feedback had resulted in more regular updating of classroom displays within the classroom environments. T2S3 explained that staff had agreed collectively to display key language to support new topics in various subjects across the curriculum. She explained:

> During the post-evaluation feedback session with the whole staff, given our school profile (a large number of pupils with English as an additional language) the inspector recommended that we focus on teaching specific vocabulary and language in advance

> of each topic… she provided a variety of ways in which this could be done…within a few weeks of the post-evaluation meeting we were displaying key vocabulary in our classrooms at the beginning of each topic (T2S3)

The principal in School Five also reported that the very clear recommendations and feedback the inspectors had made regarding the teaching of Irish and of SEN provision informed a three-year action plan for these aspects of teachers' practice. PS5 reported:

> The evidence was gathered for us…we knew exactly what needed to be done, we developed an action plan which addressed the 'how'…this plan was key in supporting teachers to develop (PS5)

The examples outlined above suggest that some teachers received practical, specific and solution-focused feedback from inspectors. On these occasions, the experiences were hugely supportive in changing teachers' practices. The data also shows that when feedback was not actionable it did not support teachers changing their practice.

One teacher in School Six reported that feedback was very unclear and that they had been left with little direction as to how to address the recommendations:

> It took us a long time to narrow down what we needed to target. It would have been nice to get some guidance from the inspector on where to start. We might have been able to allocate time and roles more effectively if we had this advice as part of the evaluation (T3S6)

Another teacher in this school said that she would have liked more specifics regarding how to improve and develop some aspects of the curriculum, planning and assessment. The lack of clarity regarding these areas frustrated her and she was still unsure what areas the inspector had recommended her to improve.

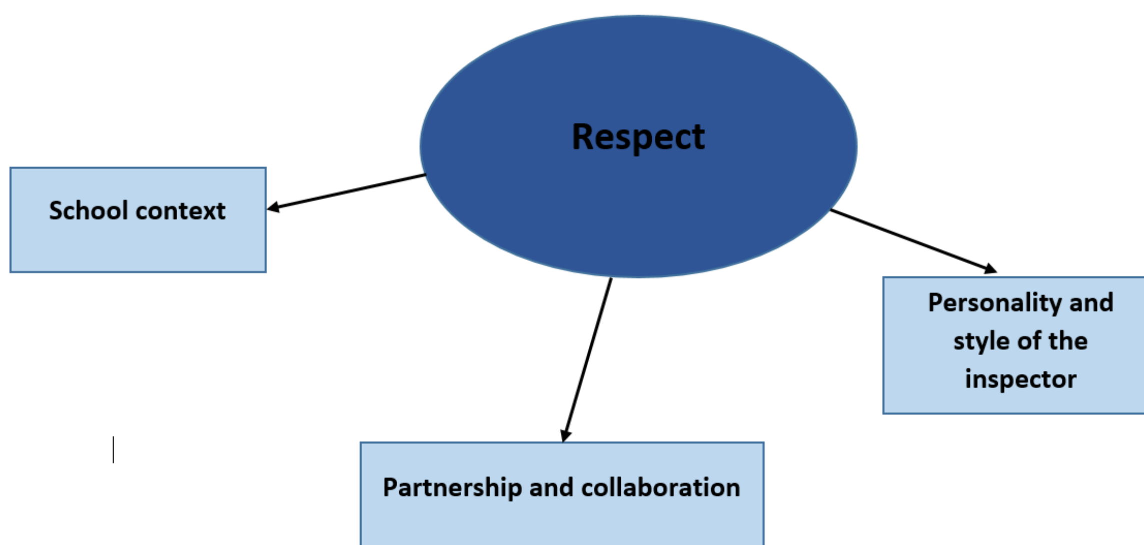
It is apparent from the data that the clarity of advice, its practicality and whether it was solution-focused were among the factors that had a bearing on how teachers could implement the feedback they experienced in the evaluation.

4.4.3 Respect

The theme of respect was very prevalent in the data when teachers and principals described their experience of evaluation. Respect is defined as the extent to which teachers and principals considered the inspectors' provision of evaluation to be respectful. This theme in discussed in this section and it has three dimensions: partnership and collaboration; the personality and style of the inspector; and school context. Figure 16 (below) provides an overview of the theme. This theme identifies the elements that variously brought and did not bring an experience of respect.

Figure 16

Theme of Respect with Three Dimensions



Activate Windows

4.4.3.1 Partnership and Collaboration. This dimension describes how teachers experienced partnership and collaboration within the evaluation process. It identifies that, when partnership and collaboration were present, it rendered the overall experience for teachers as being one of respect. This sub-section also recognises that, when partnership and collaboration were not apparent, respect within the process was negatively affected.

During the interviews, teachers in five of the schools recalled experiences where they were not listened to and they relayed that they felt they were not allowed to contribute their perspectives to the process. They also reported that the conversations were one-sided. A teacher in School Six, describing the post-evaluation feedback with the whole school reported that she and her fellow teachers endeavoured to make comments on some findings at the meeting that would have offered a different perspective or additional evidence, and that the inspector refused to allow them to express their views. T1S6 stated:

> We made comments that were not taken on board; they were shot down fairly quickly without being given the time or opportunity to flesh them out or discuss…it really was not a case of [the inspector] stating she was willing to listen and take on board and [possibly] change her opinion (T1S6)

The teaching principal in School Seven also voiced the opinion that the process was one-sided and that the voice of the teacher was not heard or taken into account. PS7 explained:

> We should have spoken up; we should have fought our corner on certain issues, I think, and I know some teachers felt that the feedback and evaluation overall was not fair and was quite one-sided (PS7)

The post-evaluation meeting provides an opportunity for the inspector to provide oral feedback on the main findings of the evaluation. At this stage in the process the findings are in draft form and school staff have the opportunity to discuss the findings. Any additional evidence that comes to light during the meeting can be used to inform the final findings (DES, 2016b). With

regard to the most recent example cited above, when questioned whether the principal or teachers had endeavoured to explain to the inspector why a particular teaching approach had been taken so as to better inform the inspector, PS7 explained:

> We did try to, but it was dismissed…we had a different agenda than what the inspector had in mind for our school (PS7)

The teaching principal reflected that, at the post-evaluation meeting, she and the teachers felt they had to appear to take on board the inspector's recommendations. For, if they questioned or argued with the inspector, they might have appeared defensive or made it seem like the school was hiding something. She concluded that it was better to accept what the inspectors were recommending; that there was a feeling of resignation that they had no way of contributing their observations. This example shows that the process did not proceed in partnership or collaboration with the teachers in the school and that respect in the evaluation was, therefore, not evident.

A teacher in School Two reiterated this sense of resignation and inevitability:

> You have to just get through them (evaluations) and keep the head down; there is no choice in the matter, [just to] get it over with… (T2S2)

Two teachers in School Seven also expressed the view that they did not have a 50/50 part in the conversation as part of the evaluation. T1S7 stated:

> The inspector had obviously a lot of experience and was teaching a lot longer than me. But I feel that it was not much of a conversation because I was not really given any time to join in what she was saying (T1S7)

A teacher in School Five recalled similar experiences of not being listened to. She highlighted that, in her opinion, it did not matter what teachers offered in the conversation either individually or collectively as it was not taken on board by the inspector.

When recalling the details of individual feedback, a teacher in School One said the feedback he received had been very one-sided and that the inspector had provided little scope for him to give his perspectives on the observations the inspector had just made.

> I felt after the WSE the feedback briefly addressed what I was doing well and then I sat there for an hour while there was information thrown at me and there was very little time given for my point of view or my contribution (T1S1)

Teachers and principals in more than one school described the evaluation being 'done onto teachers' and schools as opposed to it being a shared professional dynamic. The teaching principal in School Two stated:

> I think evaluation is something that is done onto schools - inspectors are still the 'cigire' (Irish word for 'inspector') that come in and inspect the work (PS2)

Similarly, a teacher in School one stated:

> I would certainly say it was put upon us rather than a working relationship or a professional working relationship (T2S1)

One teacher said that the staff found the process 'wholly unsatisfactory' and explained their experience that there had been no sense of partnership with the Inspectorate during the evaluation.

Some teachers and principals interviewed and surveyed did report respectful engagement. A teacher in School Three recalled that teachers there had been invited to be part of the conversation during feedback. He felt that teachers in his school found the feedback experience to be a fair assessment of the school and added that teachers had been encouraged to contribute to the feedback conversation as it took place. Their opinions and contributions to the inspector's feedback had, in short, been encouraged. The teachers within School Three also described a collaborative process in which they were given the opportunity to explain to the inspectors everything that was going on in their classrooms. They said that they felt the process afforded them the opportunity to contribute much to, and even shape, the evaluation. These

responses show that some teachers experienced a situation where they had limited or no opportunity to work in partnership, or collaborate with, the inspectors on the evaluation. A small number of teachers reported otherwise. There is a strong sense from the data that teachers felt evaluation was a foregone conclusion and that it would occur regardless of their input or that it would take place while they were not allowed to contribute. The phrases "evaluation is done onto us," "it's teachers versus inspectors" and "them and us" were repeated by teachers, reinforcing their observations of a lack of co-operation and partnership. These experiences make it clear that many teachers did not experience respectful engagement or mutual respect as part of the evaluation process.

4.4.3.2 Personality and Style of the Inspector(s). This dimension falls appropriately under the theme of respect as the data show that the personality and style of the inspector(s) influenced teachers' experiences of the feedback process. Respect was fostered when the inspector's personality and style was cordial and personable. The data showed that, when the inspector's style was collegial and their interactions with pupils and teachers were positive and put the class and teacher at ease, teachers felt respected within the evaluation process. Respect was shown when inspectors engaged with teachers as peers and the style of the inspector promoted shared learning. While these demonstrations of respect were evident to some teachers and principals, there were also experiences to the contrary.

The descriptions provided by teachers and the principal in School Eight suggest that the inspectors showed them respect in their evaluation and put them at ease. T1S8 explained:

> It was not like they were out to pick out things that were wrong, they just floated around the school easily. It did not feel in any way uncomfortable…It felt like having another teacher around… they got the best out of us and very cleverly got us to engage in reflective and professional conversation in the meetings after the classroom visits (T1S8)

Teachers in School Four noted inspectors' collegial style of engaging with the teaching staff. T3S4 complimented the inspection team by stating:

> Once the inspectors were in, it was very much like we were peers with them…they respected us and worked with all of us…they were learning from us and we were learning from them which was lovely…I felt it was very much a peer interaction (T3S4)

While admitting that the lead-up to the evaluation was "manic" and "mayhem," the teachers complimented the manner in which the inspection team fitted in with the daily life of the school. T1S4 commented:

> They adjusted themselves to the daily routine of the school and we were confident that they knew this was the way we do things around here…I thought that approach was very professional (T1S4)

A teacher in School Seven reflected on the evaluation and said that a respectful relationship between the inspector and teachers is essential and has a significant effect on how teachers experience the evaluation. A teacher in School Six thought the same:

> It comes down to the personality of the inspector. The more opportunities that are provided to develop a rapport with you as a teacher the more willing you were to talk about why you were adopting certain approaches as a teacher during the feedback process…I am definitely more inclined to take the recommendations on board when respectful, open and honest interactions are promoted and modelled by the inspector (T1S6)

According to the accounts of the teachers in School Seven, the personality and style of the inspector who conducted their most recent WSE resulted in a more positive experience than a previous evaluation in which another inspector had a very different personality and style. T1S7 explained:

> … in my opinion that particular inspector (referring to the inspector who carried out the WSE) was on the same level as me and she was much more positive; while she gave us positive feedback she also offered constructive and developmental feedback. But we came away from our interactions with that inspector feeling lifted, encouraged and motivated whereas that was not our experience with the previous inspector. The inspector who carried out the WSE made us feel comfortable whereas the other inspector did not (referring to an inspector who had carried out an incidental inspection previously)… As a result we wanted to engage with their advice and we felt motivated to make changes (T1S7)

The teaching principal in School Eight also alluded to the personality and style of the inspectors who carried out the WSE and how it positively affected the teachers and staff. PS8 referred to the fact that the fear of the impending evaluation overwhelmed some teachers and that previous experiences of inspections or accounts of evaluations in neighbouring schools resulted in making teachers feel anxious and stressed. However, when he outlined how he and the teachers experienced the more positive and supportive evaluation, he praised the personalities of the two inspectors.

. Responses to surveys reveal that some teachers did not have a good experience of the personality and style of the inspector and that their respect for the process was thereby compromised. One teacher interviewed in School One was highly critical of the manner in which the inspector interacted with the teacher and pupils during the evaluation. The teacher explained that the inspector only briefly observed the introduction to the lesson before interrupting and questioning the class about what they had previously covered. The inspector then advised the teacher what should have been included in the lesson even though she had only partly observed it. The teacher in question (T2S1) emphasised that this interaction was negative:

> The inspector was on her laptop at the start of my lesson. She spoke loads but nothing concrete. She questioned the children in such a manner that if my children were spoken to in that way I would remove them from the conversation (T2S1)

This teacher's account shows that the inspector's engagement with the teacher was not a respectful one.

Another teacher in School One recalled that the style of the inspector she engaged with negatively affected her respect for the process. The teacher described a scenario in which she was scheduled for observation for 90 minutes. The inspector arrived twenty minutes late for the observation, requested a change to the teacher's time table and the planned lesson for the allocated time for the evaluation and left the room at regular intervals to take calls. The teacher noted that the inspector did not get to follow the structure of the lesson, see how it was planned on paper or interact in a meaningful way with the pupils or the teacher. T2S1 said:

> She offered no apology for being late and appeared distracted throughout, it was very unnerving. It was as though I or the pupils were not present in the room, there was a coldness. While I received 'ok' feedback I was not impressed with how she presented herself and so I took the feedback with a grain of salt. I must have had a bad experience as some of the other teachers had really positive experiences with their inspectors…(T2S1)

While this example raises the issue about Inspectors adhering to the procedures and protocols, it also shines a light on how the style of the inspector affects the teacher's experience and the important role it plays in promoting respect among teachers in the process. This teacher's account suggested that, if she had had a different inspector in her room, she may have had a different experience.

It appears from these extracts above and the contributions of this cohort of teachers that the personalities and styles of the inspectors they encounter within the evaluation process have

a bearing on whether teachers perceive themselves to have experienced respectful engagement by the inspectors.

4.4.3.3 School Context. This dimension refers to the extent to which inspectors took school context factors into account during the evaluation process and how it influenced teachers' experience of the evaluation. This section discusses school context. These contextual factors are environmental, physical, socio-cultural and individual, to name a few. School context also includes a necessary discussion regarding the degree of empathy that inspectors had for teachers working in varied settings and contexts. The dimension of school context connects with the overall theme of respect in that inspectors' awareness, understanding and allowances of, and for, school context had a positive effect on some teachers' respect for the evaluation process.

Teachers in three of the eight schools in which the interviews occurred observed that inspectors had not adequately considered school context factors, and these teachers said they experienced a lack of understanding from inspectors regarding school context. Teachers in one school had the opposite experience; they reported that the inspection team were very cognisant of the school context factors, and there was some evidence in the survey that inspectors had contextualised their advice for specific settings. This suggests that whether the teachers' experiencing respectful engagement depended, at least to some extent, on whether inspectors had acknowledged contextual factors during their evaluation.

Within School Eight, teachers reported that inspectors took the school's context into account and that the inspectors provided very specific advice to the teachers as to how to work in such an environment. In this case the teachers considered acknowledgement of the school environment/building to be a significant issue in supporting teaching and learning. The teachers observed that the inspection team had shown empathy in terms of the school's context, had

praised the teachers' efforts in making the best out of a challenging situation and shared their advice on how the environment could be further enhanced to support teaching. T1S8 stated:

> They were very understanding, they had seen similar environments before and one of them had worked in a school building like ours. They were very aware that we did not have control over our school building; they knew the walls were damp and that we were limited in what we could do. They praised us in our efforts and provided us with tips to make the classrooms more child-friendly and colourful (T1S8)

Another teacher in this school reported, 'I had great regard for these inspectors, they got what it was like to work in a school building such as ours... '. (T2S8)

A teacher reported within the survey that an inspector understood the school context very well within their school and that this had contributed positively to the teacher's experience of the evaluation. The teacher explained:

> It was very helpful that the inspector was very familiar with two-teacher schools. We gained insight from her feedback into what works well in different situations in a multi-class classroom

Teachers in three schools provided very explicit examples of school context factors not being taken into account. Two teachers in School Seven (a DEIS school) provided a great amount of detail regarding how teachers were extremely committed to the teaching of Irish and did a lot to promote and foster a love of the Irish language and culture in the pupils. Both teachers outlined that they felt deflated by the inspector's recommendation about Irish. In their opinion the inspector had not taken into account the school context and that the teaching approaches evident during the lesson observations in Irish were not recognised. The teachers claimed that the progress achieved in recent years in Irish had not been acknowledged. While the developmental findings highlighted issues regarding the teaching of Irish and it reflected

the pupils' learning, it did not recognise that it was an uphill battle to teach Irish or the journey the school had embarked upon over the previous three to four years. They felt the school was judged unfairly by the same criteria as a school in a more 'leafy' area and that not enough credit was given to the quality of the teaching. T1S7 explained:

> While we (the staff) bent over backwards to teach Irish we were still judged to be 'satisfactory' in teaching Irish…this judgement was made using the same criteria that would be applied to a school community of parents that place high regard for Irish. Due regard was not given to where we had come from in Irish, it may have been helpful if the report included a sentence or two about what we had done in our school (T1S7)

They reported that this experience left them feeling demotivated. While one could argue that it could be interpreted that the teachers simply did not like the judgement, the example strongly suggests that school context was not fully recognised.

The same teacher spoke about the challenges of teaching in a DEIS context and that the evaluation had not taken into account efforts such schools make to ensure pupils turn up and are safe. They reported that the starting point for learning is very different in their context to most other schools and that they should not be evaluated in the same way using the same criteria. T1S7 stated:

> …Our starting points are so different; take for example our school and a school in x (referring to a school in a more socio-economically advantaged area) we are evaluated using the same benchmarks; it makes sense that context has to matter, but our experience was that it did not. More credit should be given to where we start from and how far we get rather than be piled in with the rest of the nation. Prior to the evaluation we had a child's father who died of a heroin overdose, we had to spend six weeks counselling the child, getting the child to the starting point where they could begin to

learn again. This is just one example of what we are faced with…of course these stories should not feature as part of the evaluation but they should be accounted for and respected (T1S7)

The teacher in School Seven explained that within the evaluation report, the inspector had included a customary short paragraph preceding the main findings including a brief profile of the school, staffing and pupil numbers, attendance rates and other important contextual details. The principal of this school said she felt this paragraph did not sufficiently set out her school context. PS7 explained:

> The one-size-fits-all approach to the school context paragraph maddened me, to be honest…our school has some major challenges that cannot be described by explaining the number of pupils and teachers in the school…. I don't dispute that we are not very good at everything but I know we work hard and make a difference to a number of very troubled children…we focus on their needs…I know we have made progress in recent years…we therefore can't get 'excellents' in every subject we teach. It upsets me to read reports from schools in the area with fewer challenges and the same context paragraphs. I know readers would think: why can't our school have more positives in it? I have little regard for the whole process and question why schools such as ours are judged using the same criteria as non-DEIS schools. I would have more regard for the process if there was an [individualised] evaluation model for DEIS schools (PS7)

Here again, the example shows that the teacher felt disillusioned with the evaluation process and the fact that the feedback did not have due regard for the particulars of her school context.

In School Five, a support teacher within a DEIS school mentioned that they have a large number of pupils with significant behavioural and psychological needs. She indicated that the inspector had not taken into account this significant contextual factor in the evaluation. The

teacher explained that, while the inspectors acknowledged that teachers had good classroom management skills, many teachers had felt this was an understatement in the context of the school:

> It takes a tremendous amount of work, sometimes years of input, to get a child to a point where they can sit, co-operate and listen…the effort required to do this can be the reason why some parts of learning are not better…more regard should be given to background in the school (T2S5)

This observation echoes those of teachers in School Seven. It is evident from what these teachers said in the interviews that they experienced considerable frustration allied with a sense of unfairness when the evaluation process had not adequately addressed school context factors. These experiences negatively affected their perception of the evaluation process as not being as mutually respectful as it might be.

Teachers also expressed the view that the inspectors' recommendations in the feedback was not always contextualised or appropriate to their individual school settings. Six teachers surveyed anonymously online, and one teacher in School Two, felt that the inspectors' recommendations were not practical to implement as they were not suitable or contextualised to their individual settings. In her interview, T1S2 explained that the inspector had recommended team teaching within her school. She described a school with very small classrooms in which the acoustics were very poor. T1S2 added that there was also multi-grade classrooms. They had previously tried team teaching and in-class support on many occasions, as well as doing so in advance of the WSE, but it proved impossible due to physical constraints. P1S2 remarked that they had tried to explain this to the inspector but that the recommendation was made anyway. She remarked, *'Team teaching was still recommended and no regard was given in the report to our having tried it previously.'* (P1S2)

As a result, the staff felt team teaching could not, practically speaking, be implemented in any classroom and, therefore, they did not change their practice in this regard. This issue was echoed by another teacher surveyed. The teacher reported that the physical constraints in the classroom meant that the recommendation to implement team teaching was impractical. She stated:

> Team teaching was suggested, we tried it but it did not work…I found this very distracting and we both agreed that it was not the most beneficial way of teaching. As a result we did not nor could not implement the recommendation and so practice did not change in this regard

In other instances, inspectors made specific recommendations about teaching individual pupils or groups of pupils with SEN. Here, teachers reported that it was not practical to implement the recommendations as they were not suited to the pupils' needs. The teachers noted that the inspectors had made their observations based on a 45-minute observation of the pupils in the classroom, and had not considered factors such as a thorough knowledge and familiarity of the pupil, discussions with parents or a wide range of assessment data. Two teachers said they had been advised to challenge SEN pupils more but concluded that this was not realistic as they knew the pupils' complex needs in far greater detail than the inspector did. One teacher said:

> Some of the suggestions were too advanced for the particular group I was teaching. I gave the suggestions a try but they were not feasible; if I had changed my practice it would have been for the benefit of the inspector and not the pupil(s)

This sub-section (4.4.2.2 *School context*) has dealt with how teachers experienced evaluation, and, in particular, the extent to which they felt that school context factors had been given due regard in the process. When such factors had been taken into account, teachers had a positive experience of the evaluation and it encouraged their respect for the process. This section also showed that some teachers reported that inspectors' evaluations had not taken into account a

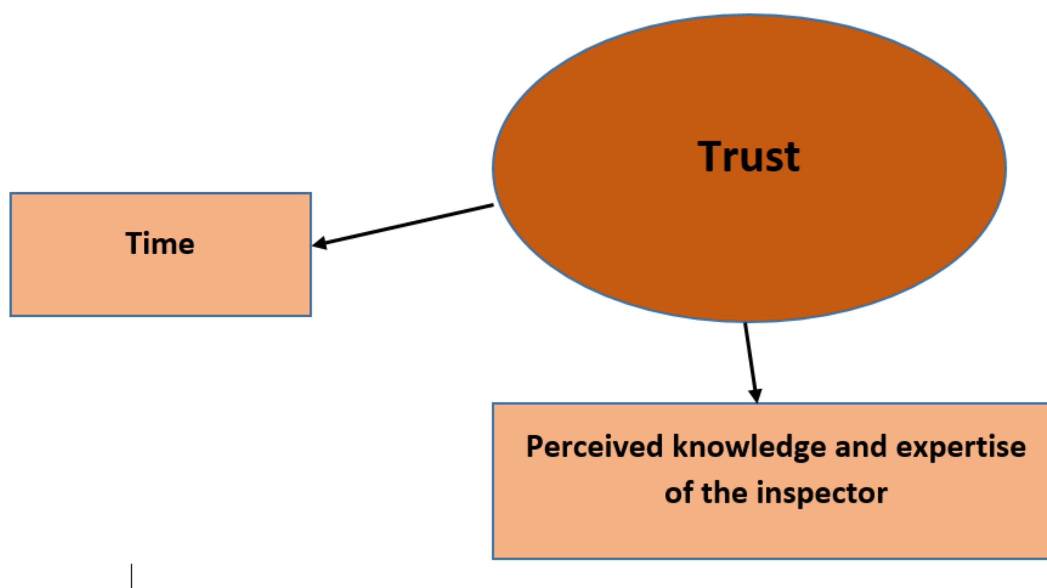
range of relevant and important contextual features such as environmental, physical or socio-cultural factors. The teachers said that such disregard had negatively affected their respect for the process.

4.4.4 Trust

This theme refers to teachers' experience of evaluation within the context of trust. The surveys and interview data suggest that teachers experienced significant misgivings and scepticism about aspects of the evaluation process. Specifically, they had doubts about the process in terms of the time afforded to the inspectors to make judgments about the quality of educational provision or the in-school phase of the evaluation representing a mere moment in time and therefore not being sufficiently representative of the extent and quality of such provision. The theme also includes how the relevant expertise and knowledge of the inspectors had a bearing on teachers' trust and credibility in the evaluation. For this reason, this theme has two dimensions: time; and the inspectors' relevant expertise and knowledge. The two dimensions within trust are discussed in the subsequent subsections (4.4.4.1 & 4.4.4.2) and illustrated in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17

Theme of Trust with Two Dimensions



4.4.4.1 Time. Teachers reported that the lack of time for some of the observations and for the subsequent feedback had a negative effect on their sense of trust. Some of them described the process as being very rushed. Teachers also raised the issue of time in another way, recounting that the period of time in which the evaluation had been conducted was a very limited picture of the life of the school and represented only a "snapshot" in time that could not possibly reflect the many dimensions of school life. The use of sampling in larger schools added to teachers' misgivings about the process where inspectors selected a sample of teachers to facilitate more efficient use of their time. These factors together contributed to teachers' scepticism regarding the credibility of the process and their trust in that process.

At least 10 teachers surveyed, and two teachers who were interviewed, highlighted the limitation that the evaluation was only a snapshot in the life of the school and that insufficient time had been afforded to inspectors' classroom observations about teachers' or schools' strengths. The 12 teachers explained that there are many elements to school life and that the

present model of evaluation did not provide adequate opportunity to see the breadth and quality of educational provision during a specified, condensed time of three days for the whole school. They noted that observations of some teachers lasted for as little as 30 minutes, and for and a maximum of two hours.

A teacher in School One felt that the evaluation was only a snapshot and that it did not reflect what happens in the school on a daily basis. Her description shows that she had difficulty in trusting the process. She highlighted the fact that there may be very different and/or effective practices occurring simultaneously in one classroom while the inspector carries out his/her observations in another. She also made the point that, on a broader temporal basis, depending on the days or time of year, the interventions the inspector did not see and subsequently recommended may have been scheduled by the school for other times of the year. The teaching principal in School Two voiced her frustration about what the inspector had not seen. PS2 stated:

> There were definite things that she missed, things that we do so well and are our hallmark, they fell between the cracks [during] the evaluation. She was with us [only] on [a] Thursday and Friday, so naturally she was not going to see every angle of what we do all the time PS2

Similarly, a teacher in School Seven expressed her frustration with the inspection model. She felt that, because it occurred over a mere three days, it did not allow for an insight to be provided regarding the extent of teaching provision in the school:

> Lots of valuable things were missed. She was with us from Tuesday to Friday. Naturally she was not going to see absolutely everything, there were lots of really good things happening that were not observed, things that we had been focusing on as a school got overlooked and other, less important things that may have been flawed got a lot of

attention. I do not think that enough of the good quality work we had been doing was observed (T1S7)

Here again, this teacher's observation shows that she could not trust the integrity of the process and again points to the temporal/contextual limitation that is necessarily associated with the fact that the inspector's evaluation amounted to a mere snapshot in time. The teacher expressed the view that such inspections should be conducted over the course of a month to enable the inspector to see interventions and programmes in use over a longer period. She felt that this approach would facilitate the observation of a variety of teachers' approaches and methodologies and would be more representative than just cramming the inspections into the standard evaluation observation time of ninety minutes.

Another teacher who was surveyed explained that the inspector had scheduled the WSE observation period within the school very tightly that they did not deviate from the timetable. This teacher also commented that teachers were forced to adapt their timetable to suit that of the inspector, *'Plans had to be changed to suit what the inspector wanted to see not, what was already working well in the school.'*

Teachers also expressed dissatisfaction with inspectors' judgements in whole-school provision in some subjects being informed by short classroom observation periods constrained by time. A teacher in School Two recounted her scepticism about the findings in Mathematics given the time constraints during the in-school phase. T2S2 explained:

I was the only teacher observed for Mathematics in the whole-process in the school (The teacher taught 3rd and 4th class in a small, four-teacher school). The inspector observed a lesson on computation and the operations for long multiplication. Time did not allow for her to see Mathematics lessons at other class levels. My lesson lasted 45 minutes. As a school we were focusing on problem-solving and I know that no other lessons were observed. There was advice in the report that teachers should

> incrementally develop the pupils' problem-solving skills; it beggars belief how this advice was in the report when the inspector did not have time to see practice throughout the school and based all the findings in Mathematics on my short lesson. The process appears to be rushed so they can move on to the next school (T2S2)

The principal in the same school also raised the issue of time and said that she was dubious about the finding in Mathematics given that only one brief lesson was evaluated. PS2 said, *'Additional time was needed to make a fuller recommendation in Mathematics.'* This issue was also raised by two teachers in School Eight regarding a recommendation on literacy. The teachers explained that the inspector had observed two literacy lessons in the school, one in each of their classes. One of the teachers had focused on writing; the other taught an oral language lesson as it was on their timetable for that time. Both teachers felt hard done by this experience. T1S8 summed up why:

> We know that they can't see everything in three days [due to time limits] I had really wanted her to see my reading programme as I have lots of different groups and levelled readers. We had recently introduced station teaching to support reading in the school and I would have thought she would have been impressed by it. The recommendation of 'attainment for a significant minority of readers needs to be progressed within the school' really upset me. If she could have had the time to come back to my classroom or the other teacher's classroom to see reading practice, I think this recommendation would not have been included T1S8

This teacher raised two issues with respect to time: firstly, that her experience of the process did not afford the inspector time to come back to her class to seek more evidence to inform the judgment. Secondly, it reinforces the previous point regarding the limitations of evaluation due to it being a snapshot in time. In this example, the snapshot afforded the opportunity to see oral

language and writing in English, but the process did not afford time to see the third dimension of the English literacy programme on which the teacher would have valued some observations. Limited time for the observation process contributed to teachers' feeling rushed and added to their scepticism in its credibility and their distrust in the process. One teacher who was surveyed reported:

> It was difficult for the inspector to gauge the quality of my practice after being in my classroom for such a short period of time. The inspector did not allow time for development in my lesson; she took the class to question them on previous learning. The inspector proceeded to recommend resources and methodologies that I was going to use and had planned in my short-term planning. There was no time or opportunity during the very brief feedback session to explain what I was going to do. The advice and recommendations in my setting were futile as I was doing them already.

It is evident from this teacher's commentary that the time limitation affected the effectiveness of the observation and the feedback session afterwards; it shows that the teacher could not trust the observation or feedback. The principal in School One heard a similar observation relayed to him by the teachers. PS1 explained:

> Some of the teachers communicated that that it is not fair when you've only been observed for one hour and 45 minutes, and you are told that you use a narrow range of methodologies. Many teachers said to me they did not need to make any changes because they knew they were implementing a range of methodologies and that the inspector did not see them used because they were there for such a short time. I suppose the model has to be looked at to ensure a breadth of practice can be seen over time PS1

The issue of limited time was also identified in the extract from the following teacher who was surveyed regarding the time allocated to the observation and feedback and how it meant they did not draw any reliable or meaningful advice from the process. The teacher said:

> The time for observation was very short – 30 minutes for each core subject, 30 minutes for History and only a few minutes for personal feedback; this was way too short to provide areas for development and any meaningful advice, the WSE also reflected a snapshot in time and not an overview

A teacher in School One suggested that the time afforded to the process only allowed for judgements and evaluation and was not adequate to promote quality feedback and so no actions could arise from the feedback or the process. T2S1 stated:

> I suppose they do not really have time to show us how to improve, feedback centred on whether I was good at something or what I needed to improve on, but there was little or no time to provide advice as to how to address my shortcomings T2S1

4.4.4.2 The Inspectors' Perceived Expertise and Knowledge. The perceived expertise and knowledge of the inspectors had a bearing on some teachers' experience of the evaluation process. They found it a professional experience when inspectors provided very specific recommendations based on their own level of relevant experience in a particular area (most notably in the areas of DEIS or special education). Although the data show some instances when this was the case, it showed more often that teachers perceived gaps in an inspector's knowledge or expertise. Therefore, the teachers felt reassured and/or supported as a result of an inspector's level of perceived expertise or were sceptical about the credibility of the advice or recommendations the inspectors offered.

Within schools three and four, teachers recalled very positive examples of shared professional experiences. They described how inspectors' expertise and experience in SEN settings informed and guided their observations and feedback sessions with teachers. T1S4 said:

> Our inspector was very passionate about, and had great expertise in the area of, special needs teaching, [she] was very much in the know and had great knowledge about the

> ‘in class support model’ of SEN teaching. So I found it really beneficial speaking to her afterwards. She had a lot of helpful hints and advice regarding my practice. We felt we should implement this advice school-wide as she had spoken about the area in such a convincing manner (T1S4)

Another teacher in the same school spoke about her experience with a different inspector on the evaluation team. She reported that the inspector had a background in special education and how beneficial the whole experience was for her. T3S4 explained:

> I was working with pupils with a high level of need at the time; the inspector who came to my class was very experienced in that area. I remember him going through my plans and assessment strategies and he chatted a lot about how they could be improved. He kept providing examples of children he used to teach and how some of the approaches he used for them could be transferable to my pupils. It was extremely beneficial (T3S4)

The examples these two teachers provided above suggest that they placed a high level of value on the interaction with their respective inspectors in terms of credibility and trust in the advice. However, the data show that the opposite was also reported. Some teachers said the lack of relevant expertise among inspectors negatively affected them in that they felt that it was difficult to rely upon, or believe in, advice from someone with less experience in contexts such as SEN. Some teachers felt that, where the inspectors did not have the perceived experience and qualifications, their valuable time was being wasted and that they had gained little or nothing from the experience. One teacher surveyed felt that her own Masters in SEN and knowledge in the field was far superior to the inspector’s qualifications and knowledge and so they found the process limiting and that the feedback was not very beneficial. This limitation was expressed by two other teachers, with one respondent stating that, ‘The visit should be conducted with someone with specific knowledge, experience and qualifications in the dedicated field for it to be more useful’

The other teacher explained that, since the inspector had limited experience and expertise to advise in an ASD setting, she had no regard for the feedback and made no changes to her practice. Another teacher felt that the knowledge she was gaining from elsewhere was more beneficial and reported that the inspector was not adequately experienced. They stated, 'When they visited, I was mid-way through an SEN postgraduate course. I felt the inspector did not have much SEN experience so the feedback was not hugely beneficial.' T1S5 stated (commenting on the knowledge and expertise of the inspector) said she did not find the advice reliable:

> I feel SEN experience is limited in the Inspectorate generally when it comes to a WSE. I have taught in an ASD unit for five years, the inspector informed me during the inspection feedback that she had been in the Inspectorate for ten years, and that prior to that she had worked in curriculum development and taught mainstream all her teaching career. While the experience was positive, and she relayed practice she had seen that worked well in other ASD settings, I found the advice hard to take from someone with no experience or particular qualifications in this area. Perhaps this visit could be done by someone with a Masters in SEN. The advice would be more credible (T1S5)

A teacher in School Eight who taught in an ASD setting observed that teaching within that SEN setting was not an area that either of the two inspectors could advise her on to any great extent. T2S8 said:

> The direction probably would not have been as strong in the ASD setting. I suppose the inspectors felt that was not their area of expertise, we did have a couple of questions for them around planning and teaching approaches, they had to say they would come back to us on it, it did not quite inspire confidence in the process (T2S8)

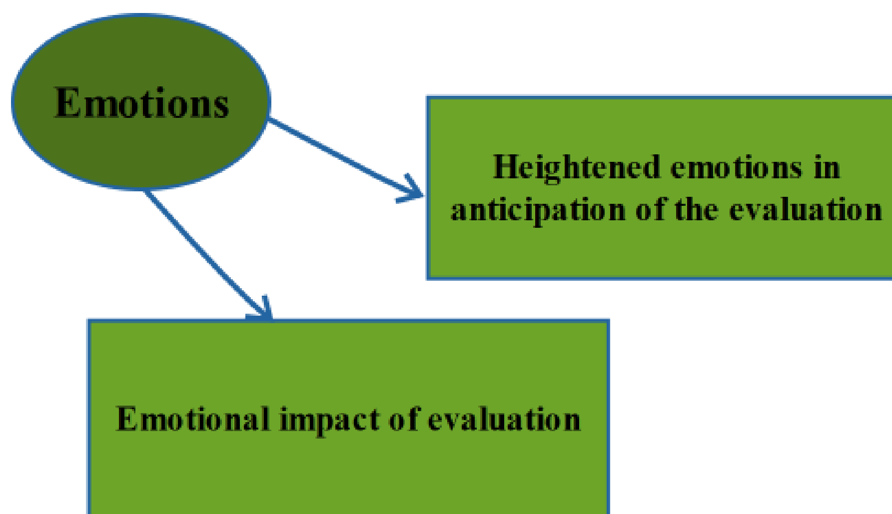
These examples show that teachers were more likely to trust the advice and feedback inspectors provided if the inspectors had relevant expertise and knowledge that could provide added value within the SEN context.

4.4.5 Emotions

This section identifies and discusses the emotions that teachers experience during the process of evaluation under the theme of emotions. The data show that the anticipation of the evaluation and teachers' preconceived notions about the process significantly influences their experiences of it and heightens their emotions. For these reasons, as shown in figure 18 (below) this theme has two dimensions: *Emotional impact of evaluation* and *heightened emotions in anticipation of the evaluation.* The findings with respect to these two dimensions are presented in the following subsection (4.4.5.1 & 4.4.5.2)

Figure 18

Theme of Emotions with Two Dimensions



4.4.5.1 Emotional Impact of Evaluation. The interview data and open-ended responses to the survey reveal that teachers experienced various emotions during and after the evaluation. They experienced anxiety, tension and pressure as a result of the evaluation. In describing their feelings about evaluation, the teachers used language such as “fear factor,” “overwhelming,” “stress,” “panic,” “mayhem,” “worry,” “high alert,” “overdrive,” “disabling,” “flap,” “terrified” and “scared.” Meanwhile, others reported having experienced “joy,” “pride,” “happiness” and “inspiration.”

Teachers experienced worry and anxiety during the process and feared, when a developmental observation in their setting was reflected in the written report, that they may have let their school down. T2S2 (a four-teacher school) remarked, ‘I felt ashamed, my classroom was the only room in which Maths was observed and so the line in the report regarding Maths teaching shone a negative light on me.’

The fact that this was a small school heightened the concern of the teacher that she might be identified in the report.

Similar findings were evident in School Four (a large DEIS school). A teacher in this school said that all her fellow teachers knew the evaluation timetable for the in-school days and were very aware of what subjects were being evaluated in the various classrooms. She recalled that the inspector observed Aistear (a play-based programme for infant classes) in her classroom, the observation went well and the inspector praised some areas and provided specific advice for development in others. T3S4 explained her emotions regarding the experience of the post-evaluation meeting with the whole staff:

> I had to keep my head down while the inspector reported on Aistear, the only room in which the programme was evaluated. She highlighted the positives about the lesson but proceeded to report on how teaching in Aistear could be improved. I thought the ground would open and swallow me up. The teachers were very supportive and they understood the context of the recommendation, but I was embarrassed (T3S4)

As with the previous example, this one raises concerns about teacher anonymity in the overall process. Although other teachers had not raised these concerns and no other patterns emerged regarding anonymity, the examples nonetheless highlights how the teachers in question experienced this issue. They experienced humiliation and anger as a result of the evaluation and the example illustrates how personalised some teachers perceive the process to be. The example shows that this particular teacher did not perceive the feedback to the whole staff as a collegial discussion or an evaluation of professional practice but an encounter that prompted her to feel negative emotions.

The data also reveal that teachers experienced positive and negative emotions when the findings of the evaluation were revealed. There were very specific examples of where teachers expressed their emotions. The following examples provide some insight into these emotions. This research does not enquire into teachers' evaluation of the process or details about whether they agreed with the findings or the evaluation process itself. While some of the following

quotations stray at times into those domains, the extracts are presented here to illustrate the emotions that manifested as a result of the process, regardless of the reason:

> I was annoyed that our strengths and successes in the Arts were not recognised
>
> I feared that the negatives of the report would be picked up by parents and that they would not see all the positives in the report
>
> Once the WSE was over I was worried about the follow-up evaluation and whether I would be able to act on the recommendations in my class
>
> There was disappointment among myself and a few other teachers at my level in the school that the team teaching we had worked so hard at was not more favourably reported on

Teachers also expressed positive emotions regarding their experiences of the evaluation. Some teachers experienced joy when the inspector highlighted (in oral feedback and/or the final written report) areas they had been focusing on. Although some of the following quotes from surveys could be seen as teachers' evaluation or agreement or disagreement with the findings or process, they are only intended to illustrate teachers' emotions regarding the evaluation:

> I was delighted with how it went overall, I think it reflected what was going on in my classroom and in the school overall. There was a lot of emotion in the staff room on the day of the post-evaluation meeting; I mean that in a good way, there were so many 'very goods' in the report and I was just so proud of our kids and the school. I felt so privileged to be part of such a good team

One teacher interviewed in School Four described being inspired by the process. T3S4said:

> Looking back now, it was an inspirational experience; as a teacher I felt motivated to work on the few little things the inspector suggested to make my teaching better…as a

> member of staff, I felt we were ready and able to work on the recommendations as a unit to improve our approaches overall (T3S4)

This example suggests that the teacher used the positive experience of the evaluation to inspire herself and her colleagues to further improve their teaching practices.

4.4.5.2 Heightened Emotions in Anticipation of the Evaluation. This dimension of the theme of emotion refers to teachers' heightened emotions in anticipation of evaluation. In many instances, teachers felt strong nervous emotions in advance of the evaluation that either dissipated during feedback or were heightened to a state of extreme agitation as a result of the evaluation and post-evaluation phases. The teacher interviewed in School Eight said that the she and some of her colleagues felt overwhelmed and experienced "the fear factor" in advance of the evaluation, but added that this fear was diluted by the end of the in-school phases:

> In advance of the evaluation we were all up to high doh and I was really worried about the class observation and what was going to be said to me afterwards. When the inspection was over there was a tremendous sense of relief and delight. I wondered afterwards what had I been so stressed about as it was not too bad in the end (T2S8)

This observation was echoed by the principal in School One who said that he observed the teaching staff were very nervous at the thought of being observed. PS1 continued:

> But I think afterwards when they realised they were professionals I suppose they had confidence in their own practice as teachers and they trusted the inspectors within their classrooms; they really started to relax and benefit from the process (PS1)

The teachers in School Four also described the lead-up to the evaluation as one of mania and 'pure panic' but added that, once the in-school phase commenced and the inspectors were in, all those emotions passed.

Teachers described the fact that, in the weeks leading up to the evaluation, its imminence significantly affected their personal lives. T1S7 said, 'My life was written off for

the two weeks running up to it until the inspector had left the building. For those two weeks I could not eat, sleep or drink without stress.' The teaching principal in the same school stated, 'All other aspects of my life shut down; until it was over I could not move on with the rest of my life.' The teachers in this school spoke about the feelings that overcome teachers regarding any inspection. They remarked that, if some teachers hear there is an inspector in a neighbouring school, it immediately 'disables the teacher; they can't sit down or eat for the day.' (PS7 and T1S7)

T2S2 explained that the teachers on her staff went into overdrive, and, in addition to the nervousness they felt, teachers were working longer hours in the days and nights leading up to the evaluation to complete additional paperwork.

Teachers in more than one of the schools described being in fear of "being caught out" by the inspector. Teachers' stress levels rose as they endeavoured to prepare for all eventualities. The teachers in Schools One, Two and Seven said that they wanted to prepare and put their best foot forward. They worried about what they might be "missing" in advance of the evaluation and whether they were going to be exposed. This cohort of teachers said that they created checklists to prepare for the evaluation in terms of planning documentation, environment preparedness, teaching approaches, resources and methodologies. T3S1 felt that all her preparation was simply not enough, 'This did not feel like a support, it felt like a pressure. I felt I had to do more in case I got tripped up or something or I could get caught out on by not having.' Another teacher in this school said, 'All I was worried about was what was I missing…I just felt that it was an attitude that I'm going to catch these people out.' (T2S1)

Interestingly, teachers in Schools One and Three highlighted the fact that the stress and anxiety the teachers experienced before or during the evaluation affected how they were interacting with their classes. A teacher in School One reported that, with the excess preparation she was putting in for the evaluation and trying to pre-empt the exposure of

shortfalls in her practice, her personality with the pupils changed, 'I was crankier with the class and they were probably saying, why is she so stressed? (T2S1). A teacher in School Three reported that the tension before the evaluation also affected their management of the pupils. T3S3 explained:

> The one thing I did not like about it was that the kids all knew it was happening and they picked up on the tension that was around the school. There was a particular instance with special education needs pupils that picked up on the tension and that had a big negative impact. That should not have happened… The pupils knew it was not a normal week in the school and I did not like that (T3S3)

Another teacher in the same school reported that she observed similar effects on the pupils in the school.

These examples point to the heightened emotions of fear, stress and anxiety that teachers experienced in anticipation of the evaluation. The examples show that, in some cases, the apprehensive anticipation of the impending evaluation not only manifested negative emotions in teachers but also imposed on them a coercive and intense period of reflection that led to their improving their practices. It enabled the teachers to apply themselves in areas they were capable of improving upon but had not previously addressed. This extrinsic motivation that the anticipation of evaluation fostered will be revisited under research question four where it will be shown that it improved teaching practices.

4.4.6 Summary – Findings Related to Research Question Three

The data show that teachers had various experiences throughout the evaluation process. They described examples of experiences within the areas of Feedback, Respect, Trust in the Process and Emotions having been variously helpful and unhelpful. Within the theme of *Feedback* the data showed that some teachers experienced inconsistencies between what was reported to them orally on an individual or collective basis and the final, written, report. This

section also revealed that there was some inconsistency between the feedback delivered within schools by individual members of the inspection team. These experiences were negative for teachers; they frustrated them and caused them to feel negative emotions. The discussion also suggested that evaluation might not bring changes in teacher practice as many teachers felt both frustrated within such scenarios and unclear about the correct course of action to take following the evaluation. This theme also discovered that balance was an important aspect of feedback. Teachers reported occasions on which feedback was balanced in terms of identifying both strengths and areas for development. It also showed that some teachers experienced balance in the form of a conversational approach by inspectors in delivering feedback that involved a two-way conversation between the inspector and teacher. Teachers recalled how they felt affirmed and uplifted when such balance was present.

However, the data showed that it was not always balanced and some teachers highlighted that the inspector's feedback was overly weighted in criticism and pointing out faults and was, therefore, one-sided in its delivery. This led to unhelpful experiences for teachers. Finally, this theme covered another dimension: experiences of the feedback being actionable and solution-focused. Here again, teachers experienced this dimension in helpful and unhelpful ways. When the feedback was clear, specific and practical, their experiences were positive. How teachers' experiences had an effect on changes in their teaching practice is the subject of the next research questions. This dimension also explored instances where teachers' experiences of the feedback being actionable and solution-focused was unhelpful and caused them frustration.

The theme of respect was subsequently explored. The data indicated that, while some teachers had experienced partnership and collaboration, a higher number of teachers reported experiences to the contrary. It was shown that some teachers felt evaluation was *done to them* as opposed to inspectors progressing it through a partnership approach. It seems to show that

some teachers did not experience engagement that was mutually respectful. This theme also explored how the personality and style of the inspector affected teachers' experience of the evaluation process and whether they had encountered engagement that was respectful in the evaluation. There were reports that the inspector's style showed respectful engagement when (s)he adopted a collegial style made teachers feel comfortable. Some teachers also suggested that the style of the inspector made them feel uncomfortable and that these experiences were, therefore, negative. This theme included the dimension of school context. It dealt with the teachers' observations as to whether school context was given due regard in the evaluation process. When it was, teachers had a more positive experience of the evaluation and it encouraged their respect for the process. This section also showed that there were instances where teachers recounted that inspectors had not adequately taken context into account and that, when this was evident, it reduced their respect for the evaluation process.

The third theme covered, trust in the process, it was subdivided into two dimensions: time; and the inspectors' perceived expertise and knowledge. Within the dimension of time, the data showed that some teachers felt that the evaluation represented a mere snapshot in time and that, since it was conducted within a tight timeframe of three days, it could not possibly reflect the many dimensions of school life. This perceived shortcoming inhibited their trust in the process. In addition, some teachers felt that inspectors had afforded insufficient time to observations that informed their judgements regarding the quality of teaching practices, and, here again, teachers were sceptical or untrusting of the process as a result. Teachers also raised the inspectors' perceived expertise and knowledge in the context of SEN and DEIS. The data showed that some teachers had a greater level of trust in the process when inspectors in that context had relevant experience and knowledge to carry out appropriate evaluations. The teachers provided examples of where they were sceptical in this regard.

The final theme dealt with Emotions, and two dimensions were discussed: emotional impact of evaluation; and heightened emotions in anticipation of the evaluation. It was evident from the data that teachers experienced a range of emotions during the process, ranging from joy, pride and happiness to fear, stress and worry. The second dimension revealed that teachers' anticipation of the evaluation heightened their emotions. On occasion, the more negative emotions they felt dissipated as the process unfolded. In some examples that were discussed, the emotions that were evident caused specific behaviour to occur such as teachers addressing areas of practice they had previously neglected, and so the evaluation acted as an extrinsic motivation in this regard.

4.5 How does the Experience of Evaluation Affect Teachers' Perceptions of their Practices, and, by Extension, the Practices Themselves?

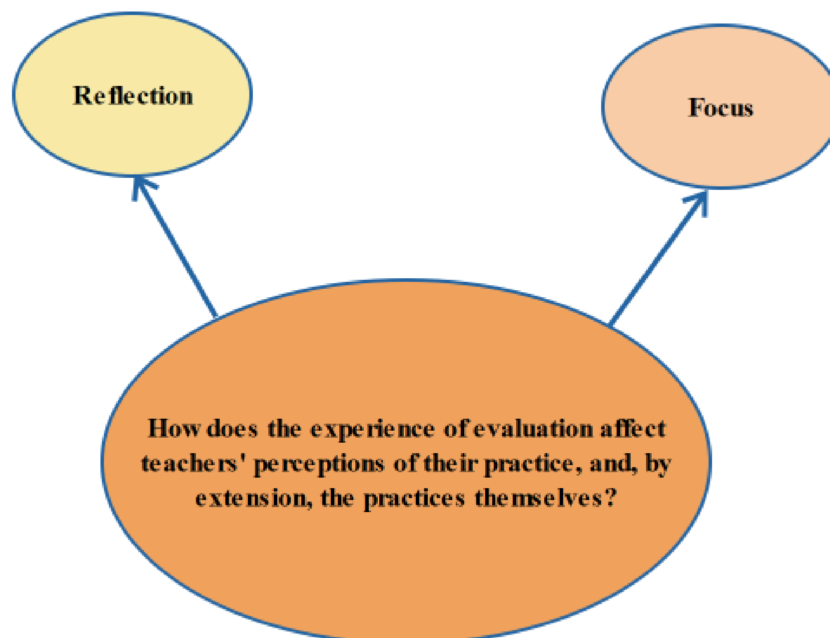
I posed this question in support of the overall aim of this research: to explore the effects of external evaluation on teachers' practice. I intended that by investigating this particular research question that it will identify how the experiences of evaluation influence changes in teachers' practice and what specific changes occurred for some teachers. It was acknowledged in Chapter Two that there was a lack of research regarding the effects of evaluation on schools and teachers. In examining this question I anticipated that the findings will help to address the gap regarding the effects of evaluation on teachers' practice in Ireland.

This question connects in a significant way to research question three regarding how teachers experienced evaluation. Some of the experiences they described also featured in question three.

As I mentioned in Section 4.4.1, I used thematic analysis to analyse the data regarding the question 'how does the experience of evaluation influence changes in teachers' practice?' The interview and survey data revealed two themes regarding this question: Reflection and Focus (Figure 19 below).

Figure 19

Thematic Map for Research Question Four



4.5.1 Reflection

This section presents the findings in relation to the theme of reflection. The aforementioned theme relates to how evaluation was an extrinsic motivation for teachers (both individually and collectively) to reflect and become cognisant of areas of practice that they were either not aware of or unwilling to address. This theme also includes how teachers collaborated with colleagues to reflect, leading to the generation of professional learning communities (at least temporary ones). It shows how, in some cases, evaluation was a catalyst for them to break routines and habits and to go beyond their comfort zones. This connects in a significant way with the findings from research question three that the anticipation of evaluation heightened teachers' emotions, and, in some cases, prompted them to make changes to their practice. This finding will be explored further in the context of reflection being facilitated by the extrinsic motivation of evaluation. Despite the findings in the previous

research question that teachers experienced evaluation in in both helpful and unhelpful ways, teachers in all but one of the schools in which interviews were conducted said evaluation supported their reflection and heightened their awareness of aspects of their practice. Evidence in the survey responses also supported this finding.

Teachers spoke about the inspectors' feedback and findings in evaluation shining a light on specific areas of their teaching practice (either successful practices that warranted extension or areas that required development) and they provided specific examples in the area of teaching methodologies and approaches to SEN teaching where this was the case. For example, a teacher in School One explained that the inspector had praised fieldwork at the post-evaluation meeting with teachers. T3S1 said that, at the staff meeting after the evaluation, there was whole-staff reflection on what effective practice in fieldwork involved. The reflections were recorded arising from such deliberations, and the principal appointed a subcommittee of teachers to put in place a plan as to how fieldwork could be expanded in a greater number of settings. T3S1 concluded:

> I could probably do more of it but I take the class out for Geography once a term. Maths trails were devised around the school by the committee and I use them also. The plan for fieldwork is there and I see teachers from different classes out more often (T3S1)

This example suggests that teachers reflected collaboratively; through the subcommittee a professional learning community was established to expand on the area of fieldwork. A teacher in School Five commented that inspectors had emphasised effective practices in ICT to some teachers during the evaluation. The teacher said that the positive comments regarding ICT made them think more about how it was used in the school. T2S5 described an informal process of reflection:

> A few of us started to think more about various websites that could be used interactively with our classes; it would come up incidentally at staff meetings and discussion would ensue. I would say ICT is more used in my lessons as a result (T2S5)

Here again, the teacher implies that a community of teachers came together to consider how ICT could be used more effectively within the school. A teacher in School Four said that, as a result of the findings and individual and collective feedback to teachers during the WSE, staff meetings included reflection on teaching approaches in the period from the WSE to the FT evaluation and thereafter. Staff members reflected on areas of practice that the inspectors had identified as very effective. This reflection involved teachers discussing how effective practices could be implemented in more settings in the school. T3S4 described the effects reflection with the whole staff had on her:

> I definitely found that [referring to reflection] very helpful; even if you were teaching at the senior end of the school and you heard teachers in staff meetings or during break times describing or questioning practices at the junior end of the school it supported reflection within another teacher's classroom…the cogs would start to turn in your head: how could I modify that lesson or learning activity for my class if it's working so well for them in junior infants? When you hear things from your peers, you are likely to implement them in your own class, they are people you trust (T3S4)

Also in this example, the teacher describes the characteristics of a professional learning community whereby teachers were sharing with each other and trialling practices as suggested by their colleagues. Another teacher in School Four said that the evaluation also supported teachers' reflection in the special education setting. An SEN teacher who taught in an ASD setting said that at the time of the evaluation she was new to this setting. She explained that the WSE was a great opportunity to reflect on the methodologies she was using in this unfamiliar

setting. It made her think about ensuring her approaches were supporting the pupils with very high needs. T2S4 reported:

> The feedback conversation with the inspector was a great opportunity to reflect on what was going on in the classroom and afterwards when the inspection was long over I was able to reflect on the conversation and the experience. This reflection could be as simple as accessing a resource the inspector suggested or in a more complex scenario whereby I was thinking back on strategies to support children with severe behavioural issues (T2S4)

A newly-qualified teacher in School Six suggested that evaluation feedback made him reflect on what he learned in college:

> There was some feedback that really made me take stock and think, yes, I could change a few things in my lessons. The whole thing made me step back and think about what I learned in college (T3S6)

Teachers within this school (School Six) and School Three found the evaluation helpful in reflecting on why teachers approached teaching in particular ways. T1S6 stated, 'It made you reflect on why you were doing things. You knew what you were doing, you had the knowledge to do it, but the 'why' is sometimes overlooked.'

Both these examples suggest that the experience of the feedback (discussed as a theme in question three) and the conversation that goes with it enabled the reflection. Teachers in School Five described that the evaluation 'sharpened the mind' and 'made you think' about methodologies and approaches. T2S5 stated, 'There was a lot of reflection on teaching practices throughout the school as a result of the WSE and some personal reflection within my own setting.' Another teacher reported in the surveys that, 'I feel we are a very hard-working staff, I did not realise there was so much room for improvement. It was a bit of a wake-up call.' Another teacher who was surveyed reported:

> We were angry about the evaluation and most of it [was] directed at the inspector for the manner in which it was carried out but when that settled the staff had a serious look at what was going on in our classrooms, there was a long period of thinking time and how we could make things better

A teacher in School Two said that, while it was challenging to hear the findings of the initial evaluation, the change that occurred within the school afterwards was positive and was the result of further staff reflection and actions initiated after the evaluation. The teacher referred to the fact that the WSE had included many recommendations and the inspectors in their judgment had rated certain practice as less than satisfactory. She suggested that the teachers were not aware that some areas needed such development and that this new awareness came as a shock to them, 'It was a good thing, okay it was a watershed moment but it was a good thing. Changes were made for the better as a result.'

T2S8 echoed this experience:

> There was a lull in spirits after the post-evaluation meeting and the report was published. When we picked ourselves back up we used the findings in the report as a kind of reflection checklist, plans were put in motion to address areas

These finding from the teachers in the survey and from interviews with teachers and principals in schools connect with aspects of research question three. That question found that some teachers experienced anger, frustration and disappointment with the evaluation process regarding the question of balance in the theme of feedback, as well as the dimensions of personality and style of the inspector as part of the theme of respect. The findings here show that, although some teachers found the experience frustrating or felt angered by it, as a result of the evaluation some also engaged in a process of reflection to improve their teaching practices.

The data also revealed that feedback from the evaluation prompted teachers to reflect on their roles within the school. During interviews, teachers in two schools reported that the WSE had increased their awareness of their roles. A teacher in School eight noted that the inspector had established that many of the teachers had been working at the same class level for a significant period of time. T2S8 explained that staff had subsequently reflected on this and drawn up a policy to support the allocation of class levels to teachers on a yearly basis:

> I had been in infants for five years; now I am working with 3rd and 4th class. This will rotate again in two years and I will move to another setting (T2S8)

Within School One, T3S1 explained how she had been teaching sixth class for 17 years of her 23-year career. The feedback meeting with the inspector had shone a light on the advantages of gaining experience in a variety of class settings. T3S1 had raised this with school management after the evaluation and both teaching staff and board of management had reflected on the teacher's observation. Arising from the discussion with school management the teacher opted to teach in the school's newly-established unit for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). T3S1 agreed that the WSE was a necessary catalyst for change and outlined that she and many fellow staff members understood the benefits of being more adventurous in their roles in the school as a result of the WSE.

Under the theme of Emotions for research question three, it was found that teachers experienced various emotions in anticipation of the evaluation process. For some, such emotions stimulated them to improve areas they had previously ignored but were incapable of addressing. It is evident from the data that evaluation was an extrinsic motivation to encourage reflection, whether it be planned or unintentional, or in anticipation of the evaluation process or during it.

A teacher in School Six observed that the WSE supported reflection before, during and after the evaluation. Upon notification that the evaluation was going to commence T1S6 said

that she was immediately thrust into reflection mode regarding lesson planning, organisation of her classroom and teaching approaches. During the in-school evaluation week the teacher said that she was reflecting on the recommendations the inspectors had made to her colleagues and that she had reflected on how these recommendations applied to her. She concluded that she had subsequently acted on the advice and recommendations.

Some teachers said that, as they progressed in their careers, they had settled into routines and some habits had become established. They explained that, during the individual and collective feedback sessions with the inspectors and the conversations during the evaluation, the WSE had shone a light on these routines and habits and encouraged them to reflect on teaching practices and methodologies they used. Other teachers reported that experiencing the feedback, conversations and the overall evaluation process raised their awareness of other methodologies and the need to break entrenched habits or emerge from their comfort zone. Here again, the evaluation was an extrinsic motivating factor to reflect. A teacher in School One said that, while she and her colleagues had got into the habit of using the same methodologies and approaches in their teaching, being notified of the evaluation had encouraged them to vary their approaches:

> When I knew the inspector was coming in I realised that I was going to need to vary my methodologies instead of just the few that I'm comfortable using from day to day in the classroom, having re-introduced them [referring to methodologies she has discarded] I must say I use them more regularly in my teaching as a result (T2S1)

Another teacher in this school said that the evaluation process and the preparation for it made them reflect to a higher degree on their teaching practices and be more organised. The teachers in this school also said that it enabled them to reflect on the curriculum, specifically on approaches to teaching oral language. T1S1 recounted that the recommendation had been so

explicit that it was clear what needed to be done, 'We reflected on what oral language was going on in the school and really thought about ways in which it could be progressed.'

This example connects with the theme of feedback and the dimension of actionable and solution-focused. T1S1 suggests that the specific nature of the advice prompted the teachers to engage in a reflection mode to make plans for improvement.

A teacher in School Eight said that the fact that she was going to be observed by someone else made her reflect on what she was doing and why she was using certain approaches in class. T3S8 explained:

> In preparing for the evaluation I became very aware of the types of activities I was doing with my class. I questioned them (the activities) more and observed how the children were reacting to them. I imagined what feedback the inspector might give me after the lesson. I kept modifying my approaches in the lead-up to the evaluation, these methodologies have stayed with me since (T3S8)

Here again, the anticipation of the evaluation was an extrinsic motivation for the teacher to reflect on her practice. T2S3 also highlighted the fact that she knew that an inspector would observe her teaching made her think about the most effective methodologies and caused her to use them in her practice again.

4.5.2 Focus

The theme of focus is presented in this section, this theme refers to how individual teachers, as well as broader, school-level actions brought a greater focus to their teaching practices as a result of evaluation. It makes connections to how teachers' specific experiences (discussed in research question three) encouraged teachers to focus, helping to bring about changes in their practice. The themes of feedback and respect are relevant here. Schools were able to focus their efforts around specific feedback. The theme of focus also applies to school-level actions that encouraged changes in individual teachers' practices.

Respondents interviewed in all the schools, and some teachers and principals who responded to the survey, reported how the WSE focused their minds on specific aspects of the curriculum and that they were able to identify areas that they needed to prioritise. Specifically, they cited methodologies and approaches for teaching practices in the areas of oral language, writing, problem-solving in Mathematics, Gaeilge and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. Some teachers also said that the period directly following the WSE was very focused for many of them as the FT process was an extrinsic motivation for them to act on the recommendations. One teacher in School Eight explained:

> The pressure was on after the WSE, we were all focused on writing, I had to place more attention on it than usual, the principal was spotlighting it at staff meetings and reminding us that we would be inspected again with a focus on writing (T3S8)

Here again, professional learning communities are suggested in the above example. The staff as a collective body appear to be working together with a common purpose of improving writing; writing was a focus during staff meetings. Teachers in Schools One to Four said that the period between the WSE and the FT evaluation was very focused. They said that they prioritised recommendations for development. Some recommendations were compliance-related and others were to do with teaching and learning. It was evident from what T3S3 stated that groups of school personnel focused on various recommendations:

> All recommendations were looked at, the board of management and in-school management team focused on the compliance recommendations and the in-school management team and teachers concentrated on the teaching and learning recommendations (T3S3)

This example shows that the recommendations and advice provided during feedback were clear, direct and actionable and the school staff distributed responsibility for implementing the

recommendations among themselves. This approach was echoed in School Four, where T3S4 said:

> The correct deployment of SEN teachers and the auditing of school accounts was not really up to us; we (the teachers) directed our attention to rectifying the teaching and learning issues, the teachers got behind those recommendations (T3S4)

Teachers in School Two reported that, immediately after the WSE, they were very focused on addressing the evaluation's recommendations and devised an improvement plan. T2S2 explained:

> After the WSE, we dusted ourselves down and set to work on the recommendations, an improvement plan was developed…we were definitely very focused and together in that period

Similarly, a teacher in School Four said that the evaluation gave the school a roadmap of where to bring the staff. She explained that all the teachers were concentrating on implementing the recommendations in time for an FT evaluation. Teachers in the four schools discussed how they prioritised recommendations for development.

A teacher in the questionnaire said that the period after the WSE was very productive in bringing about improvements in teaching practices and that teachers were very focused on such improvements. She added that, having focussed so much attention on the implementation of the recommendations, the staff found the FT evaluation very rewarding; it was as though they had been vindicated, *'The follow-up was actually quite rewarding, we really focused our efforts to make things better; it really did give everyone confidence again.'*

The data show that, as a result of the WSE, individual schools focused on specific areas of the curriculum, SEN provision and teaching practices such as planning, assessment and differentiation. Teachers in School Four said that they focused on oral language. T1S4 stated, 'Nobody argued with it, it was very obvious…there was a feeling among staff, 'well isn't it

great they recommended that, now we can target that and get on with it'. This response shows that the actionable advice and recommendations encouraged teachers in moving forward with improvements in the school. T3S4 outlined that the focus on oral language had been beneficial.

> The focus on targeted language has meant it's present in our planning, evident in the displays in our classroom; it's formed part of our whole-school approach. I think it's really something that has become part of our school practice. Since the WSE we have been focusing on oral language; the evaluation brought it back to basics for us…it definitely has impacted on the way we teach oral language (T3S4)

The whole-school approach to oral language implies that teachers progressed this as part of a professional learning community. While the example does not make the claim explicitly, it suggests that they had to collaborate to agree on whole school approaches and to have some robust staff discussions on the fundamentals of oral language teaching. Teachers in School Six described how they focused on planning following the WSE and their responses suggest that feedback brought changes in their teaching practices. For example, a teacher explained how he now plans for Geography since the evaluation. His planning involves the inclusion of specific learning outcomes for the subject for the week; setting out the tasks the pupils will engage and the resources they will use to achieve the desired outcomes. T1S6 reported that, before the WSE:

> We would just have written down, 'Geography, learn the counties of Ireland'. We would not have given any detail with regard to how we were going to teach it. She [the inspector] showed me during the feedback session what it should involve (T1S6)

Or another teacher in the same school said that evaluation helped teachers to plan for pupils with SEN both within the mainstream context and SEN settings. T2S6 reported:

> I found that within my planning I had way too many targets to reach for the SEN children and I was probably thinking more whole-class planning approaches than

> planning for the individual child. After advice from the inspector, I pulled back on the targets and prioritised what could realistically be taught within a short timeframe; the inspector's advice was excellent in this regard (T2S6)

The principal in School Eight similarly reported greater focus in planning for pupils with SEN:

> The inspector gave examples of clear and measurable target during her post evaluation meeting. Our planning got more effective as a result of the WSE, this is very beneficial for teachers' practice. We no longer have airy-fairy, wishy-washy targets. We work towards precise targets and we assess regularly to ascertain if the children are achieving the targets and to know whether we are being successful (PS8)

The interview data from teachers also show that teaching practices in SEN and mainstream class settings improved and became more focused as a result of evaluation. A support teacher in School Six explained that, before the WSE, she had been very curriculum-focused with her pupils. In the feedback the inspector had given her during the WSE, he had advised her to concentrate on priority learning needs, organisational and planning skills and how to follow a classroom timetable and she was now focusing on these requirements and developing the learning plan accordingly. Another mainstream class teacher in the same school said that, while they may have been aware of the varying levels of ability among their pupils, they may not have catered for them as well as they were doing now since the WSE. T3S6 provided several examples of enhanced differentiation practices being organised within the school since the WSE. They included individualised-reading programme for pupils, differentiated-learning objectives and tasks within lessons, and enhanced resources to cater for pupils' individual and collective learning needs. Both the support teacher and mainstream class teacher explained that, since the WSE, in-class support provision had been reorganised and the new structures

significantly assisted differentiation within the class. Interventions are now more focused on provision for pupils of varying levels of ability.

Provision of supports for more able pupils became a focus in Schools One and Eight since the WSE. Teachers and principals in these schools said that the original evaluation had highlighted that more able pupils were not being sufficiently challenged. A teacher in School Eight explained how her experience of feedback had brought positive change to her practice. T1S8 said:

> The inspector mentioned during my feedback to focus more on the higher-achieving pupils and ensure they are challenged appropriately. For example, if I was doing an introduction to a lesson and I learned that some pupils already knew what I was planning to teach that I [should] provide a challenge or a problem regarding the same topic and let them do some independent learning at their level. I am very mindful of this now and do what I can to have varied tasks for different groups of pupils instead of the whole class doing the same thing (T1S8)

Having reflected on her approaches to differentiation after the WSE, a teacher in School One reported becoming more focused on developing a greater number of problem-solving and critical thinking skills with her more able pupils. Similarly, a teacher in the same school explained that the WSE had made her reflect on the extent to which she was meeting the needs of all the pupils in the class, and, as a result, she now assessed the pupils more regularly.

The teachers in School Eight admitted that evaluation had been a major driving force behind their development and prioritisation of assessment practices in their classrooms. They described how useful the feedback had been in this regard and how beneficial, clear and focused the advice and recommendations were in advancing their teaching practices. One of the teachers referred to how positive it was as an outcome of the WSE that all the teachers were

taking a more focused and collective approach regarding writing and assessment, 'I think it's just a more whole-school approach now, we all go the one way.' (T1S8) Teachers in School Three said that they were now more focused on assessment and had a more unified approach to it. T3S3 explained:

> …we are making it more coherent. Prior to the WSE teachers were using their own strategies of assessment and we didn't really have a whole-school approach, but we are trying to work on this now

The consistent whole-school approach to assessment described above in both Schools Three and Eight indicates that assessment was the focus of teachers' collaborative work. While not stated specifically, the teachers describe whole-school approaches that would have required collaboration and dialogue in order to implement new practices successfully within their schools. The data show that teachers now not only have a greater collective focus regarding assessment, but that they also concentrate their efforts individually to a higher degree in their own classrooms. A teacher in School One said:

> The one thing I do focus on is more assessment for learning. We would have done some but I would not have done a lot prior to the WSE and I've done a lot more of it this year in 6th class (T2S1)

A teacher in School Six explained that, while assessment was not one of the main recommendations in the report, she focused on it in her own classroom afterwards as it had comprised part of her individual feedback and it was referred to in a small aspect of the evaluation report. A teacher from School Seven reported that, while the inspector had been generally happy with her assessment, the individual feedback he had given her had an effect on her practice:

> It definitely made me think about individual children and honing in on children with specific learning needs …that certainly changed and I would do a lot more assessment now than I did (T1S7)

4.5.3 Summary – Findings Related to Research Question Four

Evaluation encouraged some teachers to reflect on areas of their practice, and increased their awareness of aspects of their practice that required attention. Some teachers found that it had shone a light on areas such as teaching methodologies and planning and provision for pupils with SEN. In some instances it encouraged them to reflect on their roles within the school. The data also showed that evaluation assisted teachers in coming out of their comfort zones; some teachers said it had caused entrenched habits to be reviewed and to cease in some instances. It was evident at various stages of the process (pre evaluation, in-school phase and post evaluation) that the evaluation process had served as an extrinsic motivation for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices in far-reaching ways.

The answers to this question also revealed that evaluation had focused teachers' attention and actions at an individual and collective level. There are suggestions in the data that teachers reflected and engaged collaboratively to either share good practices that were observed in the evaluation or to work together to implement recommendations. There is evidence of teachers meeting together in professional learning communities through informal meetings, staff meetings and specially formed committees.

Evaluation caused teachers to focus on aspects of the curriculum, their approaches to planning and assessment and to meeting the needs of pupils of varying ability. Some relevant connections were drawn between findings within research question three and how the experiences of teachers brought changes in their teaching practices. Of particular note in this regard was a strong connection between feedback and its positive influence enabling and encouraging teachers to focus and reflect. In addition, the findings in this research question

show that evaluation positively influenced changes on teachers' practices in spite of their difficult and often unhelpful experiences within the areas of Feedback, Respect, Trust in the Process and Emotions.

Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from research questions three and four in the context of the literature on evaluation and teacher growth and development and the theoretical underpinnings of the study, namely, adult learning theory (ALT), transformative learning theory and self-efficacy theory. Research questions one and two are addressed to provide a context and background for understanding and interpreting research questions three and four. Relevant findings from the initial two questions are addressed as part of the overall discussion that arises from research questions three and four. There were also some unanticipated results/ non thematic findings which I discuss in section 5.4.

5.2 How do Teachers Experience the Evaluation Process?

I discuss the findings under the key themes that emerged for this question.

1. Feedback
2. Respect
3. Trust
4. Emotions

5.2.1 Feedback

Three dimensions formed part of this theme and I discuss these in the three subsequent subsections: consistency (subsection 5.2.1.1), balance (subsection 5.2.1.2) and actionable and solution focused (subsection 5.2.1.3).

5.2.1.1 Consistency. The findings of this research shows that inconsistencies in feedback impacted negatively on how teachers experienced evaluation. They reported inconsistences both between the inspectors' oral and written feedback - in cases where there was more than one inspector on an evaluation team within a school - between the feedback individual inspectors provided. These perceived discrepancies led to frustration among

teachers and dissatisfaction with the experience. They also reported that it left them unsure about what areas of practice to develop and how to put in place the recommendations the inspectors had offered. Multiple studies (Fidler 1996; Janssens, 2005, 2007; Luginbuhl, Webbink & De Wolf, 2007; Matthews and Sammons, 2004; Van Bruggen, 2005,) have shown that feedback in the evaluation process successfully adds to school improvement and that it can have a powerful effect on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 2009). While feedback by inspectors during the inspection process benefits school improvement and teacher change and development (Darling-Hammond, 2017), there is some evidence that giving and receiving feedback can be complex (Brimblecombe et al., 1996; Ehren & Visscher, 2008). The findings in the primary research in this study are consistent with Brimblecombe et al.'s (1996) and Ehren and Visscher's (2008) claim that the provision of feedback can be complicated. This study contributes to research on evaluation's effects on teachers and teaching practices by adding that feedback needs to be consistent in order to minimise complexity and to enable teachers to see clearly how to improve their practices.

Ehren and Visscher (2006) have noted that the language of the evaluation report should be carefully chosen, since misuse of language can lead to misinterpretations and negative reactions among teachers such as adverse publicity for teachers, schools and pupils, stigmatisation of teachers and undermining of their confidence in themselves and their schools. Similar negative reactions were an issue for some teachers in the present study; they experienced a lack of consistency between the inspectors' oral feedback and the written report; this caused them significant stress and they feared for their reputation and the reputation of the school. Ehren and Visscher (2006) also suggested that a trustful relationship needs to be generated by the inspector: an open attitude between the inspector and the teacher plays a crucial role in inspection and the inspector's feedback should produce a positive relationship between them and teachers and raise teachers' morale. It appears in this research that a lack of

consistency led to a reduction in some teachers' morale and in the trust required in the relationship between the inspector and the teacher. The primary findings substantiate Ehren and Visscher's (2006 and 2008) recommendations in that they demonstrate the need for consistency between oral and written feedback. Dean (1995) and Gartner and Pant (2011) showed that the inspector's experience of providing feedback impacts not only on how the advice is received but also how it is acted upon.

When a lack of consistency in feedback was experienced by teachers in the study it led to particular negative emotions such as stress, fear, frustration, dissatisfaction and a reduction in teachers' level of morale. Reflecting on two of the theories that support this research it is evident that such emotions do not support the principles of ALT, or facilitate teacher self-efficacy. The sixth principle of ALT highlights that adults need to be motivated to learn and Wlodowski (1985) suggests that for adults to change and develop they need to experience the learning process as enjoyable and pleasurable. This was not the case for some teachers in this study. As a cohort of teachers experienced negative emotions as a result of a lack of consistency in feedback it is reasonable to assume that it also effected their self-efficacy. I emphasised in chapter two that a strong sense of self-efficacy is required as a condition for behaviour change; solid self-efficacy beliefs determine how people motivate themselves (Girasoli & Hannafin, 2008) and is a significant factor in adult change and development.

This finding has significance for teachers and how evaluation is carried out in schools; particularly the management and content of feedback (written and oral) as part of the evaluation process. Within the Irish context, boards of management and teachers are afforded the opportunity to respond to the content of the evaluation report only (DES, 2015) and, when they do, the response is published along with the evaluation report. This process does not allow teachers to comment on the inspection process; if a teacher has concerns about the way in which an inspection was conducted they can use the Procedure for Review (DES, 2015). In the context

of this finding, teachers have no opportunity to challenge lack of consistency in feedback as part of the evaluation process.

5.2.1.2 Balance. This study shows that there is evidence to suggest that what teachers perceive as the relative balance of critical and constructive feedback has an impact on their experiences. Some teachers' reports were positive, noting that, during the oral and written aspect of the process inspectors had outlined a balance of strengths and areas for development. Brimblecombe et al (1996) regard this positive approach to feedback as the most effective one. By contrast, there were some teachers who experienced what they perceived to be unbalanced feedback, overly-weighted in criticism, excessively focused on faults in their teaching practices and with the same messages being repeated throughout the feedback session. The latter experience was not helpful for some teachers and in fact discouraged them. This damaging experience is consistent with Cullingford's (1999) observation of the UK's inspection system in which he observes that a fault-finding approach to evaluation and feedback is punitive and leads to teachers' experiencing stress and anxiety. It is also consistent with claims by Ehren and Visscher (2006) that repeatedly giving the same messages during feedback is ineffective. Sub section 5.2.4.2 and section 5.3.1 below deal with the subtheme of heightened emotions in anticipation of evaluation and the theme of reflection. It is interesting to note some findings in these sections conflict with the finding here in relation to balance in feedback. It will be discussed that some teachers reported that despite negative emotions of fear, anxiety and stress it prompted them to reflect and take action on aspects of practice that required revision. Specifically, it highlights that teachers took action even if the advice was not consistent, balanced or solution focussed. This is surprising considering the literature on effective feedback discussed in section 2.4. Could this portion of teachers have made changes prior to their evaluation observation and subsequent feedback? More questions emerge for further research here, for example, at what point in the evaluation process do teachers take action to

improve (in advance or after they have received feedback)? What affect does the quality of feedback have on teachers' self-efficacy?

Adult learning theory suggests that motivation is a driving force for adults to progress and achieve (Knowles et al., 2015) This research does find that when teachers had a positive experience of feedback, they felt affirmed and motivated and considered that the feedback had been conversational and respectful. This finding supports the views of some studies (Matthews and Smith, 1995; Matthews and Sammon, 2004), as well as empirical research by Ouston *et al.* (1997) that one of the benefits of evaluation is that the feedback in the process has a positive effect on staff morale. It reinforces findings by Ladden (2015, p.175) that points to teachers' morale increasing after evaluation feedback, partly since it is a recognition they so seldom receive. Ladden found that teachers responded more favourably to evaluation when it identified their strengths and set out areas for development in their teaching practices. This balanced approach to feedback connects with two of the sources of self-efficacy theory; enactive mastery and verbal persuasion. A mastery experience occurs when a person is convinced of their strengths and they know they have what it takes to compete the task successfully. Similarly, during verbal persuasion, when people are persuaded that they possess the capabilities to achieve a task they are likely to mobilise greater effort and sustain it that if they harbour self-doubt (Bandura, 1997). It can be accepted that by providing a balance of strengths and areas for development in feedback it contributes successfully to teachers' self-efficacy and by extension support their change and development.

5.2.1.3 Actionable and Solution-Focused. This study found that, when feedback included practical, specific and solution-focused advice and recommendations, it had a significant bearing on how teachers could put into practice and action the feedback they experienced in the evaluation. Many studies have concluded with similar findings. Shute (2008) and Fengler (2010) contend that feedback should not be generic in nature, while

Chapman (2002) recognised the need for it to include specific recommendations. The need for recommendations to be actionable and solution-focused connects with the literature on teacher growth and development. In this study teachers actioned advice that was practical. The literature revealed that active learning was shown to be a significant feature in supporting teachers to learn and develop. This involves use of high quality teaching resources and varied teaching approaches and methodologies which can lead to profound, highly contextualised professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) MacNamara and O'Hara (2008) were critical of feedback provided by inspectors. They reported that teachers found it too general or impractical. The finding sustains Henderson et al.'s view (2019) that feedback needs to be actionable, specific and detailed. They contend that such feedback is far more useful than generic praise and criticism. The findings in this section have implications for how evaluations occur, feedback provided during inspections needs to be clear and concise enough for teachers to be able to become active in their classrooms and 'learn by doing' (Desimone, 2009). Drawing on the theories of ALT and self-efficacy it also needs to motivate in order to secure teacher change.

5.2.2 Respect

This theme has three dimensions, partnerships and collaboration, personality and style of the inspector and school context. In subsections 5.2.2.1 to 5.2.2.3 I discuss these dimensions in relation to the literature and the theoretical framework for this research.

5.2.2.1 Partnership and Collaboration. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that some teachers had limited or no opportunities to work in partnership with inspectors, or collaborate, in the evaluation. This study suggests that some teachers felt evaluation was done 'to' them or that it had been teacher versus inspector, reinforcing the idea of a lack of cooperation or partnership. A lack of respectful engagement is also suggested here as a result. This finding challenges the Inspectorate's commitment to respectful engagement. The Code of

Practice for the Inspectorate (2015, p.4), states that the Inspectorate is committed to respectful engagement in the course of its work. It aims to work co-operatively with teachers in a spirit of mutual respect and reciprocity, promoting professional dialogue and seeking and considering the views of the education partners. The finding of this study suggests that this was not the experience of a cohort of teachers. This finding echoes the outcomes of research by Hofman et al. (2009), who found that only a small number of teachers found the relationship between inspectors and schools supportive or collaborative, or that it took account of the teachers' professional standpoints. There is also a connection with the findings of research by Griffin (2010, p.115) in which parents expressed that, since "Inspectors talk too much," the parents are left with limited opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the Inspection process.

At a deeper level, this finding is significant. It appears to be an example in which evaluation is "done to" an organisation, as previously described by Quinn Patton (2002). The finding contradicts Preskill and Torres' proposal for evaluation that it should be "done with" an organisation. They contend that:

> The evaluator encourages all voices to be heard and holds individuals accountable for any behaviours that discourage growth and action during the evaluative inquiry process. Thus, the evaluator is responsible for maintaining a climate that supports a spirit of inquiry, reciprocity, and community (1999, p.55)

Of particular significance in this finding is that, when teachers in the evaluation process experience a lack of partnership, co-operation or collaboration, it can hamper positive actions arising from the evaluation and impact on the teachers' professionalism and teacher competence as outlined in studies by Case, Case and Catling (2000), Nias (1989), Nias et al. (1989) and Woods and Jeffrey, (1996). Dean (1997) found that, when inspectors failed to create mutually respectful relationships with the teachers involved, it renders the interactions and outcomes unsuccessful. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) asserted that, when teachers are treated

like professionals, they respond in a positive manner. Drawing on adult learning theory, where collaboration is a core principle of the theory (Knowles, 1971) adults need to be involved in a collaborative learning process and want to be involved in decisions regarding their learning (Knowles et al., 2015) Working on the assumption that the inspector is a trained expert or person with particular knowledge to impart to teachers, learning from Riley and Roach's (2006) model of staff development is relevant here. They claim that staff development only works after a trusting and cooperative relationship between the trained specialist and the teacher is established. As part of collaborative engagement, a teacher will share their understandings, doubts and hopes for their classroom during dialogue and feedback sessions with trusted experts. It would appear that there was a missed opportunity in the evaluation process for a number of teachers to experience the benefits of collaborative engagement with the inspector whereby (according to the literature) such collaborations can be very significant factor in supporting teacher change and development. This has implications for how evaluation happens, processes need to nurture collaborative engagements between inspectors and teachers.

5.2.2.2 Personality and Style of the Inspector. Findings from the study show that the personalities and styles of the inspectors the teachers encountered within the evaluation process had a bearing on how they experienced the process. While some good experiences were evident in this regard, some difficulties with inspectors' personality and style were also found. This finding is somewhat unique to this study. It could have been categorised under feedback as previously discussed, as some of the research pointed to what the inspector was saying or the communication style in which the feedback was delivered. However, data in this research from a cohort of teachers clearly highlights such personality and style as impacting on them in helpful and destructive ways. Research by Griffin (2010) suggested that, while school personnel were generally positive about their interactions with inspectors, some personality issues had arisen. She found that some inspectors had poor interpersonal skills, which

contributed to teachers' anxiety levels at the time of the evaluation. Here again, it can be reasonably assumed that when teachers had negative experiences in this regard it did not contribute in a positive way to their self-efficacy or support transformation in their practice. It would appear that the selection, initial and ongoing training of inspectors and quality assurance of the manner in which they carry out their roles would be among the implications of this finding for evaluation processes.

5.2.2.3 School Context. The findings show that not all the inspectors had not adequately considered school context factors. There were a few reports of the opposite being the case, and the Inspection team were very cognisant of school context factors. Of other significance in this regard were reports from teachers in a DEIS school that indicated their high level of dissatisfaction that the context of a DEIS school had not been more sufficiently recognised. There is a suggestion that teachers had less respect for the process when such context factors were not acknowledged. This finding is consistent with a range of research from the field (DES, 1999; Gilroy & Wilcox, 1997; Hargreaves and Evan, 1997; Law and Glover, 1999; MacBeath, 1999). This finding regarding school context calls into play once again how adults learn, in the case of this study, how teachers develop. Under the principle of orientation to learning within adult learning theory, adults are more likely to commit to change when actions and recommendations pertain to real life contexts. It also resonates with literature on teacher professional development whereby programmes are most successful when they are tailored to the specific needs of the learner (Merriam, 2001).

MacBeath (1999) highlighted the fact that one of the reasons inspections were relatively ineffective was that school context factors had not been taken into account. The Department of Education's own report (1999) on the pilot WSE noted that evaluation had not taken such context factors into account. The findings from the DEIS schools in this study echo findings by Gilroy and Wilcox (1997), Hargreaves and Evans (1997) and Law and Glover (1999), which

found that schools serving disadvantaged and inner city locations often had more adverse reports and that little attention had been afforded to the schools' contextual factors as inspection focused primarily on test results and attainment. They found that there is a greater degree of challenge when the indicators for teacher accountability are measured according to the outcomes of students from diverse backgrounds. Findings are similar in this research, where teachers in a DEIS school expressed difficulty with the fact that they were being judged by the same indicators as non-DEIS schools. Findings in this research regarding context add weight to claims by Sirotnik (2002). In section 2.2.3 it was learned that he sees schools as complex organisations and that a responsible approach to measuring quality in education should be adopted by using multiple indicators and assessments to understand the many facets of schools life. This study adds value to previous research by showing how teachers experienced inspectors' disregard for school context factors - it frustrated, angered and demotivated them. This has implications for how evaluations occur in schools, and particularly for schools serving socio-economically challenged areas of society.

5.2.3 Trust

The third theme under research question three refers to trust and it has two dimensions, time and the perceived expertise and knowledge of the inspector. These two dimensions are discussed subsequently in subsection 5.2.3.1 and 5.2.3.2.

5.2.3.1 Time. The findings show that some teachers reported that observations and feedback were rushed. It was also found that some teachers felt that the period of time in which the evaluation was conducted, being a limited phase in the life of the school, only represented a snapshot in time and could not possibly reflect the many dimensions of school life or their practices in classrooms. The findings in this research suggest that it may not be possible to capture a truly representative picture of teaching practices at any given moment. The view of MacNab (2004, p.61) is echoed by this finding, in that he contended that evaluations were

snapshot in their nature. The present findings add weight to Woods and Jeffrey's (1998) claim that such brief inspections may ever be an accurate reflection of a school.

Empirical findings by Griffin (2010) found that inspections were rushed, which supports the other finding in this study that teachers suggested that feedback and/or observations were rushed. Similarly, Dillon (2010) suggested that the rushed nature of feedback added to an already stressful experience for teachers. What is common across all the studies and this research is that the lack of time appears to have impacted on the inspectors' capacity to engage in comprehensive feedback or the time to engage in reflection or professional conversations with teaching staff, which added to teachers' frustration in the evaluation. The findings here reflects Sirotnik's (2002) view that adequate time needs to be afforded to the evaluation process to support judgments on the quality of education provision in school. This finding has implications for how evaluations occur in schools; evaluation processes need to afford sufficient time for feedback and reflection and to ensure that the breadth of a school's provision is observed during inspection The findings here also support Cullingford's (1999) view that evaluations are based on what is apparent at a given time only; so that they do not capture the breadth of the school's or teachers' provision.

5.2.3.2 Inspectors' Perceived Expertise and Knowledge. The findings of this research showed that the perceived expertise and knowledge of the inspector had a bearing on teachers' experience of the evaluation. When the inspector had perceived expertise knowledge, teachers' experience of the evaluation was positive and they placed high value on the interactions, feedback, advice and recommendations. Teachers experienced the opposite when they felt the inspector's knowledge was an issue, in which case they had difficulty trusting in the process and tended to be more sceptical of the advice or recommendations offered. MacBeath (1999) put forward the theory that establishing faith and credibility in the inspectors' carrying out the evaluation is a necessary condition for inspection to lead to improvement. This

was the case for some teachers in this study, which reassured and supported the teachers. Ladden's (2015) findings also support this view; interviewees in his study expressed the view that inspectors with relevant experience and expertise can benefit the school and broaden the perspective of teachers. This finding was also shared by Mathews (2010, p.116), who found that principals clearly saw the role of inspectors as providing direction through sharing their expertise and experience; they had greater trust in the process when inspectors had the relevant expertise, experience and knowledge.

The aspect of this finding that questions the relevant knowledge and expertise of the inspector and the impact these experiences have on teachers is not untypical of previous findings. Dean (1995) and Gartner and Pant (2011) found that teachers feel better about inspection and feedback when it is carried out by inspectors who have the relevant experience and expertise. Although the nature of the experience differed in their context (inspectors with a secondary background inspecting in a primary), they found that primary teachers were concerned when inspectors from a secondary background in teaching and without the relevant experience and expertise in primary level education were evaluating at their level. Similarly, Mulkerrins (2008) found that leaders in post-primary schools were critical of inspectors who had a lack of experience in leadership roles before joining the Inspectorate. In addition, within Mathew's (2010) study, principals suggested that inspectors who would not have been in leadership positions may not have known or understood all the aspects of leadership within a school context or experienced leadership roles in order to be able to identify with, or draw from, their own experience before making their judgements and recommendations. Principals had a lack of confidence and credibility in inspectors in these findings. The findings in this research also echoed Griffin's (2010) research case study, in which participating teachers frequently commented upon the inspectors' credibility, in that instance concerning inspectors' teaching experience in their subject areas. This finding in relation to inspectors' credibility also

connects with self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1977) claims that the impact of verbal persuasion on self-efficacy may vary significantly depending on the perceived credibility of the persuaders, their trustworthiness, expertise, and knowledge. The more authentic the source of the information, the more likely are efficacy expectations to change.

Inspectors' perceived experience and knowledge of teaching in SEN and DEIS contexts was of particular significance in how teachers experienced the evaluation. Some teachers in this study claimed that inspectors lacked relevant experience or knowledge to be able to advise, support and evaluate within the SEN and DEIS contexts and teachers in these settings had less belief in them when this was the case. They found the evaluation unhelpful in developing their teaching practices when inspectors were not able to give specific advice suited to these contexts. This has significance in the selection, induction and training of inspectors, particularly in areas such as SEN and teaching in DEIS contexts.

5.2.4 Emotions

There are two dimensions related to the theme of emotions, the emotional impact of evaluation and heightened emotions in anticipation of the evaluation. The findings that relate to these two themes are discussed in the context of the literature review and the theoretical framework in the following two subsections (5.2.4.1 & 5.2.4.2).

5.2.4.1 Emotional Impact of the Lived Experience of Evaluation. There is strong evidence in this study that teachers experienced various emotions during and after the evaluation. They experienced anxiety, worry, stress, tension and pressure. Emotions to the contrary were also experienced; they reported feeling joy, pride, happiness and inspiration, both during and after the process. The finding that evaluation engenders stress, fear, anxiety, tension and pressure is not new; many researchers have discovered that this was the case (Davies & Shevlin, 2006; De Wolf & Janssens; Dillon, 2010; Griffin, 2010; Grubb, 1999; Ladden, 2015; Learmouth, 2000; 2000; MacNamara; 2002; Mathews, 2010). It substantiates

Dobert's (2004) and the Department of Education's own findings (1999) that being observed by an external inspector is a stressful experience. While there was no evidence in this research that the experience of the evaluation prompted absenteeism or premature retirement among teachers, as had been reported by Case, Case and Catling (2000) and Ouston *et al*. (1997), it does support their claim that it was traumatic or significant personal experience for some teachers.

This study contributes some additional perspectives that were either not apparent or of significance in previous research. It suggests that teachers experience fear and worry of their anonymity being compromised during the evaluation process; this was particularly significant for teachers in smaller schools, but not confined to these contexts. Previous research identified that teachers had negative emotions participating in the process; this study adds that teachers worry about how the report is received and interpreted by parents, the community or other schools in the area. The findings within this research appear to be unique in that evaluation prompts positive emotions, something that was not acknowledged in previous research. The upbeat emotions of happiness, joy and pride are significant; some teachers displayed these emotions when talking about oral or written feedback or the impact of having had encouraging interactions with inspectors. It is reasonable to assume that these positive emotions supported some teachers to change and develop. The basis for this assumption lies in one of the four sources of self-efficacy theory; physiological and affective states. A person's mindset and mood are factors of self-efficacy and related to physiological and affective states. 'Positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy' (Bandura, 1994, p.72) Self-efficacy influences whether people think optimistically, consequently, it plays a significant role in motivating people to achieve expected outcomes (Bandura, 1977). In the context of this research, motivating teachers to act on recommendations and improve their practices.

5.2.4.2 Heightened Emotions in Anticipation of the Evaluation. The findings in this research showed that teachers experienced heightened emotions in anticipation of the evaluation and that these emotions either dissipated during the in-school and post-evaluation phase or increased. In previous studies (Dillon, 2010; Griffin, 2010), the negative emotions associated with the announcement of an evaluation are clearly apparent. They describe a frenzy of preparatory activities by teachers to prepare for the evaluation. They mirror findings in this study that teachers feared that they were going to be "caught out" by the inspector or that they would have "left something out." Within this study it is shown that, while the impending evaluation negatively affected the teachers' emotions, the worry prompted them to take action in areas they had previously not addressed or aspects of their teaching practice that they did not know required development. The link between the heightened emotions that occurred as a result of an impending evaluation, on the one hand, and extrinsic motivation, on the other, is discussed further in the next section under research question four.

5.3 How does the Experience of Evaluation Affect Teachers' Perceptions of their Practices, and, by Extension, the Practices Themselves?

I discuss the findings for research question four under the two themes that emerged for that area: Reflection and Focus. Reflection is explored in subsection 5.3.1 and subsequently the theme of focus is discussed in subsection 5.3.2.

5.3.1 Reflection

The findings of this study show that, for some teachers, evaluation was an extrinsic motivation to reflect on their teaching practices and to break with routines and entrenched habits and to leave their comfort zones. As was evidenced in the findings, evaluation heightened teachers' emotions and triggered actions; reflection was also a significant response. The findings suggest that evaluation was most successful in prompting actions and reflection when certain conditions were fulfilled: effective feedback (consistent, balanced and actionable), respectful engagement and trust in the process. The findings also propose that

reflection was also triggered in teachers even when the experience was not positive or when feedback was not consistent, balanced or actionable. This finding confirms some previous theory and research. Ehren (2016) reported on a number of empirical studies regarding how evaluations prompted schools to reflect on the quality of their school. It is consistent with McNiff (2002) who sees evaluation as a process of reflection and self-review rather than something that is done to an individual. Ladden (2015) found that effective evaluation encourages reflection and a willingness among teachers to reflect more about their teaching performance. This study also echoes Dillon (2011) and Griffin (2010) who found that successful external evaluation engaged teachers in personal reflection.

It being the finding in this research that evaluation prompted reflection and the fact that it was documented in other studies is very significant in connecting evaluation to teacher growth and development. Reflection is one of the main principles of transformative learning theory; one of the theories underpinning this research. A key theory of transformative learning involves a person questioning their assumptions and engaging in a reflective process which may lead to a perspectives transformation (Kelly, 2017; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Transformative learning happens when people diagnostically scrutinise their customary practices, revise them and act on the revised point of view (Cranton, 2006). It involves taking an action on issues, based on self-reflection and previously held assumptions which brings about a transformation of meaning, context and established propositions (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). The literature on teacher change and development highlighted that reflection is pivotal to teachers' learning and development (Postholm, 2012). Teachers who engage in conscious reflection on their experiences, beliefs and practices affords them with opportunities to focus on important actions and hence creates cognitive change in both their beliefs and practices (Barnett, 1991; Thompson &Thompson, 1994; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010).

It was found that some teachers reflected and engaged collaboratively to either share good practices that were observed in the evaluation or to work together to implement recommendations. There is evidence of teachers coming together with colleagues in professional learning communities through committees, informal group meetings and in staff meetings to discuss practice. Teacher collaboration is known to be a significant contributing factor for teachers' professional development (Burko et al., 1997; Grossman et al., 2001 and Vescio, 2008). Collaboration is a core principle of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1971) Allowing adults to learn together through collaboration helps create self-directed environment that may increase the retention of core information and support problem solving abilities (Mews, 2020). Through the creation of professional learning communities in which teachers were working together it appears as though evaluation had a positive role to play in changing and progressing some teachers' practice.

This research contributes greater insights into what teachers reflected upon in terms of their practice than previous studies did. The findings here identify that teachers reflected on teaching approaches and methodologies, teaching for pupils with special educational needs, the classroom environment, what they had learned in college, planning practices and the class levels they have worked on within the school. This study also observes that, although teachers may have been emotionally affected by impending evaluation or during the process itself, it nonetheless prompted reflection on their part. The findings here contradict theory and research by Grubb (1999), Learmonth (2000), Leeuw (2003), Brunsden, Davies and Shevlin (2006) and De Wolf and Janssens (2007) who questioned the effectiveness of evaluation as a mechanism for improving classroom practice. This study strongly suggests that some teachers reflected on various aspects of their practice and it can be seen that this reflection creates an opportunity for improvements in specific areas of practice as a result.

5.3.2 Focus

The findings of this research show that teachers interviewed, as well as some who were surveyed, focused on particular aspects of the curriculum following evaluation. It enabled them to focus on areas to prioritise including methodologies and approaches for the teaching of oral language, writing, problem-solving, Gaeilge and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. Teachers identified that evaluation focused their efforts on supporting pupils with special education needs, and more able pupils, in their classes. This study also suggested that teachers identified the period between the initial evaluation and the follow-through inspection as a particularly concentrated period in which they focused on implementing recommendations pertaining to their teaching practice.

These findings appear to contradict previous research by Case, Case and Catling (2000) and Ryan (2002) who concluded that inspection fails to generate formative information about what teachers should focus on to improve their practices or students' outcomes. Some teachers in this study had a clear picture of what to focus on. The findings appear to support the views of some studies (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Matthews & Sammons, 2004) with regard to focusing attention. Matthews and Sammons (2004) asserted that inspection had a positive impact on teachers by enabling them to focus on areas that require improvement. Cousins and Earl (1992) found that evaluation can be an organisational learning tool, enabling teachers in the school to focus on relevant questions that might affect their work and practices. The finding of this research mirrors the findings of Fidler et al. (1996), Matthews and Sammons (2004, 2005) and Van Bruggen (2005) regarding evaluation being a catalyst for change by providing the school and teachers within the school with the impetus to focus on necessary improvements to their practice. While these studies did not specifically identify the areas of teachers' practice that required development, this study explicitly identifies aspects of teachers' practice that the teachers focused upon as a result of evaluation, namely, specific aspects of the curriculum.

5.4 Unanticipated Results – Non Thematic Findings

In this section I discuss a number of findings evident in the data that were raised by an individual or a small number of participants, these themes were not apparent repeatedly within the data or they were not thematic. They are significant as they raise some interesting ideas about how evaluation affected particular changes, actions or reflections for both the teachers themselves and other colleagues around them or the management structure within the school. The three findings relate to changes in roles within the school, previous learning highlighted and leadership. They are discussed in the forthcoming three subsections.

5.4.1 Changes in Role within the School

Two teachers within different schools changed roles as a result of the evaluation. The teachers had been teaching at the same grade level for a long period of time and the evaluation acted as a catalyst to bring about change in teacher allocation within their respective schools. While they alluded to this being a positive development for their careers and the progression of their knowledge and skills, further research is warranted to establish if evaluation prompts teachers to change roles or motivate them to apply for promoted posts within their existing school or other schools. There is also an indication here that the move to a different grade or class setting motivated the teachers. Motivation to learn is one of the key principles of adult learning theory. Factors such as career needs and advancement opportunities are some of the reasons why adults further their education (Mews, 2020). In this regard, it is positive that teachers were encouraged to reflect on their roles within the school as part of the evaluation and it is worthy of additional research.

5.4.2 Previous Learning Highlighted

A newly-qualified teacher reported that evaluation feedback made him reflect on what he learned in college. Other teachers commented that evaluation made them consider what they had studied in courses and what they had learned from previous experiences. While this was

not repeated by many teachers it is a very significant point. According to Warford (2011) and Postholm (2012) the learning of teachers cannot be promoted without awakening their previous knowledge and experiences. A principle of adult learning theory also highlights the importance of drawing on prior knowledge which is a fundamental way adults learn for themselves (Mews, 2020). Based on this finding and its alignment with literature on teacher growth and development and adult learning theory it is suggested that there is value in making connections with teachers' previous learning in courses and through their experiences. This is worthy of further exploration to ascertain if evaluation (particularly the feedback component of evaluation) draws on teachers' previous experience, and subsequently, if teachers revisit those experiences to develop their practices.

5.4.3 Leadership

On some occasions, teachers highlighted the roles of the principal and members of the in-school management team as being influential in leading the process of implementing the recommendations in relation to the WSE. Principals established committees within schools to progress teaching practices and they used staff meetings as a forum for spotlighting new approaches to particular aspects of the curriculum they were focussing on as a result of the evaluation. Similar to the previous two sections, this was not repeated consistently by teachers and was not a theme in the findings. Nevertheless it is an important point to consider. It was highlighted in chapter two that leadership plays a role in supporting teachers to change, develop and learn. School leaders are pivotal in encouraging teachers to implement new ideas and strategies they learn from their colleagues and elsewhere (Desimone and Garet, 2015). They are also an important factor in fostering a positive atmosphere and a culture in which teachers can collaborate. Principals play a significant role in facilitating collaborative communities of practice (Opfer et al., 2011; Rink and Valli, 2010). Allowing adults to learn together is at the core of adult learning theory. The leadership role and its connection with progressing teachers'

practice post evaluation on teachers' practice merits additional research. It would be valuable to ascertain what actions principals and leaders within schools take to advance teaching practices as a result of evaluations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The conclusion and recommendations drawn from my research derive from the interviews, questionnaires and published follow-through evaluation reports. I present these conclusions and recommendations in sequence, in line with the research questions. I make recommendations for evaluation systems generally and for how evaluation occurs within the Irish context (where applicable to this context specifically). In addition, some methodological recommendations are made in section 6.3.1 in light of learning from how the study was conducted as a practitioner-researcher studying elements of his own practice and as a result of some of the limitations as explained further on in section 6.3. Some areas that require further study and research are suggested and the limitations of the study are identified.

6.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

I address the conclusions and recommendations per research question in subsection 6.2.1 to 6.2.4 in this section.

6.2.1 Research Question One - What is the Nature of Recommendations Regarding Teachers' Practice in Sample Schools?

The recommendations contained in WSE reports focus on the fundamentals of teachers' practice, i.e., planning and preparation, assessment, teaching approaches and methodologies and support for pupils with individual learning needs. They afford very strong weighting to recommendations that relate to teachers' practices. The study concludes that evaluations placed significant emphasis on teaching practices and that teaching practices are accountable under the accountability purpose of evaluation as discussed in Chapter Two. The research also suggests that, given its emphasis on teaching practice in evaluations, evaluation for improvement is a central purpose of evaluation; recommendations are made to teachers in

schools to address specific areas of their teaching practices so that they can improve their teaching practices.

6.2.2 Research Question Two - What Progress do Schools Make in Addressing the Recommendations Relating to Teachers' Practices in Sample Schools?

From the Inspectorate's perspective, it appears that the sample schools made significant progress in implementing the recommendations relating to teaching practices. This supports the theory and previous empirical findings that evaluation supports improvement, at least to some extent. As is evident from the answers to research questions three and four, evaluation prompted some teachers to change their practice in various ways; we also saw that it had a destructive impact on a selection of teachers. My research ascertained this through surveys and interviews. The strength of the findings to research question two, combined with what is learning about the impact of evaluation and teachers' experiences of it in research questions three and four is that it identifies that FT reports do not generate a nuanced enough picture of teacher development within the evaluation context to support the quality that the Inspectorate is committed to.

Recommendations

Since this finding and conclusion relates to a limitation of what information and data FTs can assemble to support teacher growth and development the following recommendation is for the evaluation system within the Irish context.

Evaluation Practices within the Irish Context

More evaluation tools and techniques should be incorporated into the FT model of evaluation to gather up teachers' perspectives on the progress they make in implementing recommendations pertaining to their teaching practices.

6.2.3 Research Question Three – How do Teachers Experience the Evaluation Process?

I present the conclusions and recommendations arising from the study under the themes that emerged from the data in subsection 6.2.3.1 – 6.2.3.4.

6.2.3.1 Feedback. Evaluation was a positive experience for teachers when inspectors' oral feedback to individual teachers and groups of teachers was consistent with the final, written report. When such feedback conflicted with the written report, teachers experienced frustration with the inconsistency. This research suggests that evaluation systems should have procedures in place to ensure consistency between the content of what is orally reported to teachers and that contained in the final, published report.

Teachers also found evaluation unhelpful when judgements of inspectors on the evaluation team were in conflict. When this was apparent, teachers experienced confusion about what constituted effective practice and which practices warranted development and/or extension. This study concludes that teachers require consistency of judgements between inspectors in evaluations.

Evaluation had a positive impact on teachers when they perceived a balanced approach to feedback that included a blend of strengths and areas for development, and when the inspector adopted a conversational approach in delivering feedback. Teachers felt evaluation was unhelpful when it was overly weighted in faults or criticism, i.e., when the inspector's feedback was one-sided. The research also showed that when feedback, advice and recommendations were practical, specific and solution-focused, teachers were encouraged to develop their practices at least to some degree.

Recommendations

Since a number of findings relate to how feedback is generated and delivered, the following recommendations are made for evaluation systems generally and for evaluation practices within the Irish context.

Evaluation systems generally

This study contributes to previous research that teachers value feedback when strengths are identified and are accompanied by proportionate and manageable developmental feedback. This finding is significant for how evaluations occur. Inspectors should provide formative feedback during evaluations that suggests areas for development in teaching practices. The feedback should focus on key strengths, the progress teachers have made, their successes with the class and pupils and the identification of specific, actionable and solution-focused areas for development within their teaching practices. Advice and recommendations made during feedback should be contextualised to focus on teachers' ability and capacity rather than concentrating disproportionately and unrepresentatively on faults in teachers' practices that inspectors have observed.

To better support consistency between the oral feedback and the final written report, thorough quality assurance measures should exist within evaluation systems and be firmly applied to ensure consistency between what inspectors orally report to teachers and what is written in the final evaluation report for the school.

A record of the quality of teaching practices observed by inspectors during the in-school evaluation phase should be provided to any teacher who has been observed in the evaluation. inspectors should be required to consider these records when writing their evaluation reports. In addition, mechanisms need to be put in place that afford teachers the right to reply and to discuss and challenge evaluation findings not only at the oral feedback stage but also when they receive the written report.

Evaluation practices within the Irish context

The Code of Practice for the Inspectorate (2015) and the Guide to Evaluation in Primary Schools (2016) should be reviewed to ensure that the principles and procedures therein better address issues regarding the need for consistency, balance, a conversational style of delivery and a practical and solution-focused approach by inspectors to their delivery of feedback, advice and recommendations to teachers in the course of evaluations. The review of the Code and Guide should be carried out in partnership with teachers.

During feedback, inspectors need to provide examples of effective practice and strategies that enable teachers to improve. Specificity and detail in feedback is preferable to generic praise or criticism.

The evaluation criteria to inform inspectors' judgments in class settings should be consistently applied by inspectors to better ensure uniformity of judgements about teachers' practices.

6.2.3.2 Respect. The research suggests that teachers' respect for the evaluation process is negatively affected when they are not allowed sufficient opportunity to work in partnership with inspectors in the evaluation process. A lack of respectful engagement by inspectors was shown in this study to exist. This deficiency is in conflict with the Code of Practice for the Inspectorate (2015, p.4), which states that it is committed to respectful engagement in the course of its work. While its principles - aiming to work co-operatively with teachers in a spirit of mutual respect and reciprocity, to promote professional dialogue and to seek and consider the views of education partners - are strong, this study shows that their execution is in question. A collegial style by inspectors promotes both teachers' learning and their respect for the process. Some difficulties with inspectors' personalities and styles were evident in this study that reduced some teachers' respect for the process, and this had a bearing on how they experienced evaluation, particularly regarding the delivery of feedback. This research also suggests that teachers require inspectors to show a comprehensive acknowledgment of school

contextual factors. When such factors are not adequately acknowledged it negatively impacts on teachers' experience of the evaluation process and can cause them to feel demotivated. This effect is particularly significant among teachers working in DEIS schools.

Recommendations

Collaboration and collegiality between teachers and inspectors was shown to be a crucial aspect of teachers' experiences of evaluation. Therefore, the following recommendations are made for evaluation systems generally and for evaluation practices within the Irish context regarding the theme of Respect:

Evaluation systems generally

Evaluation systems need to actively encourage and involve teachers in the design of inspection policy and evaluation procedures for schools.

Teachers should be given opportunities to collaborate in the evaluation process. They should have a say in how the in-school evaluation phase is conducted and in identifying aspects of practice that could be prioritised for inspection. In addition, teachers should be given a forum for providing contextual information regarding classes to inspectors during the pre- and/or in-school evaluation phases.

Selection procedures for inspectors need to be vigorous to ensure successful candidates have the requisite interpersonal and communication skills to provide effective feedback. Induction programmes for newly-appointed inspectors and ongoing CPD for inspectors should focus on providing effective approaches to delivering feedback.

Evaluation practices within the Irish context

The Code of Practice for the Inspectorate (DES, 2015) should be executed as prescribed with regard to upholding its principle of 'respectful engagement.'

Criteria for evaluating teachers' practice in DEIS schools should be reviewed to take greater cognisance of school context and the large section of environmental contexts that exist within schools operating in the DEIS initiative

The study has shown that, when inspectors do not create mutually respectful relationships with teachers in the evaluation, it leads to unsuccessful outcomes. Therefore, the practical arrangements and pre and post-inspection planning should not be confined to the inspector and in-school management. Instead, evaluation processes need to actively encourage teachers' involvement in the design of inspection policy. At local and school level, teachers should be allowed to work with the inspector and be involved in all aspects of the process, including the selection of observations settings, interventions within the school, how evaluation observations occur within the school and how feedback is managed and conducted.

While The Code of Practice for the Inspectorate (2015, p.4) aims to work co-operatively and fairly and to promote trust in its working relationships with others in its quest for respectful engagement, the experiences of teachers suggest that the execution of this principle requires closer monitoring. This has a bearing on how inspectors are selected, trained and monitored. Selection procedures need to be robust to ensure inspectors have the requisite interpersonal and communication skills to deliver effective feedback and execute evaluation processes in schools. Induction programmes for newly-appointed inspectors and ongoing CPD for experienced inspectors should focus on effective approaches to delivering feedback and executing all aspects of evaluation within schools.

Evaluation policy and procedures need to extend existing procedures for evaluating in schools serving socio-economically challenged areas of society to ensure the complexity of

individual school contexts is taken into account when evaluative comments on the quality of provision are made by inspectors. Teachers should be afforded the opportunity to present the profile of their class to the inspector before evaluation visit to assist the inspector in making judgements that can be appropriately contextualised.

6.2.3.3 Trust. Teachers' trust in the evaluation process was shown to be badly affected when teachers felt inspectors afforded insufficient time during the evaluation process to making judgements about specific areas of their practice. The study shows that teachers also perceived evaluation to reflect a mere moment in time and that it did not comprehensively capture the range of their practices.

Perceived experience, knowledge and expertise of the inspector was also shown to be a crucial component of teachers' trust in the evaluation process. It was particularly significant for some teachers working within the DEIS and SEN contexts.

Recommendations

These conclusions suggest that the following recommendations are appropriate under the theme of Trust:

Evaluation systems generally

Sufficient time should be allowed within the evaluation process for teacher observation, dialogue and feedback. Evaluation systems should review existing evaluation models to ensure maximum time is allowed for teacher observation, dialogue and feedback.

Evaluation practices within the Irish context

To ensure that the whole picture of school life is evaluated, the Inspectorates, working in consultation with teachers, should research and trial the development of a model of evaluation under which teachers' practices within a school are observed over the course of a school year. This observation should comprise a variety of sustained visits to ensure inspectors' judgements are based on a selection of experiences and not just one snapshot in time. The series

of observations might include a blend of evaluation and advisory and support activities with the school. The report arising from these combined observations could be published after the visits.

What this also means for future evaluations is that teachers should have greater opportunities to give their input into the evaluation timetable. They should be involved in identifying programmes and schools activities that are relevant to the evaluation being conducted and give their judgement as to their quality and developmental feedback. Collaboration between inspectors and teachers in the design of evaluation within schools would help to minimise the risk of teachers regarding it as a mere 'snapshot' of school life. At a broader level, Inspectorates could consider implementing models of evaluation that allow for evaluations to be carried out over a series of short visits to the school for a sustained period of time to better present a range of teaching experiences.

Inspectorates should ensure that evaluation models have sufficient opportunity to provide feedback to teachers as soon as possible after the observation period. Feedback time within the process should not be compromised to schedule other inspection activities and the integrity of feedback within the process should be upheld.

Inspectors' expertise and experience should be audited regularly by its management body. Specific actions should be put in place through CPD to address any shortcomings regarding inspectors' capacity to evaluate teachers' practice in a wide range of classroom settings and contexts.

Some teachers in this study claimed that inspectors lacked relevant experience or knowledge to be able to advise, support and evaluate within the SEN and DEIS contexts and teachers in these settings had less belief in them when this was the case. They found the evaluation unhelpful in developing their teaching practices when inspectors were not able to give specific advice suited to these contexts. This has significance in the selection, induction

and training of inspectors. Within the Irish context, all primary school inspectors are trained primary school teachers with a minimum of five years' experience and a range of educational experience, expertise, knowledge and additional qualifications. Only inspectors with relevant expertise and experience in these particular schools and classes should be evaluating in these contexts. Inspectorates should look to building the capacity of inspectors who are less familiar with such contexts through their induction and ongoing CPD programmes. Teachers with specific expertise and relevant experience should be seconded to evaluation teams for short periods of time to support inspectors who have no experience in particular areas of teachers' practice (such as SEN or DEIS). In addition, consideration should be given to inspectors with limited or no experience in these areas being seconded to particular education settings for short periods to enable them to gain experience and expertise in specific areas of teaching practices.

6.2.3.4 Emotions. External evaluation stimulates a range of emotions within teachers. They vary from fear, stress, panic and worry to joy, pride, happiness and inspiration. This study shows that, on some occasions at least, the fear, panic and worry can act as an extrinsic motivation for teachers to address areas of their practice that they were previously unwilling to focus on or were unaware that they required attention.

Recommendations

Since the study shows that evaluation unearths a variety of emotions in teachers, the following recommendations are made with respect to the theme of Emotion:

Evaluation systems generally

Extensive, multi-disciplinary research should be carried out among teachers as to why they experience such adverse emotions as a result of evaluation. The findings and recommendations should be shared widely among teachers, Inspectorates and other key stakeholders in the education systems. Teachers should be afforded the opportunity to respond to the research and to make representations to their Inspectorates as to how, within the context

of their own system, to address any recommendations arising from the findings. Implementation of any proposed actions arising from the study and subsequent engagement between teachers and their respective Inspectorates should be led by a steering group comprised of inspectors and teachers who would monitor and review their implementation.

6.2.4 Research Question Four – How does the Experience of Evaluation Affect Teachers' Perceptions of their Practices, and, by Extension, the Practices Themselves?

The study suggests that evaluation engenders reflection among teachers regarding their individual and collective practices and heightens their cognisance of aspects of their teaching practices. It proposes that, as a result of evaluation, teachers tend to focus on their teaching approaches in various curriculum areas. It was shown that evaluation can have both positive and negative effects for teachers. This research suggests that evaluation is a catalyst for change in teachers' practices in areas of the curriculum, and that change can occur irrespective of whether the experience for teachers is positive or negative.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Some limitations to this study must be acknowledged. Teachers largely self-selected themselves to participate in the survey and semi-structured interviews. This suggests the possibility that they were motivated by the opportunity to express strongly held views about the evaluation process. Other teachers might well have communicated different perceptions drawn from their experiences of evaluation. The limitations of these findings include the fact that they were based on what teachers reported and their unavoidably subjective perceptions. A more thorough study of feedback meetings between inspectors and individual teachers, and of the post-evaluation meetings with the whole staff, is necessary to more precisely ascertain the extent to which these findings can be objectively confirmed. Further study could include a review of presentations that are delivered to staff, inspectors' notes, published reports and

targeted questions to teachers and inspectors regarding the consistency in terms of tone and substance between inspectors' oral presentations and their subsequent written reports, as well as the consistency or otherwise between the advice and recommendations individual inspectors offer when they are working in inspection teams.

Another limitation is the fact that the data for this study were gathered at a fixed point in time following teachers' experience of one WSE and, subsequently, a follow-through evaluation. It did not draw on teachers' experiences of other evaluation models. While the data gathered were enlightening in many respects, a longitudinal study would have enabled the collection of data from a greater number of teachers over a longer period of time, possibly involving a greater number of evaluation models. While this approach would have provided interesting data, it was considered beyond the scope of the study.

My inductive analysis suggests that the perceived power differential between the inspector(s) and teacher(s) impacted on some teachers' experiences of evaluation. I had not anticipated that power would be as strong a focus for a cohort of teachers. It permeated throughout the four themes that emerged in answering research question three (feedback, respect, trust and emotions). For example, under the theme of feedback, for certain teachers, in some instances, they felt they could not engage in a two way conversation with the inspector, they experienced a one-sided feedback session lead by the inspector. Similarly, findings in the theme of respect showed that some teachers felt that inspection was 'done to' them and they had no say in the process. In another way, under the theme of trust, teachers reported that they had no power over the decision regarding the time in which the inspection occurred, how long observations sessions would last or how time would be apportioned within the evaluation process. They felt the power in relation to time was out of their control and that the inspector made the decisions and they had to conform to the process. These findings expose a limitation in my theory/theories that underpin the research. Chosen theories (adult learning theory,

transformative learning theory, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy theory) did not account for the power dynamic that emerged in the findings. I thought my chosen theory of self-efficacy would tease out how teachers use evaluation to support belief in their capabilities and capacities to organise and execute courses of action and ultimately bring about changes in their practice. I had envisaged a partnership and collaborative approach between teachers and inspectors which could have been explored through self-efficacy theory. It is evident that a limitation of the study was that power theory (either exclusively or in combination with one or all of my chosen theories) could also have been used as a theory through which to understand evaluation and its impact on teachers' practice. If the research was conducted again, I would hope to have a theory, such as power theory, that could address the limitations that emerged through this study and that became evident through the inductive analysis and findings.

The inclusion of pupils' observations on the impact of evaluation on teachers' practices would have enriched the study. However, the work involved in organising large number of teachers and schools to take part in the study and the difficulties involved in gaining access to the children during the period of school closure due to Covid-19 combined to afford me insufficient opportunity to engage with the pupils. The views of inspectors about the process involved in making judgements and providing feedback would also have contributed to this research.

Despite these limitations, I believe this research contributes in a significant way to exploring the effects of external evaluation on teachers' perceptions of their practices – and on the practices themselves – in a cohort of primary schools in Ireland, which had not previously been studied to the same degree of detail.

6.3.1 Methodological Recommendations

In light of the fact the power emerged during the inductive analysis as being significant for some teachers in their experience of evaluation the following recommendation is made.

A further study of the impact of evaluation on teachers or schools should consider using power theory as a way of understanding evaluation and its impact(s).

Within this research, I was a practitioner-researcher in a position of power and some useful steps were taken to address the power differential between me as an inspector and my participants (teachers and principals) in researching an aspect of my work. The following recommendation is made for future researchers who may be studying an area of their work from a position of power.

The researcher needs to respect the rights of the participants and the participants need to take priority over the interests of the researcher. High levels of communication need to exist between the researcher and prospective participants. They need to be made very aware of the research aims and objectives and what is expected of them at all stages of their engagement in the research process. Participants need to be made aware that they can choose to disengage with the research at any stage. A warm rapport needs to be established between the researcher and participants during interviews. The researcher should be prepared to give a little of him or herself so that a trusting relationship is established between both parties. It is important that the researcher reminds the participants that the data collected is only being used for the purposes of that particular research and that it data cannot be used to inform the work of the main role of the researcher which connects him/her to the participants. Finally, the researcher needs to remain objective throughout the interview process. It is important that they do not over react to answers or provide personal opinions. They should seek clarity around contexts or situations but not provide commentary on how either they themselves or the participants should have handled the situation.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

The qualitative findings of this research are detailed and insightful, adding to our knowledge about teachers and principals' experiences of primary school evaluation processes.

It provides key insights into the nature and effect of respectful engagement, the impact of emotions and personal relationships, the limitations of what evaluation can professionally observe given the temporal and context-specific nature of visits, the impact of consistency of feedback, and the development of greater reflectivity and focus before, during and after evaluations. These findings add a nuanced and valuable contribution to practitioner-based research.

Throughout this research, I concerned myself with the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices and how teachers grow and develop, which guided the literature I reviewed and the conclusions I would ultimately make. The study focused on obtaining the views of teachers regarding the effects of evaluation on their teaching practices. The perceptions of principals were also obtained to validate the teachers' contributions. It is suggested here that the views of parents would bring a far greater understanding of the effects of evaluation on teachers' practices. The pupils' views regarding how evaluation affects their experiences within the classroom also warrants further study. Further research, involving comparative analysis in which schools that made no progress or merely partial progress in advancing teachers' practices following evaluation are compared with those who made good or very good progress, would be useful. It might contribute additional insights into why some teaching practices progress following evaluation while others do not. Discussion under the themes and research questions in this research suggest lines for further enquiry that are likely to be productive:

- An exploration of teacher emotions before, during and after evaluation.
- A study on the consistency of inspectors judgements from teachers and inspectors' perspectives.
- An investigation into school evaluation recommendations - how specific, practical and action-focused are the recommendations and advice from the Inspectorate in its evaluations?

- An exploration of the skill sets and experience of inspectors for working in various school settings.
- A study of the effectiveness of the feedback meeting between inspectors and individual teachers and of the post-evaluation meetings between inspectors and the entire staff
- How do the views inspectors express in the oral feedback during post-evaluation meetings compare with those they express in the final, written reports?
- An exploration of the process schools engage in to address recommendations within evaluation reports – Are there systems in place within schools to progress recommendations?
- How closely do the evaluations adhere to the published guides for evaluation (A Guide to Evaluation in Primary Schools, (2016) and the Inspectorate's Code of Professional Practice (2015)?
- How suitable is the WSE model for evaluating teachers' practice in DEIS and SEN settings?
- Are there differences in how teachers in larger schools regard the evaluation process and those in smaller schools, given that sampling only occurs in larger schools?
- Is teachers' anonymity preserved during the evaluation process?
- How does initial training and CPD within the Inspectorate help inspectors to make judgements and provide feedback?
- How do quality assurance measures within the Inspectorate affect their practices in areas such as feedback and report writing?
- Does the reflection among teachers that occurs as a result of evaluation lead to improvement in their teaching practices?

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Appendix A

To whom it concern within SCHOOL X

I would be grateful if you could forward this email to the principal and all the teachers with the school (via email).

Kind regards
John Mescal
Doctoral Student Maynooth University

Dear Teacher/Principal

I am completing an Ed.D (Doctorate in Education) with Maynooth University. By profession, I am a senior inspector employed by the Department of Education and Skills and I work in primary schools. Your school, **School x** does not fall within the area of my responsibility. As part of my Ed.D, I am seeking to carry out a research study in your school. My supervisor from Maynooth University for this research is:

Dr Joe Oyler E-mail: XXXXX@mu.ie Tel: +353 1 xxxxxxx

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to better understand the impact of external evaluation by Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors on teachers' practice in primary schools. One of the purposes of evaluation is to support school improvement; improvement in teaching, learning, leadership and management, and supports for pupils. This study aims to explore the impact of external evaluation on teachers' practice within the three year period following the Whole School Evaluation – Management Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) in a school. **This study is being conducted in a private capacity as part of my Ed.D. My day-to-day evaluative role as a school inspector will be set aside in the conduct of this research**

Why is your school of interest in the research?
I am interested in researching schools in the West Dublin and the midlands region. In searching schools within this geographical region on the Inspectorate Report's section of the Department of Education and Skill's website I can see that you have a Follow-Through Evaluation between my period of interest (Sept 1 2016 and Sept 1 2019). I am contacting all teachers in these schools who fall into this category.

What is being requested of you?
I am asking you to take part in a short survey on 'The Impact of External Evaluation on Teacher's Practice'. The survey should take 15 mins approx. to complete. The link to the survey is supplied here.

Do I have to participate in the survey?
No, participation is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate all responses are completely anonymous and neither you nor the school you work in will be identifiable. If you **do not** wish to take part you **do not** need to take further action.

Consent
If you wish to take part, consent will be required as part of the completion of the online survey. Link provided here) Click.

Who has approved this study?
This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics committee. You may have a copy of this approval if you request it.

Further clarification
Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to read this letter and to consider participation in the online survey. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address or phone number provided below should you require any further clarification.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given
have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please
contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at **research.ethics@nuim.ie** or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt
within a sensitive manner.

Yours sincerely,

Insert Photo of myself

John Mescal
Telephone: XXXXXXX
E-mail XXXXXXX@mumail.ie

Appendix B

John Mescal

Doctoral Student

Address

XXXXX@mumail.ie

Phone no:

School Address

Xx/10/2019

Dear Principal

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me over the phone earlier. Please see detailed information regarding my request and the next steps for you, the Chairperson of the board of management (BOM) and teachers should the BOM grant permission and if teachers would like to become involved. I would be grateful if you could forward this email to all teachers in yours staff and the chairperson of the BOM.

Information.

I am completing an Ed.D (Doctorate in Education) with Maynooth University. By profession, I am a senior inspector employed by the Department of Education and Skills and I work in primary schools. Your school, **School x** does not fall within the area of my responsibility. As part of my Ed.D, I am seeking to carry out a research study in your school. My supervisor from Maynooth University for this research is:

Dr Joe Oyler E-mail: xxxxx@mu.ie Tel: +353 1 xxxxxxx

Information about the research

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the impact of external evaluation by Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors on teachers' practice in primary schools. One of the purposes of evaluation is to support school improvement; improvement in teaching, learning, leadership and management, and supports for pupils. This study aims to explore the

impact of external evaluation on teachers' practice within the three year period following the Whole School Evaluation – Management Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) in a school. This study is being conducted in a private capacity as part of my Ed.D.

What will the study involve?
This study will involve working in the school for up to 1 school day within the period mid February 2020 to April 2020. It will involve all teachers and the principal who provide signed consent to participate , in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be 60 minutes approximately in duration while I am working within the school

The principal will also be invited to take part in a separate semi-structured interview while I am working within the school. This interview should last approximately 60 minutes also. The discussion themes will be provided to the teachers participating in semi-structured interview in advance. I will be audio-recording these interviews so that I can be as accurate as possible in writing up the findings.

Who has approved this study?
This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics committee. You may have a copy of this approval if you request it.

Why has ________ National School been asked to take part?
This school have been asked because it had WSE-MLL and a Follow-through Evaluation in in the period Sept 1, 2016 to September 1, 2019. I am interested to explore how external evaluation impacted teachers' practice and how the judgement in the Follow-through report was evidenced.

Consent
You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview will place during school hours or whatever time suits the group most and last for up to 60 minutes approx. A schedule of discussion themes is included in this information pack and a consent form.

Withdrawal of Consent
Participation is completely voluntary. My day-to-day evaluative role as a school inspector will be set aside in the conduct of this research. While I work as a school inspector, **School X** does not fall within my areas of responsibility. I will be working with and alongside teachers to learn from them. You are assured that your school's decision to participate or not in the research project will not impact on the school's relationship with myself, Maynooth University, the Department of Education and Skills or the Inspectorate. Participants will have the choice to opt out of this project at any time without adverse consequences. Likewise the school has the freedom to withdraw at any stage without having to justify the reason for doing so.

Confidentiality
The identity and location of the school will be protected in the published dissertation. Participants will not be named and all information from the study will be treated with confidence and anonymity. All data gathered will be safely stored and destroyed in a confidential manner after completion of the research. A hard-bound copy of the final dissertation will be filed in Maynooth University. The findings may also be presented to colleagues or published in relevant educational journals.

What information will be collected?

The semi-structured interviews will focus further on exploring the impact of external evaluation on teachers' practice in the school. Observational notes will be made about the school assessment data, SSE plan, school improvement plan and the whole-school policies where relevant.

Will the school's participation in the study be kept confidential?
Yes, all information that is collected about the school during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time. All hard copy information will be held in a locked cabinet at the researchers' home, electronic information will be encrypted and held securely on PC and will be accessed only by myself, John Mescal.

No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party. If you so wish,
the data that you provide can also be made available to you at your own discretion.
'It must be recognised that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

What are the possible disadvantages of the school taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for the school in taking part. I am conscious that **School X** is a busy working environment and that the work of the teachers is very demanding. Engaging in the research will obviously take some time away from the core work of the school but I hope that it will provide a forum for teachers and the principal to reflect on teaching practices in the school which can be beneficial for teaching and learning.

Further clarification
Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to read this letter and to consider participation in this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address or phone number provided below should you require any further clarification.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given
have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please
contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at **research.ethics@nuim.ie** or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt
within a sensitive manner.

If you do not wish to be involved in this study you do not need to take further action or respond to this email.

Next steps

Attached to this email are consent forms for
1. The chairperson of the BOM
2. The principal
3. Teachers who wish to become involved.

Please complete the consent forms relevant to your role in the school and return to my email address within 10 days of receipt if you wish to become involved. Please note if the BOM does not provide consent it will not be possible to proceed with the study in your school.

Yours sincerely,
John Mescal
Telephone: 087xxxxxxx
E-mail xxxxxxx

Insert Photo of myself

Board of Management Consent Form

Research Project: Exploring the impact of external evaluation by Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors on teachers' practice.

Name of university: Maynooth University

Name of researcher: John Mescal (Ed.D Student)

1. I understand that the letter is asking me to consent to the teaching staff and principal in __________ National School participating in a research project.
2. I understand that the research involves:
    a. A semi-structured interview with some selected teachers
    b. A semi structured interview with the principal
3. I understand that all the information gathered will be kept strictly confidential and that the name of the school or teachers will not be included in any write-up.
4. I understand that in addition to participation being voluntary are free to withdraw from the research activities for whatever reason. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent for the school to participate at any time and for whatever reason.
5. I understand that this research will be published in form of a report and potentially in academic journals.

(Please tick one of the following boxes to indicate whether or not you give your consent):

☐ I AGREE to the research being conducted within _________ National School

☐ I DO NOT AGREE to the research being conducted within _____________ National School

Signed:____________________________ Date:________________

Chairperson of the Board of Management

School Principal Consent Form

Research Project: Exploring the impact of external evaluation by Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors on teachers' practice.

Name of university: Maynooth University

Name of researcher: John Mescal (Ed.D Student)

1. I have read and understood the attached information letter giving details of the research project.
2. I have had the opportunity to ask John any questions that I had about the project and my involvement in it, and understand my role in the project.
3. My decision to consent is entirely voluntary and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice.
4. I understand that the semi structured interview will be audio-taped.
5. I understand that the data gathered in this project may form the basis of a report or other form of publication or presentation.
6. I understand that my name will not be used in any report, publication or presentation, and that every effort will be made to protect my confidentiality.

☐ I AGREE to participate in the research project

☐ I DO NOT AGREE to participate in the research project

☐ I AGREE to participate in the semi structured interview

☐ I DO NOT AGREE to participate in the semi structured interview

Participant's signature: ______________________ Date: _________

Teacher Consent Form

Research Project: Exploring the impact of external evaluation by Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors on teachers' practice.

Name of university: Maynooth University

Name of researcher: John Mescal (Ed.D Student)

1. I have read and understood the attached information letter giving details of the research project.

2. I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions that I had about the project and my involvement in it, and understand my role in the project.

3.My decision to consent is entirely voluntary and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice.If oy udo not wish to participate it is not necessary to do anything further at this point.

4.I understand that the semi-structured will be audio-taped.

5.I understand that the data gathered in this project may form the basis of a report or other form of publication or presentation.

6.I understand that my name will not be used in any report, publication or presentation, and that every effort will be made to protect my confidentiality.

☐I AGREE to participate in the research project

☐I DO NOT AGREE to participate in the research project

If selected for the semi structured interview

☐I AGREE to participate in the focus group

☐I DO NOT AGREE to participate in the focus group

Please indicate the following to enable selection of teachers for interview.

1. Male/Female
2. Years of service as a teacher
3. Years of service in the school
4. Class level taught during the evaluation if applicable
5. Are you a member of the in-school management team (Y/N)/

If you do not wish to participate in this research, no further action is required and you do not need to respond to this email/letter

Participant's signature: ______________________ Date: _________

Appendix C - On-Line Questionnaire

The Impact of External Evaluation on Teachers' Practice 19 February 2020 Final

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Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. I very much appreciate you giving up the 15 minutes (approximately) that it will take to complete.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the impact of external evaluation by Department of Education and Skill's (DES) inspectors on teachers' practice in primary schools. This study is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. Joe Oyer in the Education Department of Maynooth University. His contact details are as follows should you wish to clarify anything regarding the study, Joe.Oyler@mu.ie

Ethical approval

This study has been reviewed and has received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics committee. If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Consent
Participation is completely voluntary. Thank you for providing signed consent which can be completed at the end of this survey.

Confidentiality
The identity and location of the school and all staff will be protected in the published dissertation. Participants will not be named and all information from the study will be treated with confidence and anonymity. All data gathered will be completely **anonomyous** and I will have no way of connecting statements to individuals. The data collected will be safely stored and destroyed in a confidential manner after completion of the research. A hard-bound copy of the final dissertation will be filed in Maynooth University. The findings may also be presented to colleagues or published in relevant educational journals.

Thank you once again for agreeing to complete the survey. Should you wish to contact me my contact details are: john.mescal.2018@mumail.ie.

Kind regards

John Mescal

Doctoral Student, Maynooth University

Next

Finish later

The Impact of External Evaluation on Teachers' Practice 19 February 2020 Final

20% complete

SECTION ONE: CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

1.Which type of school listed below best describes your school? * *Required*

- ○ School with a teaching principal
- ○ School with an administrative principal

2. Please indicate the size of your school by ticking the most appropriate box below: * *Required*

- ○ 0-3 mainstream teachers
- ○ 4-6 mainstream teachers
- ○ 7-10 mainstream teachers
- ○ 11-15 mainstream teachers
- ○ 16+

3. Are you a member of the in-school management team (eg. principal teacher, deputy principal, assistant principal i or assistant principal ii)? * *Required*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Was your teaching observed as part of the most recent Whole School Evaluation (WSE)? * *Required*

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Non Applicable (I was not a member of staff at that time)

5. I have read the recommendations contained within the most recent WSE report. * *Required*

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

6. Was your teaching observed as part of the recent Follow-Through Evaluation? * *Required*

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Non Applicable (I was not a member of staff at that time)

7. Have you read the most recent Follow-Through Evaluation report?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. What role best describes you?: * *Required*

- ○ Administrative principal
- ○ Teaching principal
- ○ Mainstream class teacher
- ○ Special education teacher
- ○ Other

< Previous | Next >

Finish later

The Impact of External Evaluation on Teachers' Practice 19 February 2020 Final

40% complete

SECTION TWO: FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHING PRINCIPALS: The following questions seek to better understand the impact of the WSE on your individual teaching practices

9. Feedback provided by the inspector during the WSE effectively identified strengths in my teaching practices.

More info

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- My teaching was not observed as part of the WSE
- Non applicable, I was not a member of staff at the time of the WSE

9 (a) If you wish, please provide additional information.

10. Feedback provided by the inspector during the WSE effectively identified areas for development in my teaching practices.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- My teaching was not observed as part of the WSE
- Non applicable, I was not a member of staff at the time of the WSE

10 (a) If you wish, please provide additional information.

11. The WSE helped me to reflect on my teaching practices.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Non applicable, I was not on the staff at the time of the WSE

12. The WSE process helped me in self-evaluating my teaching practices.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Non applicable, I was not on the staff at the time of the WSE

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

13. The WSE impacted on my teaching practices in the following ways:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Non applicable, I was not a member at the time of the WSE
Strengthened my pedagogical knowledge	○	○	○	○	○
Developed my capacity to create an effective learning environment for teaching and learning	○	○	○	○	○
Developed my approaches to planning and preparation for effective teaching	○	○	○	○	○
Developed my approaches to assessment within my class	○	○	○	○	○
Impacted on my selection and use of teaching approaches	○	○	○	○	○
Impacted on my awareness of pupils' individual learning needs	○	○	○	○	○
Impacted my ability to cater for pupils at different levels of ability in my class	○	○	○	○	○

13 (a). If you wish, please provide additional commentary on an aspect(s) of the above.

14. The changes I made to my teaching practices (if any) as a result of the WSE have been sustained and are embedded as part of my daily practice.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Non applicable, (I was not on the staff at the time of the WSE)
- ○ Non applicable, (I made no changes to my teaching practices)

15. I trusted the feedback provided by the inspector regarding the quality of my teaching practices.

- ○ Very much
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ A little
- ○ Not at all
- ○ Non Applicable (I was not a member of staff at that time) or (my teaching was not observed as part of the WSE)

16. I trusted the feedback provided by the inspector(s) regarding the quality of teaching practices throughout the school.

- ○ Very much
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ A little
- ○ Not at all
- ○ Non Applicable (I was not a member of staff at that time) or (my teaching was not observed as part of the WSE)

17. I was aware that there would be a Follow-Through Evaluation on the WSE within a 2-3 year period.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Non Applicable (I was not a member of staff at that time)

18. The WSE was an impetus for me to improve my teaching practices.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Non applicable, I was not on the staff at the time of the WSE

19. The survey is almost complete for teachers, please tick the appropriate box below to proceed to the next step.

- ○ I am a teaching principal
- ○ I am a class teacher, SEN teacher, HSCL teacher or other

< Previous | Next >

Finish later

The Impact of External Evaluation on Teachers' Practice 19 February 2020 Final

60% complete

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPALS AND TEACHING PRINCIPALS ONLY

20. Were teaching practices developed throughout the school as a result of the WSE?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

21. The WSE prompted the professional development of staff in relation to teaching practices.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

21 (a) If you wish, please provide additional commentary.

22. The WSE supported the school in reflecting on whole-school teaching practices.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

23. The WSE process supported the school in developing its SSE process with regard to teaching practices within the school.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

23 (a). If you wish, please provide additional detail.

< Previous   Next >

Finish later

The Impact of External Evaluation on Teachers' Practice 19 February 2020 Final

80% complete

CONSENT PAGE

In agreeing to participate in this research, I understand the following:

- This research is being conducted by John Mescal, a doctoral student at the Department of Education, Maynooth University.
- I have been informed as to the general nature of the study and agree voluntarily to particiapte in the survey.
- There are no known expected discomforts or risks associated with participation. The researcher has agreed that any identifying information will be removed from responses.
- All data from the study will be treated confidentially. No participant's data will be identified by name at any stage of the data analysis or in the student's thesis.

By clicking on the consent below, I agree to participate in the survey: * *Required*

○ Click to Consent

< Previous

Finish ✔

Finish later

Appendix D - Questions for Semi-Structured Interview (Teachers)

- Did the WSE support your teaching practices? If so, how? If not, why?
- Did it impact/strengthen you pedagogical knowledge? If so, how? If not, why?
- Did it develop your capacity to create an effective learning environment?
- Did it support you in your approaches to planning and preparation?
- Did your assessment approaches develop as a result of the WSE?
- Did it make you more aware of the pupils with individual learning needs within your class?
- Did the WSE impact on your capacity to cater for pupils at different levels of ability within the class?
- If you made changes to your teaching practices as a result of the WSE, were they sustained?
    a. What were the factors that were significant in supporting this development in response to the WSE?
    b. If you did not sustain changes, why not, what factors influenced this?
- How did you experience the evaluation process?
- Were strengths in your teaching practices identified?
- Were areas for development in your teaching practices identified?
- Would you see WSE as a form of CPD? If so, can you elaborate?
- From your perspective, did teaching practices change or develop throughout the school as a result of the WSE, how do you know?
- How would you describe the interactions between you and the inspector(s) carrying out the evaluation?
- Did you feel the inspector saw your authentic classroom experience?
- How did you plan or prepare for the evaluation?
- Is there anything you would like to share with me regarding the impact of the evaluation on your teaching practices?

Appendix E - Questions for Semi-Structured Interview (Principals)

- Did the WSE support the development of teaching practices in the school? If so, how? If not, why?
- Did it impact/strengthen pedagogical knowledge throughout the school from your perspective? If so, how? If not, why?
- Did it develop teachers' capacity to create an effective learning environment?
- Did it support teachers' approaches to planning and preparation?
- Did it support teachers' approaches and methodologies?
- Did it make teachers more aware of the pupils with individual learning needs within their classes?
- Did the WSE impact on teachers' capacity to cater for pupils at different levels of ability within classes?
- If teaching practices were changes/progressed as a result of the WSE, were they sustained?
    a. What were the factors that were significant in supporting this development in response to the WSE?
    b. If they were not sustained, why not, what factors influenced this?
- How did teachers in your school experience the evaluation process?
- Were strengths teaching practices identified?
- Were areas for development in teaching practices identified?
- Would you see WSE as a form of CPD? If so, can you elaborate?
- From your perspective, did teaching practices change or develop throughout the school as a result of the WSE, how do you know?
- How would you describe the interactions between teachers and the inspector(s) carrying out the evaluation?
- Did you feel the inspector saw your authentic classroom experience during the evaluation?
- How did teachers plan or prepare for the evaluation?
- Is there anything you would like to share with me regarding the impact of the evaluation on teaching practices?