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ABSTRACT

Internationally, there is a growing recognition of teacher educators acting as both agents of and subjects to centrally devised policy reforms. In an Irish context, in which a rhetoric of policy veils teacher accountability behind standards/codes of professionalism, this study sets out to explore how professionalism is communicated to pre-service teachers during their School Placement practicum by teacher educators. This was achieved by examining a sample of teacher educators' written reports of observed lessons (N = 429) and interviews with a sample (N = 10) of teacher educators from one Irish university. This study found that messages regarding the looking the part of a professional and fitting-in were communicated by teacher educators. While these messages appeared to be communicated from a position of care to ease students' transition into the professional space, these messages also contained suggested sentiments of power and conformity. This study draws conclusion based on the professional agency of teacher educators and how their enactment of standards in programme design may communicate more than initially intended.

Introduction

The growing social and political pressures of performative cultures and the resultant demands of accountability have placed the issue of teacher professionalism in the spotlight (Sachs 2016). Mirroring international policy developments (Training and Development Agency 2007; Department of Education 2011), the Republic of Ireland's teacher regulatory body published its own *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (Teaching Council [2012] 2016, updated in 2016), which details the expected professional behaviour of teachers. Such policy reforms have been referred to as 'frameworks of accountability' (Furlong et al. 2000, 15), that are not necessarily targeted at the student teacher, but instead 'designed to constrain teacher educators' (Whitty and Wisby 2006, 49).

As a result, initial teacher education (ITE) and its role in terms of policy reform has received growing attention (Cochran-Smith 2011; Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro, and White 2011; Murray 2014). The swirling discourses of teacher professionalism have naturally had a backwash effect on ITE, with teacher educators (TEs) appearing as conduits to realise this

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agenda. On one hand, TEs are expected to adopt this rhetoric of professionalism while also providing evidence to professional accreditation bodies that pre-service teachers (PSTs) have successfully met/performed these determined standards (Goepel 2012). Therefore, teacher educators must be viewed as key policy actors, who are regarded as both agents of and subjects to such policy reforms related to teacher professionalism (Ball 1994, 2008).

That being said, the collation of such evidence and, as a result, the design of assessment mechanisms in ITE to reflect the successful demonstration of desired dispositions, has proven 'to be a highly complex matter' as the substances of these assessments are fluid and value-laden concepts (Bullough 2019, 508; Choi, Benson, and Shudak 2016; Sockett 2009, 295). Despite its fluidity Moore and Clarke (2016, 671) note that the concept

> 'remains associated and imbued with positivity. Who does not want to be professional, when the word is used so very often – in the worlds of education, of business, of politics, of entertainment – to indicate approval and respect?'

Because of its fluidity and value-laden nature, Moore and Clarke (2016) suggest that we should overcome concerns of defining concepts such as professionalism by instead focusing attention on the 'who', that is, those who decide what professionalism comprises of and those who hold individuals accountable to expected standards. This is crucial for ITE, and for our work as TEs, as the messages of professionalism we communicate to PSTs will likely permeate through to their future practice as professionals (Ó Gallchóir, O'Flaherty and Hinchion 2019). As a result, the aims of this research were to investigate how teacher educators assess for professionalism, and what messages are communicated about the profession.

Professionalism

There is a significant body of work which has attempted to both categorise or unpack the concept of professionalism. Freidson (1971) traces the origins of the concept to traditional fields, such as law and medicine. Professionalism as a concept has featured in the literature since the beginning of World War II (Bourke, Lindstone, and Ryan 2015), when Marshall (1939) outlined the potential for social stability and democracy emerging from the professions. In terms of distinguishing the work of a professional from that of proletarian work, Larson (1977) highlighted autonomy as the essential quality of being a professional. Freidson (1994, 169) though, surmised the use of the concept as 'inconsistent and incomplete', a sentiment shared throughout the literature (Englund 1996; Evans 2008; Evetts 2006; Hargreaves and Goodson 1996).

Drawing on the work of Hoyle, Evans (2008) outlines the fluidity and non-static nature of the concept. In 1975, Hoyle (p. 315) initially defined professionalism as 'those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions'. This definition highlighting the autonomy of the professional and their power in terms of protecting and enhancing the conditions of their own practice of work. However, Hoyle's (p. 146) description of the concept in 2001, suggests a subtle yet significant shift in focus, as professionalism is regarded as a term used 'to describe enhancement of the quality of service' offered. Noticeable in Hoyle's most recent use of the concept is the apparent removal of the autonomy of the professional and in its place

a neoliberal rationale of social accountability for the service provided (Moore and Clarke 2016). This aligns with Evans' (2008, 21) description of 'new professionalism', as there appears to have been a power shift within the profession of teaching, and as a result of this power shift, autonomy has given way to accountability (Evans 2008; Hoyle and Wallace 2005).

Sachs (2016) offers an explanation for the increased accountability within the teaching profession: 'given the huge investment in school and education by governments, it is not surprising that there would be a focus on accountability and transparency of practices'. To ensure the effectiveness and reward for the investment in educational practices, the importance given to accountability is captured in the design of standards/codes of practice that govern professions and their professionals, but frequently fails to involve the professional in their creation (Sachs 2016; Wilkins and Wood 2009). As a result, professionalism exists in the discourse as an elusive competence of perfection, a prized possession that a professional is in constant pursuit of but always remaining, conveniently outside of their grasp (Moore and Clarke 2016). As discourses of service professionalism suggest, there is always more a professional can do as they attempt to constantly improve the offering of their services.

This study draws on an understanding of professionalism as a dynamic, socially constructed concept that is in a constant state of (re)shaping through interactions between the macro level of the field, institutions, practices and biographical experiences of the individual in question (Evans 2008; Evetts 2006, 2009; Hargreaves 2000; Sachs 2016). Therefore, within the confines of ITE, while we may be bound by externally mandated expectations, it is us as TEs who are the ultimate decision-makers responsible for enacting standards of professionalism. Further still, we are also ultimately responsible for holding PSTs accountable to these 'professional' standards.

The Irish context of initial teacher education

Teacher Education in Ireland has undergone a number of changes in recent years (O'Donoghue, Harford, and O'Doherty 2017). Perhaps the most significant changes however, have been in the regulatory field with the establishment of the centralised independent statutory professional body the Teaching Council of Ireland in 2006. The Teaching Council hold the responsibility of regulating entry into the profession and upholding standards for teachers in the primary, post-primary, further education and training sectors. The establishment of the Teaching Council (2011) heralded significant changes to teacher education programmes across the state because of the implementation of programme accreditation requirements. This resulted in a homogenisation of teacher education programmes in relation to curriculum content and the overall balance of campus-based and practicum placements. The establishment of this centralised body of governance has signalled a stronger culture of accountability and oversight in the arena of teacher education driven by broader neoliberal trends of increased accountability, conformity and performance management within the Irish context (Hennessy and Mannix Mcnamara 2011; Lynch, Hennessy, and Gleeson 2013).

Teacher professionalism has taken on a heightened focus in Ireland in the past decade, exemplified by several publications in recent years by the Teaching Council including a professional code of conduct, fitness-to-practice legislation and a number of high-profile

fitness-to-practice cases of teacher misconduct that received significant media attention. The Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (Teaching Council [2012] 2016, updated 2016) sets out a series of standards that teachers are required to comply with in order to 'steer an ethical and respectful course through their career' (Teaching Council [2012] 2016, 15). In a statement outlining TEs' accountability for the maintenance of such standards, the Teaching Council (2017, 23) advises that 'processes and systems should be in place to facilitate the development of the core values and professional commitments that are set out in the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*'.

Despite calls for greater school–university partnerships in teacher education to increase the effectiveness of the practicum experience for PSTs (Teaching Council 2017), School Placement remains largely delivered, maintained and driven by teacher education providers. In general, while schools volunteer to facilitate PST placements, school-based teachers have no formal mentoring role and are not involved in the assessment of the PST. As a result, academy-based TEs in Ireland are solely responsible for the assessment of PSTs during School Placement. Therefore, through a process of enactment (Ball et al. 2011), we as TEs have interpreted the terrain of professionalism and translated its relevance into our own specific programmes where we deem suitable. These interpretations and translations are evidenced in the design of pedagogical and assessment experiences, and in interactions with one another and students, in which we attempt to gather evidence of successful performance but also, implicitly communicate our (as TEs) socially constructed shared meanings of what constitutes professionalism during School Placement.

Methods

Set within this specific context, the aims of this study were to investigate how teacher educators assess for professionalism, and what messages are communicated about the profession. In order to address this, the study explored TEs' views of professionalism through analysis of written assessment documents and through interviews with a sample of teacher educators in an Irish university. Phase 1 of the study consisted of a sample of (N = 429) written assessment reports of TEs' (N = 96) observations of PSTs during School Placement. Phase 2 comprised semi-structured interviews with a sample of TEs (N = 10) regarding their understanding of the concept of professionalism and how it pertains to PSTs during School Placement. Ethical consent for both phases of data collection was gained from the relevant University Research Ethics Committee. In compliance with ethical requirements, identifiable information from all lesson appraisal guides was removed and pseudonyms were used throughout to ensure anonymity. All those whose comments in the lesson appraisal guides that are featured in this paper, were emailed for permission to use the evaluative feedback. For the second phase of the study, all participants were provided with full information regarding the study before being invited to participate. Interview participants had the options to withdraw from the study at any time without requiring a reason to do so. Transcripts of the interviews were anonymised before analysis and only the research team had access to the transcripts.

The research was undertaken in a university context in the Republic of Ireland. Although it offers both a 4-year undergraduate concurrent and a 2-year professional masters in education (PME) consecutive programme, this study only focused on the written reports

Table 1. Direction given to School Placement tutors.

- Evidence of engagement with the school community through non-direct teaching periods
    - Professionalism in engagement with all School Placement stakeholders
    - Appropriate preparation for teaching
    - Adherence to university and school policies and practices (e.g. School Placement folder, recording attendance of learners, etc.)

from the concurrent programmes. Twenty-five percent of the credits for the undergraduate programmes are allocated to the 'Foundation Studies' (McGarr and McCormack 2014). School Placement is a central pillar of the PST experience. The Teaching Council (2013) directed that 25% of all ITE programmes should be dedicated to practicum experiences. As a result, the PSTs in this ITE provider participate in two separate School Placement experiences, an 8-week block in the second semester of Year 2 and a further 10-weeks in the first semester of Year 4. The remainder of the credits are given to the selected subject specialisations.

As previously outlined, due to the lack of a formalised policy existing between ITE providers and School Placement host schools (Ó Gallchóir, O'Flaherty and Hinchion 2018, 2019), the assessment of PSTs during School Placement is solely the responsibility of HEI employed staff members, in the form of a School Placement tutor. These TEs play the dual role of both mentor and assessor to these PSTs (McGarr and Ó Gallchóir 2020). As part of each placement, PSTs are assigned two School Placement tutors; a subject tutor and an education tutor. This aligns with the mandate from the Teaching Council (2017). Each PST is visited twice per tutor for a total of 4 observations across a practicum experience. Due to the volume of enrolled PSTs and the nationwide geographic location of placements, tutors are drawn from both internal full-time university faculty members as well as a significant cohort of part-time staff (typically retired teachers or principals). As a result, we use TEs as an umbrella term to include all those who assess PSTs during School Placement.

During each visit, the tutor completes a written report (referred to locally as a lesson appraisal guide (LAG)) which also serves the dual purpose of documenting feedback on practice but ultimately as an evidenced record of assessment of the observation. This three-page document directs the tutor to comment on a range of issues identified by the ITE provider, for example, planning, effectiveness of teaching, assessment, literacy and numeracy, subject knowledge and professional conduct. The LAGs are handwritten in triplicate, with the PST, TE and the School Placement office retaining a copy of the observation. The professionals in the host schools who act as cooperating/mentor teachers are not a part of the assessment. Table 1 offers an overview of the scaffolding provided to the tutors regarding professional conduct.

Data collection and analysis

In phase 1 of the study, at the beginning of 2018, a random sample of the tutors' LAGs were explored to document the messages delivered regarding professionalism. A total of 429 lesson reports (229 reports from 2011 to 200 from 2016) representing >10% of a potential total sample of 4,156 reports from both academic years were analysed. Across the two periods, 96 from a potential total of 207 TEs were represented in the sample; however, the

researchers were careful to enumerate each report rather than document particular TEs. This was in order to protect their anonymity. What the TEs wrote in the LAGs under the criteria of 'Professional Conduct and Practice' was transcribed verbatim into an excel file. We then embarked on a content analysis of the transcribed comments. Cavanagh (1997) regards content analysis as a flexible method for the analysis of textual data. The goal of content analysis is to 'provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study' (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, 314). This is achieved by transcending beyond simply counting words towards examining and classifying uses of language that espouse similar meanings. As a result, Hsieh and Shannon (2005, 1278) view content analysis as a 'research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns'. For the analysis of the TEs' written reports, we aligned with Kondracki and Wellman's (2002) approach for conventional content analysis that prioritises the inductive nature of interpretation.

While the content analysis of the written reports provided a frequency of the varying nature of the comments communicated directly to PSTs, the shorthanded written nature of the messages resulted in a lack of depth. As a result, we sought to explore further TEs' understandings of professionalism during School Placement. Therefore, a second phase that consisted of semi-structured interviews with TEs after the completion of School Placement was conducted the following academic semester. All of the TEs (both internal and external) (N = 108) who participated in the institution's School Placement in the autumn semester of 2018 were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview based on their understanding of and interactions with the concept of professionalism (Appendix 1 includes the questions that framed the semi-structured interviews). Of the 10 TEs who consented to participate, three were considered as internal full-time members of university faculty, whereas the remaining seven were external part-time staff, predominantly retired teachers/principals/school leaders. Due to the researchers' relationship with many of the TEs, a researcher who was independent of both School Placement staff and the faculty conducted the interviews. This measure was taken to allow the TEs to speak freely regarding their understanding and enactment of the concept in their feedback to PSTs. The interviews all took place on campus and lasted on average 30 minutes. On completion, the researchers transcribed the interviews verbatim.

The semi-structured interviews were analysed by adopting Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of conducting interpretive thematic analysis (see Table 2 for an outline of how we approached this thematic analysis). We selected this approach as it enabled us to make valid inferences (Mayring 2000) from the TEs' responses. This approach also allowed us to complement the emerging themes with extracts from the TEs' messages in the LAGs which provided a richness to the findings. At each stage of the process, we negotiated and agreed on the emerging inferences before continuing.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Procedure.

Stages	Action (s)
1	To become familiar with the structure and content of the narratives, we repeatedly read the transcripts of the interviews while also listening once to the original recordings to ensure accuracy and tone.
2	We separately identified and organised initial codes. This was an iterative process as the transcripts required recoding as new codes emerged. A list of initial codes were agreed before proceeding.
3	We compared and collated codes to create the main and sub-themes, such as; 'Looking like a teacher as a means of othering' which related to the importance of dress and looking like a teacher.
4	Reviewing the themes, codes and definitions. At this stage we both reviewed the transcripts a final time and agreed on the validity of the story emerging in our findings.
5	Further refinement of themes, assigning clear titles and definitions. In this phase we deviated from Braun and Clarke's approach as we begun to map relevant extracts from the LAGs which complemented the emerging themes.
6	Writing the report, making the explanation of themes coherent.

Findings

Content analysis of comments in the lesson appraisal guides

The content analysis of the written reports highlighted that when asked to comment about 'professionalism' within the Lesson Appraisal Guide (LAG) many of the TEs commented on PSTs being respected by learners in the classroom, their confidence and maturity in enacting the role of a teacher and made comments about how they were integrating into the school environment. Table 3 provides an overview of the frequency of trends/comments that emerged from the analysis of these written sections.

However, the evaluative nature and brevity of these handwritten comments resulted in a lack of richness in the TEs' comments. For example,

Clear respect for pupils. #88
Mutual respect and rapport has developed with pupils and staff. #118

Table 3. Content Analysis of written sections of Lesson Appraisal Guides.

Codes	Total
Respected	129
Confidence	107
Mature	77
Fitting in	70
Feedback from School Management/Coop Teacher	58
Presentation	57
Preparation	50
Duty of Care	41
Extra-curricular Activities/Additional	34
Responsible/Ownership	28
Control	19
Committed	19
Adherence to Policies/Regulations	16
Planning	15
Responsive to Tutor's Feedback/Advice	8
Hardworking	8
Reflective/self-assessment	7
Approachable	3
Subject-Matter/Knowledge	3
Creative/Innovative	2
Improvement	2
Talent	1

In fact, the majority of the TEs used this category within the written reports as a means of providing a brief, sweeping soundbite for the visit to the individual PST.

Very professional sense evident overall. #107

Professional attitude and approach. #115

These messages suggest a final sign-off or 'thumbs up' on the TEs' observation and that there were no particularly outstanding issues to report during the evaluation. However, when considering the messages from a constructive perspective, feedback such as '*a good level of professionalism demonstrated*' (#318) may leave PSTs uncertain as to what aspects of their practice indicated this 'good level' and how they may continue to develop this standard throughout their ITE experience.

Thematic analysis: teacher educator interviews and lesson appraisal guides

The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews explored these emerging trends closer. Two major themes were identified: 'Looking the part' and 'Fitting in and being accepted by the community'. Each theme is discussed in this section.

Looking the part

This theme highlights the importance placed by the TEs interviewed on the overall dress and appearance of the student teacher during school placement. In all 10 of the semi-structured interviews, the TEs echoed one another in their understandings of professionalism.

Well, professionalism has got everything to do with how you present yourself … the standards, your actual self-presentation. (TE5)

A professional is somebody who looks professional in terms of their attire. (TE8)

It means that the preservice teacher knows how to conduct themselves as a professional in the school and in the classroom. And that starts with dressing themselves professionally. Looking the part. (TE9)

It is significant that all of the interviewed TEs highlight presentation of self as a determinant for professionalism. The centrality of image appears to negate other aspects, such as school context or subject matter knowledge.

There were only a handful of comments in the LAGs that made specific reference to dress. The following are examples of the comments the TEs wrote in terms of dress:

Highly professional manner; speech; dress; etc. #135

Teacher's attire and attitude demonstrated a duty of care throughout lesson in a mature manner. #436

It is understandable that within the LAGs, the TEs may have been hesitant to commit in writing an evaluation of the PSTs' dress/attire due to the perceived personal nature of such comments. Perhaps, messages regarding dress and attire were masked by the more frequent term 'presence', which also served to suggest that the PSTs looked the part of a teacher.

Has good maturity with good presence. #61

Has V.G. presence and demands respect. #157

The interviews served to further expand these messages regarding dress in which, the TEs discussed in detail the expected dress code of a teacher and the influence appearance can have on both teaching and learning. Prior to School Placement, each PST meets individually with their TEs. The purpose of this meeting is to assess the PST's competence in planning but also to begin forging this professional relationship. As a result, TEs also outline their expectations of the PSTs during their practicum. Two of the TEs interviewed, went into great detail regarding the messages they convey to PSTs before the beginning of placement in order to establish the expectations for a dress code:

> I can tell you what I tell them if you wish? I tell the males that I expect them to wear a real trousers, good shoes, a real shirt and I tell them to look around the teachers' room and if some of the other teachers are wearing ties then they should wear a tie. But if no one else is wearing a tie then I will accept that. I tell the females, I have taken advice from a previous course leader, and she told me that I should tell them what she told them and that is, that if they look in a mirror and feel that they could just about get away with going out tonight then they are inappropriately dressed. T1

> So, I go through the attire as I see it, what I consider to be suitable for boys and the girls or the males and the females. I tell the girls, very obviously, if you're wearing a low-cut top, I don't want to see your cleavage and 6th year boys don't want to see your cleavage and so I say make sure you wear a scarf. And they look at me and I say, 'that's the reality of it. You have to be professional'. I say boys, I don't want to see you as if you're going out for a pint in a local pub. I want to see that you are dressed professionally and that it sets you apart from the James going for a drink with his friends from the James in the professional setting. So, I think you have to look the part of a professional. T8

In both quotes, the TEs communicate a simplistic dichotomisation within an individual who is a teacher; the self as a teacher and the rest of the self, outside of this professional role. Both roles appear to be separated through a conscious selection of dress. This is evident in the necessity for a different and distinct dress code between social interactions and professional interactions. In order to ensure the impression of professionalism, it is assumed that an individual can 'don a costume' and seemingly leave behind the litany of additional social roles they may enact outside of the classroom.

In terms of the rationale for such a dichotomisation, the TEs suggested two connected benefits for the PSTs. First, that it is important for PSTs to recognise that they are in a professional setting and that there are expected behaviours accompanying this. Secondly, dress and appearance in a school setting helps to differentiate and signify roles.

> I do think sometimes for preservice teachers because their age is only slightly different to leaving cert [senior level] students, if you walked into the room you might not recognise the preservice teacher among the students. I do think sometimes if they thought a little more about how they might use a dress code to give them that sense of being a teacher in the room that it would help them. TE2

> I mean a dress code that holds, that you look different from the rest and an understanding that you are not one of the gang, you are one of us, [a teacher]. When you walk in [to the classroom], you are the person they are looking at. TE3

I said, you must set yourself apart because you're a professional. And that starts with the visual initially because the first thing they are going to see if you. So what sets you apart from them. TE8

The TEs stress the importance of dress not as a fashion necessity but to allow PSTs to appear as the authoritative teacher within the classroom. Perhaps, dress masks the closeness in age. Second-year PSTs on the concurrent model are typically 19–20 years of age. It perhaps is believed that dress gives the impression of authority to PSTs who are present in the school for a short 8-week period. Therefore, the TEs' prioritisation of dress could also be seen as a professional courtesy from an experienced educator to a new teacher 'in learning'.

These comments from the TEs may reflect the different influencing factors at play: the TEs' assumptions in terms of the desired image of a 'professional' teacher, expectations from the participating schools that have volunteered to host the PST, and the impact of the relatively young age of the undergraduate student teachers (particularly on their first school placement). This suggests the presence of an assumption that that dress can affect classroom authority and that learners within the classroom are responsive to such 'professional' dress. How the TEs unanimously echoed one another would also suggest strong evidence of a socially constructed understanding of this arguably narrow perspective of professionalism. While initial readings of the transcripts could suggest dress as an expression of hierarchical power (Bourke, Lindstone, and Ryan 2015), perhaps the true intention of why this is communicated by the TEs is out of a concern for the student teacher and a desire for them to be respected and recognised as a teacher within the school. School Placement is well documented as a challenging experience in terms of a student teacher's ongoing identity development journey, and looking at the advice and looking at the advice and comments given from this perspective, they could be seen as advisory and coming from a position of care and support even though they initially appear as demands for conformity.

Fitting in and being accepted by the school community

The second theme to emerge from the interview data conveyed professionalism as a commitment to their host community (schools). In the LAGs, 70 of the 439 reports directly provided evaluative comments on the PSTs' attempts at 'fitting in' to the host school community. However, the TEs also noted that particular appraisals from school management or cooperating teachers (N = 58) and engagement in extra-curricular activities in the school (N = 34) also showed attempts to negotiate this transition to a new environment. Of these messages, it appears as if 'off-the-record' conversations with professionals were utilised and documented as evidence.

Principal in school very impressed with your work it seems, and you seem to be helping wherever you can – well done. #16

School report suggests that you are well integrated into the overall community. #20

It was noted that there was a good contribution made to assist with the schools open night and enrolment day. #38

Being part of a community and focusing on becoming embedded within the culture of the school during School Placement was highly valued by the TEs during the interview. One way in which the PSTs could show their commitment to the school community was through extracurricular activities and 'being on hand to help out' (TE3).

> If their cooperating teacher said he or she is great, I certainly like to hear, for example, if the school feel confident to allow our preservice teacher to engage with the parents at a parent – teacher meeting, I feel that the school is now confident in the student. Not all of them get that far. Things like that are the upper part of the spectrum. TE1

> [Being professional is] about being there for the principal, for the deputy principal, it's about getting to know students outside the classroom and building up relationships with them. TE2

The focus on activities outside of their own timetabled classes may be reflective of the political nature of School Placement in Ireland. There is no formal structured requirement for schools to engage in or support School Placement and as a result, School Placement survives on a partnership of goodwill and, in some instances, guilt to host PSTs. Therefore, part of a host schools' understanding of supporting School Placement initiatives is that they are receiving 'free-labour' to help with school-wide activities. This was certainly evident in the evaluative feedback in the LAGs and the TEs' interviews.

Additionally, it would seem that the TEs view this understanding of the broader role of a teacher, as an additional learning outcome from School Placement.

> Because I have come from a position of being deputy principal, I emphasised that being the metalwork teacher or being the tech graph teacher or science teacher, that you have to contribute an awful lot more to the school in general than just being a teacher in the school. And to me, we grew and transitioned from where the teacher arrives at 9 in the morning, shuts the door in the room and comes back out at 3 in the evening and goes home. A school cannot operate like that. TE2

> It is important to look at the whole school life as well as the classes they are teaching. To try and get into that place where they are a professional, as in the teachers that they are working with. TE7

The interviews suggest that the TEs believe that PSTs' understanding of the role of a teacher may be limited to a traditional perspective and that perhaps PSTs are overly focused on their timetabled lessons and fail to appreciate the multi-layered interactions and activities within a school. During School Placement, it would seem that the TEs view part of their role as guiding PSTs from this narrow view on the self in their own classroom towards being a member of a wider community. However, PSTs are ultimately assessed on their in-class practice alone. Therefore, the narrow prioritisation on the self in the classroom is understandable. According to the TEs during the interview, the benefit of approaching School Placement with this broader understanding of the role of a teacher and perhaps also being aware of the valued asset a PST can be to a school, is the acceptance and embracement of the whole-school community.

> I'll tell you where I notice it on some occasions, you have gone to schools, you are walking down the corridor with the preservice teacher and you get a 'hi sir' from the students in the school. That's nothing to do with teaching in one sense but it has everything to do with teaching in another sense . . . Because that's what you do. That is not in your job description. TE3

> And within the school as well, you know when the school will value a trainee teacher, it just jumps out at you when they get in to the school and they just become part of the life of the school. TE7

> They know, they're there. The school loves them. Everybody knows them. They are, you would think they are a functioning member of the school community. TE10

This theme reinforced a sentiment of searching for belonging and acceptance in School Placement host schools that is common in the literature (Long et al. 2012; Young and MacPhail 2014). In terms of the TEs' messages, the comments suggest that PSTs should embed themselves within the culture and fabric of the school as soon as possible. The benefit of doing so would suggest a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which all stakeholders recognise the PST as a valued contributing member of the community and as a result, a mutual level of respect emerges. Again, one could view this as an instruction to conform to the school's practices and 'fit in' but in recognising the need for a supportive network of colleagues to draw from in teaching, the advice could alternatively be seen as driven by a concern for the student teacher's well-being and that 'fitting in' not only provides a level of social and professional support, it also increases their subsequent employment prospects in the school.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored what messages TEs might communicate to PSTs in documented interactions regarding professionalism. We decided to focus on the messages communicated during School Placement as this is often reported as the most formative and distressing experience of ITE (Young and McPhail 2014). This was achieved by analysing TEs' written communications of professionalism and semi-structured interviews with TEs about their communication of professionalism through interactions with PSTs during School Placement.

The TEs communicated messages of looking the part and conforming to their host schools. In terms of looking the part, it was suggested that PSTs had to view themselves as being different from students in the school and that this is signified by their choice of attire. By establishing themselves as different, they accept the responsibility of leading learning and behaviour within the class. These messages seemed to serve the purpose of encouraging the PST to embrace this new identity and perhaps casting off contradictory images of being a post-primary/university student. The theme of conformity in the messages was evident in the advice to acclimatise and socialise with the host school as soon as possible. It seemed that the quicker the PST realised these aspects, the easier the transition would be. There are two ways one can interpret the advice within the messages. Through one lens it could suggest a diminution of the student teacher's agency where the comments and advice could be seen as demands to conform to particular ways of 'being' a teacher. However, through an alternative lens, the comments and advice could be seen as coming from a position of care for the students' well-being and a desire to help them to develop their professional identity and sense of belonging within the professional context, and therefore ultimately, the implicit rules of 'being a teacher' in order to be recognised as a teacher.

Before exploring the implications of the study, it is important to mention some of the study's limitations. First, this study explores the communication of professionalism in one ITE provider in a university context in Ireland. As a result, the data provides just a snapshot of the interactions. Additionally, the nature of and the assessment of School Placement in Ireland is significant, as TEs from the academy are the sole assessors of PSTs hence the extent to which these findings can be generalised beyond the Irish context is a matter of debate. Secondly, there is an interaction between PSTs and TEs that we could not evidence. This was the (in)formal conversations between one another, in which communication of professionalism outside of the officially sanctioned lesson appraisal guide (LAGs) could not capture. Therefore, to some extent this research captures the recorded interpretations of professionalism whereas more nuanced perspectives and messages may be verbally communicated through the school placement process.

Turning to the implications of this study. Notwithstanding the rationale for the advice and guidance provided in relation to professionalism by the TEs in this study, the first issue to consider is what messages do the PSTs receive in relation to professionalism. Professionalism was communicated in terms of fitting in and looking the part, and while we have mentioned the benefits of this for PSTs' personal and professional adjustment to teaching, its effect on their understanding and enactment of professionalism may be problematic. The messages suggest a narrow interpretation of professionalism, one that possibly reflects restrictive conceptualisations of professionalism aligning with the broader societal shift towards greater teacher accountability and the image of the service professional (Hoyle 2001; Moore and Clarke 2016). This could perhaps reflect discourses of teacher learning in England and further afield, which have shifted towards a practice-orientated 'apprenticeship' conceptualisation of teacher education (Mayer and Mills 2021). The TEs' documented interactions regarding professionalism, did not appear to communicate messages regarding professional values, respect, care and integrity as an educator (DES 2016) nor the expectation for a professional to be a life-long inquirer of their own practices and self (OECD 2016). However, it is certainly possible that these broader considerations of professionalism may be addressed in other aspects of initial teacher education programmes, although it may appear that a critical learning opportunity has been missed; the chance to articulate such value-laden abstract concepts with feedback connecting theory with practice. Therefore while concepts in teacher education such as professionalism exist as global facets of teacher quality, greater attention should be focused on the possible gap between what is caught in teacher education and what is taught, as this study demonstrates that it is the locally communicated messages that may influence the meaning making of PSTs. Future research may set out to further explore intended learning outcomes in ITE programmes with the realised learnings interpreted by PSTs.

With increasing efforts from transnational institutions (OECD) and major regional polities (European Union) to 'harmonise' visions for teacher quality and thus, teacher education (Menter and Flores 2021), the findings of our study perhaps raises more questions about our own held assumptions as TEs and what we as policy actors in this globalised knowledge economy may unintentionally communicate to students during teacher education. Brookfield (1995) notes that the sincerity of our intentions does not equate to purity of practice. It is crucial that we do not lose sight of the fact that we as TEs are key policy actors (Ball 1994, 2008), and as policy actors, it is through our enactment that we breathe life into standards, such as professionalism, within our programmes. Through the process of

interpretation and translation (Ball et al. 2011), we socially verify and sustain the shared enactment of standards within our programs. As policy actors, we have agency in the pedagogical and assessment artistry of our programmes (Ó Gallchóir and McGarr 2021) and as a result, we are responsible as TEs for potentially reductionistic messages regarding professionalism that PSTs may unintentionally 'catch'. Therefore, instead of lamenting the relevance of politically generated standards or globalised conceptualisations of teaching, is it not time that we recognise our agency, and therefore responsibility as pedagogues and, begin to question what we would like these standards to truly reflect and how this can be realised and celebrated within the canvases our own teacher education programmes?

Disclosure statement

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Appendix

Phase 2 – Questions for semi-structured interviews.

(1) What is your experience as a SP tutor?
(2) What does professionalism during School Placement mean?
(3) What is your experience of student teachers in UL and their professionalism during School Placement?
(4) Can you give an example of when a student exhibited a strong level of professionalism during SP?
(5) Can you give an example of when a student exhibited a strong level of professionalism during SP?
(6) How would you frame your feedback regarding professionalism during the post-lesson review?