Exploring school-university partnerships: the roles, experiences, and interactions of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors

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Abstract

The importance of school-university partnerships has featured in teacher education agendas, legislation, and policies in the Republic of Ireland for the past thirty years, with partnerships primarily occurring during Initial Teacher Education programmes. Partnership at this juncture involves placement tutors from universities, cooperating teachers from schools, and student teachers during school placement. Despite the value placed on school-university partnerships, much of the research has highlighted that student teachers receive inequitable support during school placement. This study sought to understand why this may be the case by investigating the experiences of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors (the triad) during partnerships, as well as how each triad member perceives their own role and the role of other triad members. Consequently, I aimed to illuminate the challenges and opportunities associated with school-university partnerships.

An interpretivist qualitative approach was employed and was structured through the lens of a social theory of learning framework. The research setting was one concurrent post-primary Initial Teacher Education programme and schools linked to the same programme. The participants included four student teachers, four cooperating teachers, and four placement tutors, who took part in semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A qualitative questionnaire also gathered the opinions of eight principals and four pedagogy lecturers. The findings were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Three overarching themes were extracted from the dataset. Firstly, 'the impact of communication on practice' illustrated that some participants were unaware of guidelines pertaining to school placement, while others revealed they do not engage with the guidelines. Additionally, some participants are reluctant to engage in professional conversations, in part owing to power dynamics or a lack of confidence. Secondly, 'the complexities of relationships across the landscape of practice' revealed that each member of the partnership is valued but this materialises in different ways. Time is also a crucial feature in building relationships, but relationships are fragile, with assessment and the goodwill of schools playing a key role in partner interactions. Thirdly, 'forming and supporting partnerships across the landscape of practice' shows that most participants believe partnerships are effective, but partnerships are understood differently amongst participants, with some indicating that partnerships can happen beyond school placement. An analysis of the three themes highlighted that there were different levels of access, support, and participation for triad members as they boundary cross during school placement, with some responsibilities claimed, while others were displaced. This resulted in varying levels of partnerships at play. This study makes recommendations based on these findings and contributes to teacher education by providing a frame that helps to understand dyadic and triadic interactions of the triad within a wider landscape of practice.

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

List of acronyms

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

DoE: Department of Education. *Previously named the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Education and Skills.

HEI: Higher Education Institution

ITE: Initial Teacher Education

NQT: Newly Qualified Teacher

SCITT: School-Centred Initial Teacher Training

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Glossary of key terms

Community of practice

Defined as 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis' (Wenger,1998:4).

Continuum of teacher education

'This describes the formal and informal educational and developmental activities in which teachers engage, as life-long learners, during their teaching career. It encompasses initial teacher education, induction, early and continuing professional development and, indeed, late career support' (Teaching Council, 2011:5).

Cooperating teacher

'A co-operating teacher is a teacher in the placement school who supports and guides the student teacher and who acts as a point of contact between the HEI and the school. In a post-primary setting, a student teacher may be placed in a number of different classes and may, therefore, have a number of different co-operating teachers across a number of subject areas. In such circumstances, one teacher may take on a liaison role, seeking feedback from other co-operating teachers and acting as the point of contact for the principal and HEI placement tutor' (Teaching Council, 2013:5).

Droichead

'The Droichead process is an integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers' (Teaching Council, 2017:3). Droichead is the Irish word for bridge.

Higher Education Institution (HEI)

'HEI or Higher Education Institution denotes those colleges, universities and other third level bodies providing one or more accredited programmes of initial teacher education' (Teaching Council, 2020:4).

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

'ITE refers to the initial phase of learning to be a teacher when student teachers are engaged in a recognised teacher education programme' (Teaching Council, 2020:4).

Landscape of practice

Landscapes of practice builds on the concept of communities of practice by acknowledging that there are an array of communities of practice, that can assume different roles and responsibilities, that make up an entire profession.

Microteaching

A method used in some Initial Teacher Education programmes which facilitates student teachers to practice their teaching with a cohort of pupils or peers, with the guidance of a lecturer. The student teacher engages in a form of analysis of their teaching, along with receiving feedback on their teaching from the pupils taught and their peers. Microteaching can involve the student teacher being video recorded (Oxford, 2015).

Partnership (in teacher education)

'Partnership refers to the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education. These processes, structures and arrangements also include School/HEI partnerships which focus on improving learning and teaching' (Teaching Council, 2020:4).

Partnership (specific to school placement)

'Partnership refers to the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners involved in school placement to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education' (Teaching Council, 2021a:3).

Placement tutor

'A School Placement Tutor is a person engaged by a HEI to support and mentor student teachers and evaluate their practice while on placement' (Teaching Council, 2020:5).

Pupils

The term pupils is used instead of students to avoid confusion with student teachers. Pupils in this thesis refers to post-primary students.

School placement

'The term school placement refers to that part of the programme which takes place in school settings and which is designed to give the student teacher an opportunity to integrate educational theory and practice in a variety of teaching situations and school contexts. The school placement experience encompasses a range of teaching and non-teaching activities and affords the student teacher opportunities to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported' (Teaching Council, 2020:5).

Student teacher

'A student teacher is a student who is engaged in a programme of initial teacher education' (Teaching Council, 2020:5). May also be referred to as a pre-service teacher.

Teaching Council

'The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006 as the professional standards body for the teaching profession. The Council, in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, is responsible for determining the duration and nature of programmes of teacher education' (Teaching Council, 2020:7).

Treoraí/Treoraithe

'The term *Treoraí,* the Irish word for guide, replaces the term *Co-operating Teacher* and more accurately reflects the nature of the role of a teacher who supports and guides the student teacher during his/her school placement experience. In a post-primary setting, a student teacher may be placed in a number of different classes and may, therefore, collaborate with a number of different *Treoraithe* across a number of subject areas' (Teaching Council, 2020:6).

Chapter One: Introduction

The HEI and the school are fundamental to the professional development of the student teacher and...how these partners relate, share and integrate their various contributions matters a great deal.

(Hall et al., 2018:12).

1.1. The problematisation of school-university partnerships leading to the research aim

In the Republic of Ireland, hereafter Ireland, partnerships between schools and universities have been prominent in teacher education agendas, legislations, and policies for the past thirty years. This is reflective of international policies that identify the importance of school-university partnerships within teacher education. Despite their importance, school-university partnerships are broadly defined and loose connotations of their meaning impact partnership enactment (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016). For example, Smith (2016:20) defines school-university partnerships as 'an agreement between teacher education institutions and stakeholders of education who work together towards a shared goal, to improve education at all levels'. This definition implies a heterarchical relationship between schools and universities who work collaboratively towards a 'shared goal'. Smith's definition draws similarities with Day et al.'s (2021:24) definition, which states school-university partnerships are 'an enterprise that is jointly created, developed and sustained in the midst of complex settings to advance educational practice, knowledge and understanding'. Again, this definition implies schools and universities have co-constructed a shared goal. The shared goal depends on the purpose of partnerships, which can be categorised as focusing on pupil learning, student teacher learning, the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers, and/or conducting research (European Commission, 2007). It is therefore unsurprising that definitions attributed to school-university partnerships are broad; however, their vagueness makes partnerships difficult

(Farrell, 2021). Consequently, generic descriptions of partnerships that lack clarity can impede a shared vision and commitment to partnerships (Brisard et al., 2005), which has been the case in Ireland (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016).

School-university partnerships in Ireland have predominately focused on student teacher learning during school placement, with this process involving many key partners (Figure 1.1). This study therefore focuses on school-university partnerships in the context of student teacher learning, with particular emphasis on the school placement triad of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors. As noted by Steadman and Brown (2011), when collaborative triads are forged, it can be significant in the professional development of student teachers and all members of the triad. Despite this recognition, there are inconsistencies in their dyadic and triadic interactions, with partnerships ranging from anything between dysfunctional to productive (Chambers & Armour, 2012; O'Grady et al., 2018). Tensions have been reported due to the differing expectations of the triad in relation to each other's role, particularly if these expectations are not discussed prior to school placement (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Nguyen, 2020). This ultimately leads to inequitable student teacher support (Heinz, 2014; Young et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2018; O'Grady et al., 2018; Heinz & Fleming, 2019; Farrell, 2021), therefore this research aims to understand why role enactment, expectations, and interactions vary amongst this triad so the issue of inequity of student teacher support can be addressed. As the European Commission (2005:3) states: 'teacher education...should be...an object of study and research' to help support the principle of partnership[1]. Accordingly, this study investigated school-university partnerships in one Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme to help understand the positioning of different partners

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[1] The European Commission (2005) names partnership as one of the common principles for teacher competence and qualifications.

in supporting student teachers in the process of learning how to teach and suggests ways to enhance such partnerships.

This study was guided by two research questions:

- What are the experiences of student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers in supporting student teachers in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?

- How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in enhancing school-university partnerships?

The research questions are investigated through an interpretivist methodological approach, involving interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires, all of which are detailed in the methodology chapter. The remainder of this chapter provides further context and background to the research area by presenting an overview of national ITE programmes, followed by the research setting and my own positionality. The chapter concludes with the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Setting the scene: an overview of Initial Teacher Education programmes in Ireland

ITE is the first stage of the continuum of teacher education[2] in Ireland and this study focuses specifically on post-primary ITE. Concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes are the main routes to become a post-primary teacher. Concurrent programmes are undergraduate degrees

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[2] The remainder of the continuum includes Induction for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and CPD for in-career educators (Teaching Council, 2011a). The induction programme is named Droichead, an Irish word for 'bridge', and Cosán is the CPD framework, meaning 'pathway'.

that include disciplinary studies and practical and pedagogical education over four years, while consecutive programmes are post-graduate degrees that contain practical and pedagogical education for two years subsequent to individuals engaging in disciplinary studies (Department of Education, 2023a). As noted earlier, school-university partnerships typically occur during school placement in Ireland: school placement is a compulsory component of both programmes[3], with 25% of time dedicated to school placement during concurrent programmes and 40% for consecutive programmes (Teaching Council, 2021a). There are many key partners that support student teachers during school placement (Figure 1.1) and each student teacher is assigned at least one placement tutor and cooperating teacher during school placement. Over the duration of the ITE programme, student teachers must be assessed by more than one placement tutor.
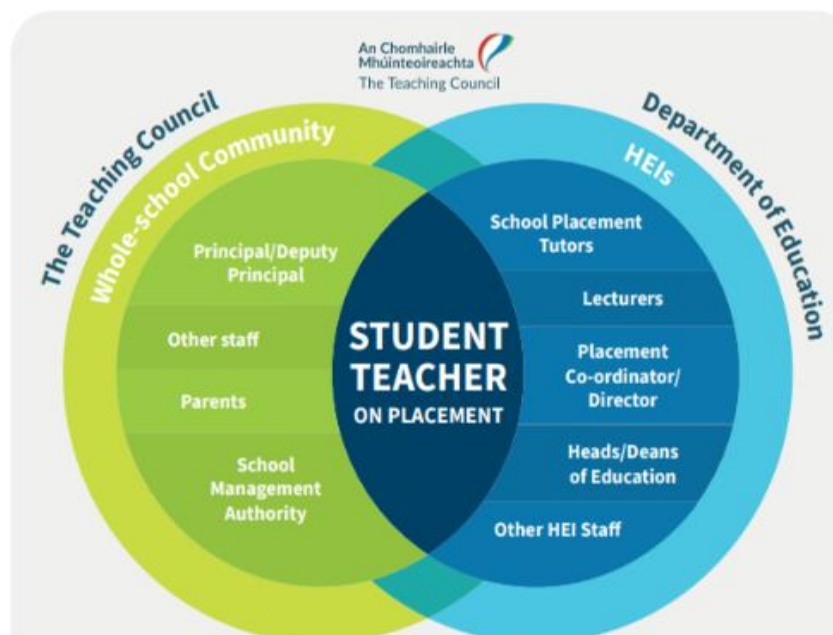
Figure 1.1: Key partners during school placement[4].

Source: Teaching Council (2021a:16).

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[3] The breakdown of school placement requirements related to the concurrent ITE programme of this study are outlined in Appendix A.
[4] Key partners in the 2013 version of the Guidelines on School Placement includes cooperating teachers but this is omitted in the revised edition. Perhaps it is an error or 'other staff' encompass cooperating teachers.

1.2.1. Providing the context: the research setting

This study takes place in one concurrent ITE programme that prepares student teachers for qualification in two subjects. Preparation for teaching, inclusive of school placement, involves lectures on pedagogy and completing microteaching. Prior to school placement, student teachers have school placement briefings and are assigned one placement tutor in first year and two placement tutors (one per subject) in subsequent years. If a student teacher requires further support during school placement, they may be assigned an additional placement tutor. Each placement tutor and student teacher have a pre-school placement meeting and a placement tutor visits the student teacher once during school placement. The placement tutor role involves pastoral support and formative and summative assessment of student teachers (Teaching Council, 2021a): the role is expanded on in chapter three and four.

The Higher Education Institution (HEI) contacts principals and arranges school placement for first-year student teachers and in the subsequent years' student teachers approach principals requesting a placement in their school. School placement is dependent on the agreement of principals to host student teachers. Student teachers are supported by one or more cooperating teacher during school placement (Teaching Council, 2021a): this is decided by each school. The cooperating teacher is not involved in the summative assessment of the student teacher, but their opinions and formative feedback on the student teacher is requested from the HEI. The cooperating teacher role is explained in chapter three and four.

Second-year student teachers are the focus of this study. Traditionally, this cohort would have participated in school placement in the first year of their programme; however, school placement was replaced with an online microteaching programme because of the COVID-19

pandemic. Therefore, it was their first experience of school placement and interacting with cooperating teachers and placement tutors. Additionally, this cohort of student teachers had one placement tutor visit and one professional dialogue with a second placement tutor. Professional dialogues are structured online meetings between a student teacher and a placement tutor to discuss planning and practice and were introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also important to note that student teachers and their host school received advance notice[5] of a placement tutor's visit, which differed from practice prior to the pandemic.

1.2.2. My positionality within the research

It is important to identify my own positioning in the research setting. I was a student teacher in the HEI of this study. Following qualification as a post-primary teacher, I was a cooperating teacher for student teachers from the same HEI for several years. I am currently an education lecturer that teaches mostly in the area of pedagogy, and I am a placement tutor in the same HEI. As I have experience in schools and the HEI of this study, this research is predominantly, but not exclusively, a form of insider research. It is not fully insider research as I have not taught in all the schools as the participating cooperating teachers, and I have not been a principal. My positionality is expanded on in the methodology chapter, along with the steps I took to ensure the research was ethically compliant.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

The introductory chapter served as an overview of school-university partnerships to provide context to this study. Firstly, the problematisation of school-university partnerships in Ireland, specifically in ITE, that led to this study's research questions was provided. The research

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[5] Advance notice of a placement tutor's visit is no longer provided for second-year student teachers and their host school.

design and setting were outlined, along with my positionality, to provide further context to this study. Seven chapters now follow. Chapter two presents a social theory of learning theoretical framework as applied to this study. Chapter three thematically reviews significant policies related to school-university partnerships. Chapter four reviews the literature pertaining to school-university partnerships, the roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers, placement tutors, and student teachers, as well as the influencing factors and supports for each individual. Literature is also reviewed in relation to principals and pedagogy lecturers. Boundary crossing and interactions between the triad members, as well as power dynamics are then reviewed. Chapter five describes the methodological approach adopted, presenting the chosen research paradigm, further details on my positionality, along with the research design, research sample, methods employed and the ethical protocols, as well as the data analysis approach. Chapter six includes the participant biographies and details the findings under three themes. Chapter seven discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical framework, literature, and policies. Chapter eight concludes the thesis and revisits the research questions and provides a number of recommendations emulating from this research, along with outlining the contribution of this study to teacher education. Chapter eight also acknowledges the limitations of this study.

Chapter Two: A social theory of learning theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

A theoretical framework based on a social theory of learning is the chosen framework for this study. The chapter begins with an outline of a social theory of learning as pertained to this research, drawing predominantly on the work of Wenger, Lave, and Wenger-Trayner. The concept of power within the context of social learning is then outlined. Milestone publications on legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice and what they mean in ITE are subsequently presented. Learning in a landscape of practice follows, and how it reflects the positioning of partners in school-university partnerships.

2.2. Social theory of learning: social interactions that lead to practice

There are many learning theories, with each theory serving a particular purpose (Wenger, 2018), thus a theory that matched this study's context had to be identified. For example, in teacher education, arguments could be made for a social theory of learning, attesting that learning occurs through social participation (Wenger, 2018; Allen et al., 2020), or an opposing theory of cognitive learning, maintaining that knowledge, and therefore practice, can be transferred from one person to another (Korthagen, 2017). In this study, a cognitive learning theory is discounted as a frame as pedagogy lecturers, placement tutors, and/or cooperating teachers cannot simply transfer knowledge on how to teach to student teachers. Instead, a social theory of learning is more suitable as it explores interactions between student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers as supporting student teacher learning, rather than knowledge transfer processes. A social theory of learning differs from social learning theories as it positions individuals as active participants in learning as opposed to viewing individuals as learning behaviours through observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1977; Wenger, 2018). However, aspects of a social learning theory are present, as student teachers observe teachers,

but observation does not occur in isolation and student teachers spend more time teaching and undertaking microteaching (in the HEI) than observing classes, hence a social theory of learning is deemed more suitable (Appendix A).

Four components of meaning, practice, community, and identity, equate to social participation within a social theory of learning (Wenger, 2018): how each one relates to this study is illustrated in Figure 2.1.
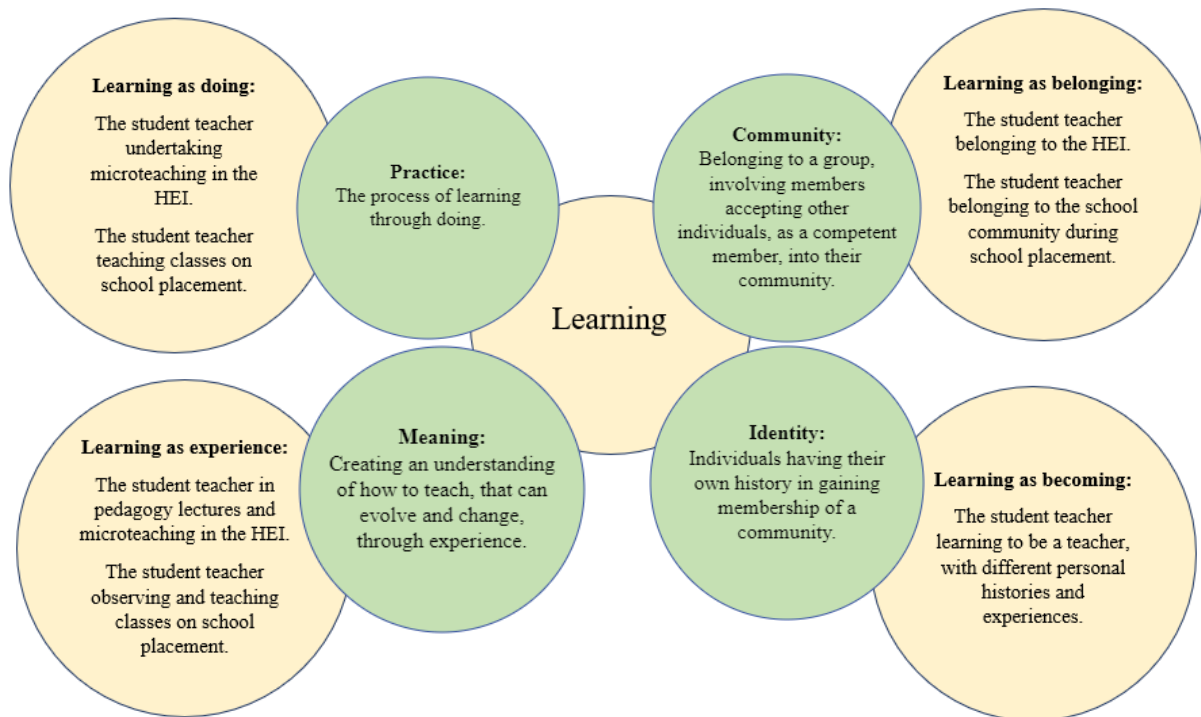
Figure 2.1: The components of a social theory of learning as described by Wenger (2018) and applied to student teacher learning
Source: Wenger (2018).

The four components that place participation at the core of learning impact the individual, communities, and organisations (ibid). For the individual, participation means engaging and

contributing to the practice of a community. In this study, for a student teacher to learn, they are expected to participate and contribute to the community of teachers through teaching their classes and engaging in conversations, and therefore contributing to the community of pupils. This impacts and advances student teacher learning. For communities, 'it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members' (ibid:223; Arnseth, 2008). Student teachers are the new generation of teachers and will refine their practice over time, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement through dialogue with placement tutors and cooperating teachers, which can potentially impact the learning of cooperating teachers and placement tutors (Woodgate-Jones, 2012; O'Grady et al., 2018; Zaffini, 2018). For organisations, 'it means that learning is an issue of sustaining the interconnected communities of practice through which an organization knows what it knows and thus becomes effective and valuable as an organization' (Wenger, 2018:213). In this study, the HEI and the school are interconnected sources of learning and a support structure for student teachers.

While the social theory of learning is deemed the most suitable frame in which to situate this research, it is important to note that the theory does not claim to say 'everything there is to say about learning' (Wenger, 2018:226), as no one learning theory can account for the complexities of learning (Allen et al., 2020). The concept of power, beyond what is apparent in this framework, is now considered.

2.2.1. The conceptualisation of power as an added dimension

As the chosen framework is built on social interactions, forms of power are present, with Huzzard (2004:357) arguing that 'learning is an outcome of power'. Later in this chapter, the importance of acknowledging and conceptualising power within a social theory of learning is

made clear, particularly in the context of power being overlooked or described in vague terms (section 2.3. and 2.5.2). An added dimension of power is now addressed to help understand the complexities of power relations and what it means for this study.

A Foucauldian concept of power sees power functioning through relationships (Foucault, 1982; Contu & Willmott, 2003; Phillips & Larson, 2012), with interactions resulting in individuals feeling either powerful or powerless (Contu & Willmott, 2003). Consequently, power can either facilitate or impede the learning process (ibid; Huzzard, 2004). Foucault (1982) attests that the subject, i.e., the person, rather than power itself, should be examined as he believes a person does not own power, but power is an action someone takes because of the actions of others. Furthermore, Foucault (2000) cautions against viewing power in negative terms that equate to repression as power can have a positive impact on individuals and knowledge formation. Whether power manifests itself in positive or negative terms is explored throughout this chapter and subsequent chapters.

Contu and Willmott (2003) draw on the work of Lukes (1974) to ascribe three dimensions to power. The first dimension is overt conflict amongst individuals. Gherardi et al. (1998:276 &278) note 'inevitable conflicts' occur 'within and between communities over what is to be known, how such knowledge should be acquired and what form of rationalisation should accompany its distribution'. Indeed, what, how, and why student teachers learn certain pedagogical practices, along with how they are supported, could draw similar conflict of opinion amongst those involved. The second dimension is covert power, whereby actions are taken to avoid conflict (Contu & Willmott, 2003). The voluntary nature of schools facilitating school placement, i.e., the Department of Education (DoE) not mandating school participation

or the Teaching Council[6] not wanting school placement to burden schools (Chapter Three, section 3.3.3) are examples of avoiding potential conflict. The third dimension of power refers to institutionalised norms and practices whereby 'individuals and groups *willingly* subscribe to values and practices that reproduce unequal relations of power' (ibid:18). The traditional hierarchical positioning of HEIs in school-university partnerships is one such example and is discussed in chapter four.

Aligning with the third dimension above, March (1991) uses the term exploitation to describe the reproduction of practice, not as a derogatory term, but to depict individuals adhering to the status quo to meet organisational expectations. Additionally, Fairclough (2011) states that discourse can contribute to the reproduction of practice, through either explicit use of language (power *in* discourse) or implicit language (power *behind* discourse), a position also inferred by Foucault (1982). Huzzard (2004:357) propositions that exploitation is needed to 'direct learning processes in line with the project remit and its financial and time constraints' and often individuals are rewarded for compliance thus ensuring reproduction of practice (March, 1991). Examples of potential exploitation in this study's context are student teachers adopting pedagogical practices that solely focus on preparing pupils for state examinations or student teachers plugging gaps in the issue of teacher shortages, which can impact their attendance in their ITE programme[7]. March (1991) also attests that exploration, which involves experimentation of new possibilities and flexibility of procedures, is essential so that practice can be advanced. Student teachers exploring the process of learning how to teach during school placement can lead to the possibility of experienced teachers learning from student teachers,

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[6] The Teaching Council are the professional standards body for the teaching profession in the Republic of Ireland.
[7] Third year undergraduate teachers are eligible to apply for registration with the Teaching Council to facilitate their employment to help cover substitutable vacancies (Foley, 2023).

therefore advancing practice. Ultimately, March (1991) proffers that both forms of power, exploitation and exploration, are needed within organisations.

The concept of power demonstrates the complexities associated with social interactions and how it can either facilitate or impede learning, thus illuminating the need to acknowledge power within this study's frame. The following sections, underpinned by a social theory of learning, can be viewed as an evolution of what is involved in the social interactions that support student teachers' access and participation in the teaching profession.

2.3. Legitimate peripheral participation

As indicated, learning to teach involves social interactions between many individuals. Legitimate peripheral participation, a situated learning activity, describes the process in which newcomers gain access to learning to become part of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Jagasi et al., 2015). The newcomers, i.e., student teachers, require access to the profession to learn how to teach, with access and resources granted through the ITE programme and associated school placement. Access to the profession is 'legitimate' in the sense that learners are treated as potential members who will gain full community membership in time (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Prior to gaining full membership, newcomers are at the periphery of a community of practice. The term 'peripheral' suggests 'an opening' into a community where newcomers have 'access to sources' to aid their learning, i.e., through the support of established members of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991:36). In line with a social theory of learning, the transfer of knowledge from established community members to newcomers is not the premise on which legitimate peripheral participation is built upon. Instead, newcomers participate in the community of practice, but with limited responsibilities

(Hanks, 1991). In time, newcomers are expected to move in an upward trajectory to undertake further responsibilities or to become more involved in the community. This mirrors the trajectory of student teachers who undertake microteaching in the HEI and observations in the school prior to beginning teaching on school placement. The level of newcomer participation is then dependent on what is agreed by established members of a community. The level of such student teacher participation is outlined in the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2021a), with the HEI and schools localising what this participation looks like in practice.

While Lave and Wenger (1991) observed apprenticeship type models of learning for their concept of legitimate peripheral participation, they omit access to sources from those outside of the community of practice that a learner wants to gain access to (Figure 2.1a). In this study, student teachers receive support from pedagogy lecturers and placement tutors, which assists student teachers in their legitimate peripheral participation in schools (Figure 2.1b).
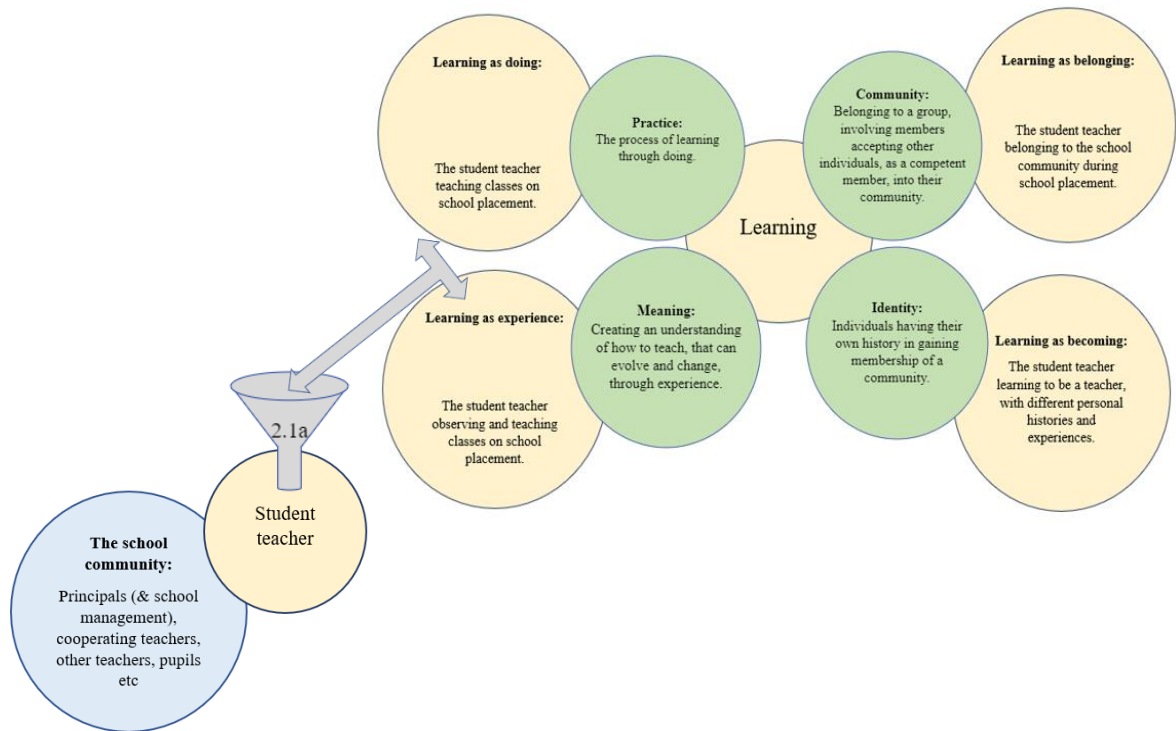
Figure 2.1a: Visual representation of legitimate peripheral participation as described by Lave and Wenger (1991) and applied to student teacher learning.
Source: Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (2018).
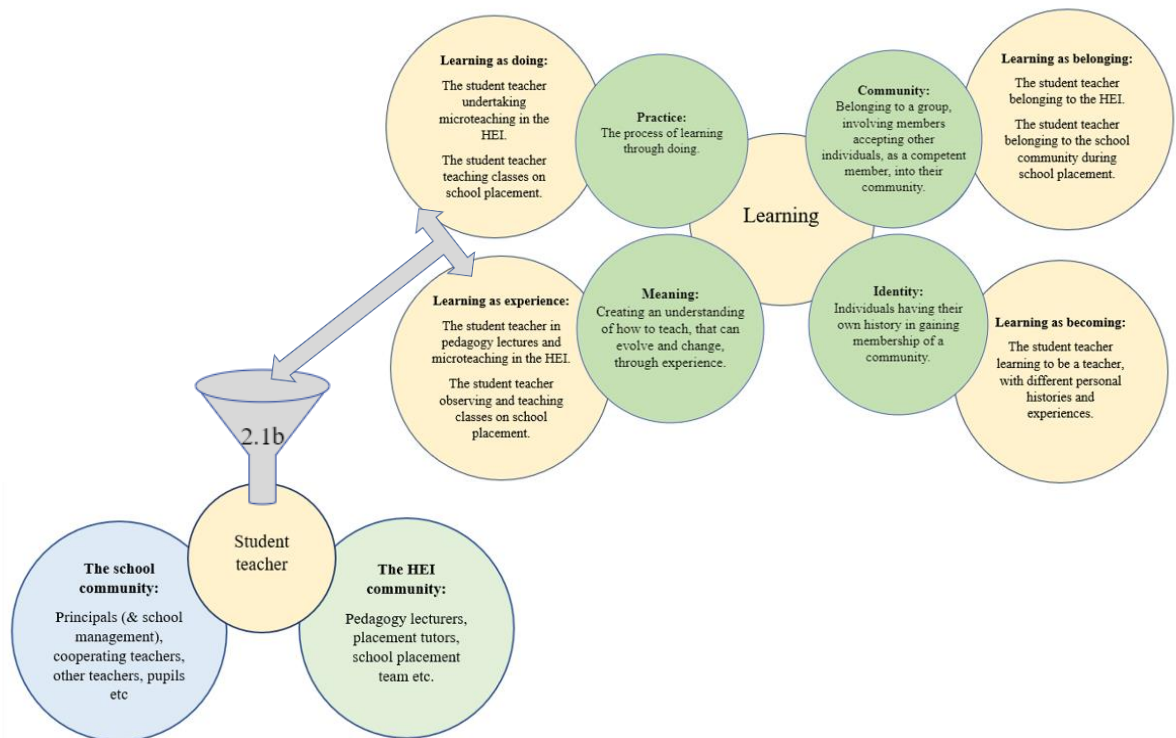
Figure 2.1b Visual representation of legitimate peripheral participation as described by Lave and Wenger (1991) and adapted to apply to student teacher learning.
Source: Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (2018).

Arnseth (2008) argues that Lave and Wenger's theory simplifies the process of participation, with Figure 2.1a illustrating that this is the case. Legitimate peripheral participation is complex as student teacher learning and participation can be impacted by internal influences, such as preconceptions on how to teach from their time as a pupil (Lortie, 1975), or by external influences, such as assessment from their placement tutor during school placement. At the same time, student teachers are working alongside cooperating teachers, who are part of a community of teachers, which is ultimately the community that student teachers are seeking access to. This demonstrates that student teachers are navigating multiple sources of learning during their legitimate peripheral participation (Figure 2.1b).

The legitimate peripheral participation framework is further criticised for not providing sufficient detail on how conflicting perspectives or forms of power can affect access, identity, and participation in a community of practice (Arnseth, 2008; Li et al., 2009). Aligning with the earlier point of learning being facilitated or impeded by power (Contu & Willmott, 2003), Shields and Murray (2017) attest that power dynamics can determine how student teachers engage in their legitimate peripheral participation. This cannot be overlooked when there is involvement of various partners in the process of legitimate peripheral participation, particularly if two communities are disconnected as student teachers cross boundaries (Figure 2.1a). In subsequent work, Wenger (1998) and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) counteract this criticism by acknowledging the need for various support from different communities of practice, all of which are detailed in this chapter.

While legitimate peripheral participation has clear relevance to this study, the lack of partnership between sources is one reason it is too restrictive as a framework (Figure 2.1a). Additionally, its emphasis on the newcomer only discounts it as a sole framework. It could be

argued that newcomers can already be members of the profession, but who take up a different role within their job. For example, first-time cooperating teachers (Young & McPhail, 2015) and first-time placement tutors are newcomers who require a form of legitimate peripheral participation to carry out their role. Like student teachers, the roles and responsibilities of placement tutors and cooperating teachers are outlined in the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2021a) and can be localised by the HEI and schools, thus legitimising their role during school placement. However, it is often the case that cooperating teachers and placement tutors are automatically regarded as full members of such communities of practice as they do not need a qualification or formal professional development to carry out these roles. This further signifies the importance of gaining their perspectives on how they perceive their role within school-university partnership, particularly as a lack of support can impact the legitimacy and understanding of their associated roles. In such instances, there is no upward trajectory whereby new cooperating teachers and placement tutors can begin at the periphery of a community, who observe and learn the practice from more experienced members. Instead, they are expected to have full participation from the outset. The lack of legitimate peripheral participation afforded to cooperating teachers and placement tutors is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

Johnston (2016:537) also mentions the restrictive nature of this framework, maintaining that student teachers do not fit neatly into the legitimate peripheral participation description as they 'join the community for only a limited time so that they do not have the opportunity – nor are they expected – to move from the periphery to fully mature practice in the centre of community activity'. This point is particularly relevant as second-year student teachers undertake a four-week placement and are not expected to become full members of their placement school, instead, it is a learning opportunity for student teachers to become members of the teaching

community at a later date. Johnston (2016) suggests a category of 'temporary newcomer', or 'guest' should be added to the framework. In subsequent years, Lave and Wenger acknowledge that the trajectory from the periphery of a community of practice to full membership is too limited and there are many forms of membership beyond full membership of a community of practice (Handley et al., 2006). For example, placement tutors and cooperating teachers are not trying to become part of the community of the other but need access to each other's practice to support student teachers, thus form a temporary community of practice. The different types of participation within a community of practice are detailed in section 2.4.

Even though legitimate peripheral participation is not a sufficient frame in which to situate this study, it does have relevance on how student teachers gain access to the teaching profession, and associated support, therefore adds context to the establishment of communities of practice. While Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced communities of practice in their legitimate peripheral participation framework, they did not provide the specifics of this concept, but Wenger (1998) clarified what communities of practice are, and how they function. Communities of practice, as related to this study, are explored next.

2.4. Communities of practice: what it means to be a member
2.4.1. Defining communities of practice within school-university partnerships
Wenger (1998:4) defines communities of practice as 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis'. Wenger (2018b) attributes five stages to the development of communities of practice. The initial stage, the potential phase, involves partners identifying commonalities from which to build their community (ibid; Young, 2012). The second stage, known as the coalescing stage, analyses the abilities and potential learning from community members. This leads to the third stage, the active stage, whereby members

support the practice of each other. In time, some communities of practice enter a dispersed stage as they are no longer required to work as closely together. The final stage, the memorable stage, signifies the end of a community of practice; however, it can have a lasting impact on the practice of individuals (ibid). All five development stages of communities of practices are beyond the scope of this study, but the first three have particular relevance to this study.

While the aforementioned definition by Wenger (1998), and the stages of community of practice development, outline core aspects of a community of practice, the level of member participation can vary and take different forms. Wenger (1998) advances the concept of legitimate peripheral participation by acknowledging that not all individuals begin at the periphery of a community and subsequently become full members of a community of practice. In some instances, there are barriers that can impede member participation, meaning they may have marginal participation (Davies, 2005). For example, if first-time cooperating teachers and placement tutors are expected to have full participation from the outset, without formal training or qualifications, it can hinder the legitimacy associated with their role as it is taken for granted they know how to fulfil their responsibilities. This can have a knock-on effect for other members within a community of practice: as Davies (2005:577) points out, ultimately 'the community determines who has access to' their practice and if cooperating teachers or placement tutors are unsure of their responsibilities, it can impact student teacher support, consequently leaving student teachers with limited access and marginal participation during school placement.

In addition to peripheral, full, and marginal participation (ibid), Wenger (1998) recognises that not all individuals intend to become full members of a community of practice and may require temporary access to other communities of practice. Participation in partnerships can also be

described as occasional, transactional, and/or core (Wenger-Trayner, 2022; Zaffini, 2018). Participation is occasional in the sense that a community of practice is formed between the triad for a short period during school placement, and it is not intended to stay in place beyond school placement, and instead they disperse, but this community of practice is a core group during school placement. Additionally, such communities of practice could be considered transactional as student teachers receive access to the school community to practice their teaching. Furthermore, individuals can be involved in many communities of practice at once, with varying levels of participation (Wenger, 1998; Zaffini, 2018). For instance, the placement tutor may interact with several cooperating teachers in different schools, with different contexts[8] and expectations, resulting in a range of experiences across communities of practice, while the cooperating teacher must balance supporting the student teacher and their pupils at the same time. The different communities of practice in this study are illustrated in Figure 2.2.

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[8] Different contexts are in part recognised through school patronages, which refers to the 'legal governance entity for all schools, where the guardian of the 'characteristic spirit' of a school is a person or entity known as the 'patron'. 'The Irish Education Act (1998) gives ultimate responsibility for school values and 'characteristic spirit' to the school 'patron', a role legally separate from that of school ownership and school management' (O'Flaherty et al., 2018:317).
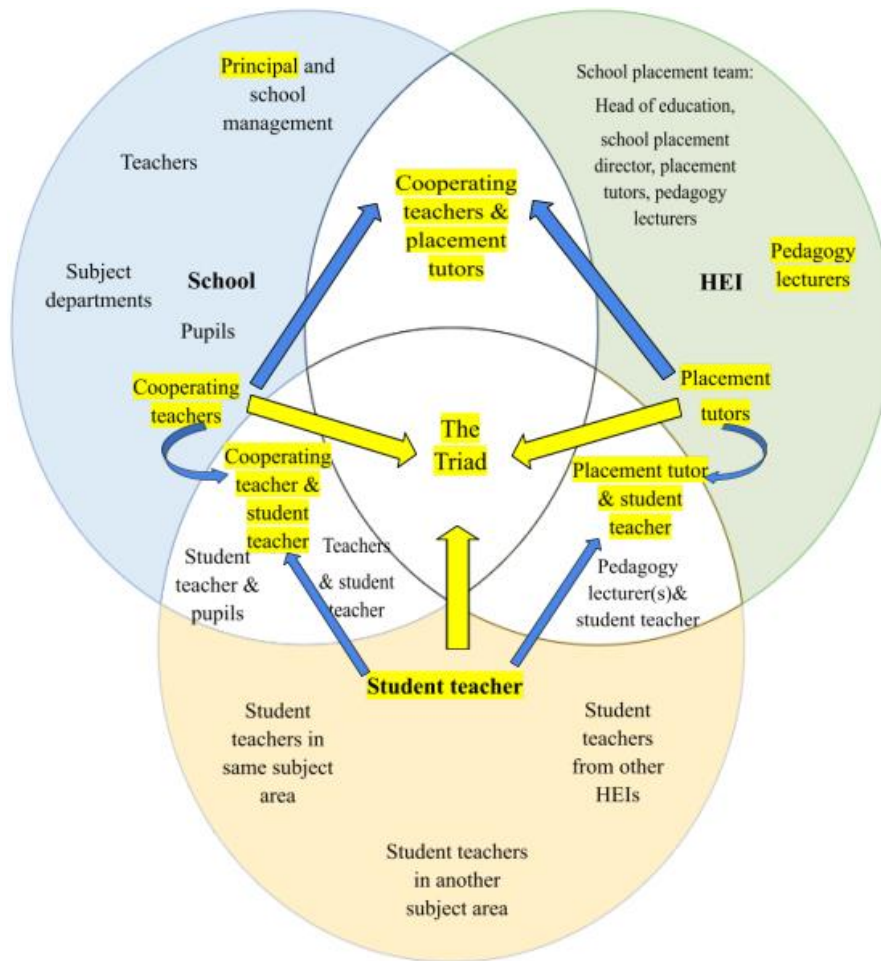
Figure 2.2: Visual representation of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998): created to apply to student teacher learning. *This is not an exhaustive list of all the communities of practice that occur across teacher education but serves as an illustration of the multiple communities of practice within a landscape of the profession. The white parts of the diagram represent the coming together of partners during school placement, while the highlighted sections are the focus of this study.

Each community of practice represented in each section of the Venn diagram could overlap to form additional communities of practice: taking the school section for example, cooperating teachers could intersect with their subject department, other teachers, the principal and other school management. This example illustrates that there are many different communities of practice at play, and learning to teach, and working collaboratively can take many forms.

2.4.2. The dimensions of mutual engagement, negotiation of a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire

Communities of practice are often misrepresented as any group of people (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Li et al., 2009), with Cox (2005) attributing the confusion to the term community simplifying the concept's meaning. This confusion has led to an array of interpretations and descriptions of the theory, particularly as communities of practice are described in broad terms (Storberg-Walker, 2008). It is therefore important to note that individuals who share commonalities are not by default a community of practice (Amin & Roberts, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2021; Johannesson, 2022). Wenger emphasises that the most important aspect of the theory is that it makes a difference to practice (Fitzpatrick, 2021): for this to happen, communities of practice must be built on three dimensions of mutual engagement, negotiation of a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

Firstly, membership in a community of practice requires mutual engagement in which relationships form between individuals. This is important in the potential, the coalescing, and the active stages of community of practice development. Mutual engagement also welcomes diversity: 'what makes engagement in practice possible and productive is as much a matter of diversity as it is a matter of homogeneity' (ibid:75). Diversity of support through school-university partnerships is important in contributing to student teacher learning, with Figure 2.2. showcasing the diversity that can be prevalent in communities of practice. Young and McPhail (2016) describe student teachers and cooperating teachers working together, who strengthen each other's role, as a form of mutual engagement. Relevant to this study, placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, and principals could be added to the list of partners that require mutual engagement.

Communities of practice are not always harmonious; therefore, community maintenance is an 'intrinsic part of any practice' to facilitate mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998:74; Zaffini, 2018). During school placement, the members of communities of practice vary annually, for example the host school accepts a different student teacher each year, so the relationship can differ. The placement tutor and the cooperating teacher from each institution may also change, therefore the relationship between schools and universities is changeable, and transient partnerships may exist.

Secondly, joint enterprise consists of 'a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement' (Wenger, 1998:77). Wenger (1998:53) defines negotiation in communities of practice as 'continuous interaction, of gradual achievement, and of give-and-take', which has particular importance during the coalescing and active stages of a community of practice development. The different roles, focus, and demands placed on individuals within communities of practice, including outside of school placement, showcase the importance of give-and-take required for collaboration and engagement. This ties in with March's (1991) suggestion that exploration and exploitation are required in organisations. Joint enterprise helps manage and support each party's expectations. Young and McPhail (2016) state that the negotiation of joint enterprise develops and strengthens throughout school placement as relationships evolve. Indeed, the opposite could occur due to expectations not being met or differing expectations between individuals. Accountability structures play a part in joint enterprise, as school placement guidelines (discussed later) and student teacher assessment by a placement tutor can influence both their practice. Additionally, joint enterprise may differ between communities of practice that a member could be part of, for example a placement tutor will interact with several student teachers and cooperating teachers during school placement, thus the negotiations may vary. Similarly, the cooperating teacher may have

a few student teachers from different HEIs, across different stages of their ITE programme, from consecutive and concurrent programmes, which lead to different expectations. As highlighted, each year individuals involved in similar types of communities of practice can change, for example the placement tutor may not visit the same schools each year, or the cooperating teacher within a school can change, and the student teacher does not go to the same school each year, owing to many changes in a community of practice structure. These scenarios demonstrate that joint enterprise is not a fixed agreement and is a complex process (Wenger, 1998), and each community of practice is dependent on its participants and their response to guidelines.

The third dimension of communities of practice is having a shared repertoire, involving the actions, processes, routines, tools etc. that are part of their practice. This supports the legitimate role of each member within the active stage of community of practice development. A shared repertoire is characterised by a history of mutual engagement that is inherently ambiguous. Ambiguity can make communication challenging, yet it can result in new insights (ibid). Additionally, previous experience in communities of practice, whether positive or negative, may have a bearing on the future participation and engagement of members of current communities of practice (Young & McPhail, 2016). Furthermore, 'mismatched interpretations or misunderstandings' can disrupt mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998:84), such as student teachers having preconceptions on how to teach from their time as a pupil (Eisner, 2003). While addressing mismatched interpretations or misunderstandings are intended to resolve issues, it can also generate new insights (Wenger, 1998). Aligning with that thought process, this study is not seeking a consensus on what each partner should do; however, the perceived role of self and others is, to establish if it helps or hinders mutual engagement.

While the community of practice framework has merit for this study, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) advance this concept by exploring communities of practice as part of their positioning across the wider landscape of a profession. The justification of using landscapes of practice, that build on communities of practice, is detailed later.

2.4.3. How communities of practice function: the duality of participation and reification

Wenger (1998) identifies the need for both participation and reification for communities of practice to function efficiently. Participation refers to taking part in a community of practice, but also the relations with others in that community. This correlates with this study as it explores the participation of the triad and their experience in relation to each other. As Wenger (1998) acknowledges, participation is not always harmonious and therefore participation does not necessarily equate to collaboration. This is important in the context of school-university partnerships; just because schools opt to participate, it does not guarantee collaboration (Chapter One, section 1.1.).

Reification are the objects or tools created and used to support participation in communities of practice. School placement policies and guidelines from the Teaching Council, the HEI, and schools are forms of reification (O'Grady, 2017), and these resources legitimatise the role of key partners during school placement (Young, 2012). Those who develop reification may not be involved in the communities of practice and while the Teaching Council forms working groups to be representative of different partners, it cannot account for all school contexts and individuals. As a result, 'reification must be reappropriated into a local process in order to become meaningful' (Wenger, 1998:60). Compiling school-based or HEI guidelines is one way to reappropriate policy documents, which is encouraged by the Teaching Council (2021a) who outline the necessity of HEIs to reappropriate school placement guidelines to their localised

context and they provide schools with a template to devise a localised policy. The latter is particularly important as schools may host student teachers from different HEIs undertaking a concurrent and/or consecutive programme.

Wenger (1998) emphasises the importance of the process (participation) in conjunction with the product (reification) (Figure 2.3), and while reification is important, it is people and their social interactions within and across communities of practice that 'contribute to the continued vitality, application, and evolution of practice' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015:13), again showcasing how a social theory of learning is central in this framework.
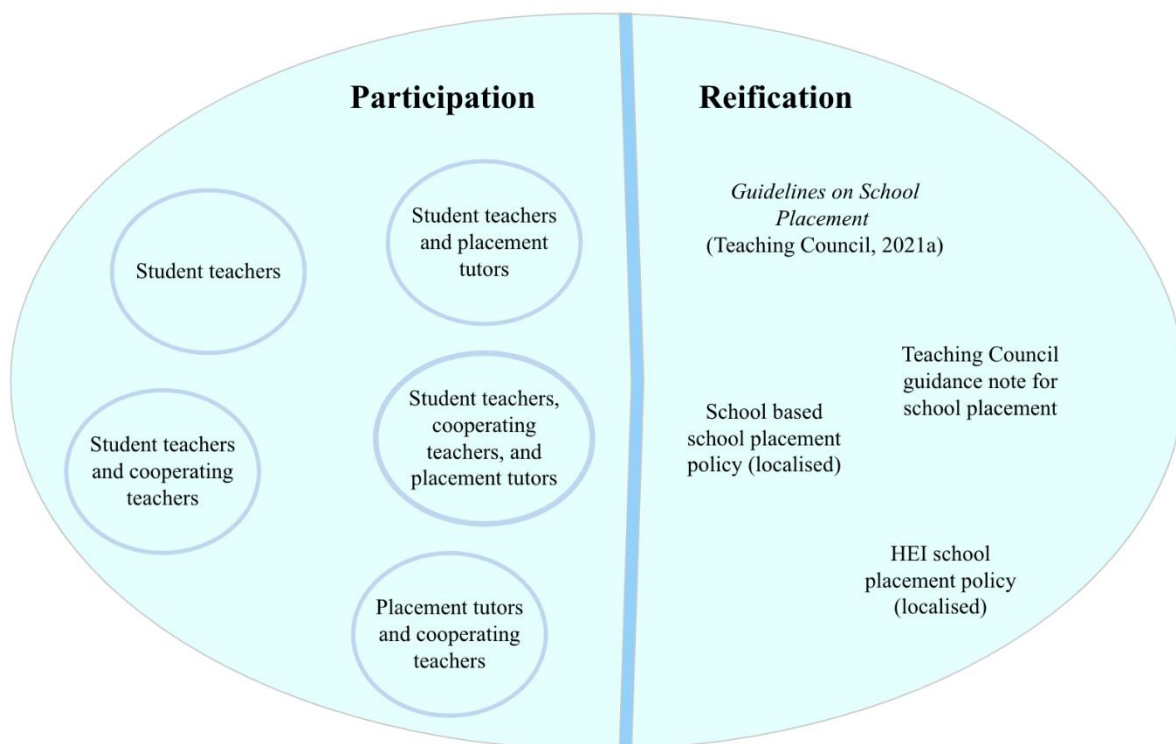
Figure 2.3: Adapted figure of duality of participation and reification as applied to student teacher learning. *The circles represent potential communities of practice.
Source: Wenger (1998).

2.5. Landscapes of practice: crossing boundaries between communities of practice

The three dimensions of communities of practice, along with the duality of participation and reification, provide a good foundation in which to situate this research; however just like legitimate peripheral participation, the concept of communities of practice has been expanded by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015). Learning in landscapes of practice better reflects the varying knowledge, competencies, boundaries, and power relations that exist across a profession. As the landscape of practice framework represents the differing positions and diversity across a profession it is a more inclusive framework for members of school-university partnerships.

2.5.1. Communities of practice that make up a landscape of practice

While the community of practice framework details a structure in which communities function, landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) provides a greater overview of the many communities of practice that make up a profession. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) maintain that no one community of practice can claim to know the full 'body of knowledge' of its profession, therefore communities of practice should cross boundaries into other communities of practice to understand the profession in its entirety. In my construction of the landscape of practice for student teachers, the significance of the triad is clear as there are several communities of practice that student teachers are potentially connected to, albeit tangentially. With this, this frame acknowledges the role that pedagogy lecturers, principals, student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers all play in the process of learning to teach, but with the need for each community of practice to navigate the boundaries between them.

2.5.2. Competence and knowledgeability: the negotiation of boundaries

Competence and knowledgeability are core facets that support and evolve practice across the landscape of practice (ibid). Firstly, competence is socially negotiated by an individual community of practice and each community of practice does not need to be competent in other's area of the profession, hence competence can be contained within single communities of practice. For example, what competence looks like for placement tutors does not mirror the competence of cooperating teachers. As outlined previously, communities of practice where members do not have the same role are formed during school placement, therefore different forms of competence are required within single communities of practice to support each other. Here within lies the importance of exploring the perceived role of self and others within this study.

Competence within and across communities of practice is not static, for example, communities of practice may include a variety of identities and experiences amongst members, localised school contexts, updated school placement guidelines, or role requirements that lead to changes in what competence means. Even with negotiating the meaning of competence, past experience, along with other factors, can result in members of communities of practice to 'reflect, ignore, or challenge the community's current regime of competence' (ibid:22). It is not guaranteed that all members will agree on what is deemed competent for their community of practice. While Wenger was criticised for failing to detail how power dynamics can affect communities of practice (Arnseth, 2008; Li et al., 2009), landscapes of practice deal with this by acknowledging that power dynamics can lead to the acceptance or resistance of competence amongst and across communities of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This has implications for how individuals across communities of practice interact, and ultimately how student teachers learn how to teach: again, this indicates that power can manifest itself either

positively or negatively. Despite this acknowledgement, the continued use of broad explanations, such as omitting details on different forms of power, still draws criticisms (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021). As indicated earlier (section 2.2.1), this is why it is necessary to conceptualise power pertaining to social interactions.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:22) specifically reference student teachers when they note that 'it is mostly the regime of competence that is pulling and transforming their experience – until their experience reflects the competence of the community'. Again, in the context of school-university partnerships in Ireland, student teachers are attempting to learn the competence of teachers from cooperating teachers; however, student teacher competence is not formally assessed by cooperating teachers. While student teachers are not trying to emulate placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, or principals, levels of competence may be learnt from many members of the landscape of practice e.g., through feedback and advice. This again highlights the complexity of student teachers moving between and being part of numerous communities of practice.

In contrast to competence, knowledgeability is not contained to individual communities of practice but spans across communities of practice in the landscape of practice. As stated, it is not necessary for different practitioners to be competent in each other's area; however, it is crucial they understand the different practices across the profession: Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) call this awareness 'knowledgeability'. For instance, student teachers and placement tutors should be familiar with and understand the job of a teacher to ensure that student teachers are suitably equipped to teach the classes of their cooperating teacher. If the student teacher and HEI place unrealistic expectations that differ greatly to school practice it could potentially hinder future school-university partnerships. Furthermore, if student teachers

and placement tutors understand the cooperating teacher role, it can contribute to student teachers availing of support from cooperating teachers. Moreover, if the school is not familiar with the student teacher role during school placement, it can make it more challenging for schools to appropriately support the student teacher. Perhaps March's (1991) point on exploitation comes to the fore here if a student teacher is expected to reproduce the practice of the school's experienced teachers. These are just a few examples that demonstrate that knowledgeability is central for school-university partnerships: as HEIs and schools are in different settings, they need to understand each other's areas of knowledge and competence to jointly assist student teacher learning.

2.5.3. The political, localised, and diverse nature of landscapes of practice

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) categorise landscapes of practice as political, flat, and diverse, which recognises power dynamics, localised responses to mandated practices, and the diversity of a profession, thus highlighting the advantage of the landscape of practice framework over the community of practice frame. The landscape is deemed political due to the power dynamics that can emerge within and across communities of practice, which include competing claims to knowledge, such as voices being 'silenced by the claim to knowledge of others', leading to 'knowledge hierarchies' (ibid:23). Claims to knowledge can either be accepted or rejected by individuals and communities of practice. Claims to knowledge may be shrugged off 'as too disconnected to be relevant' (Johnston, 2016) but power dynamics may lead practitioners to 'create an appearance of compliance while doing their own thing' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015:23), which essentially aligns with a covert form of power (Contu & Willmott, 2003). Examples may be student teachers 'performing' a certain way when placement tutors assess their teaching, regardless of their beliefs on how to teach, or

a cooperating teacher telling a placement tutor that the student teacher is doing well, even when they[9] have concerns.

The landscape is described as flat when 'each community has its own practice and these practices co-exist' (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021:368). This means that each grouping of practitioners does not subsume the practice of another, i.e., one community of practice does not eliminate the role of another community of practice, even if it claims a hierarchy over another (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Instead, the local nature of practice results in communities of practice deciding what works best for them. For example, the Teaching Council (2021a) *Guidelines on School Placement* inform practice, yet the HEI generates its own guidelines to meet its localised context. Additionally, as stated earlier, the Teaching Council (2021a:24) provides a template for schools to draft their own policies, but 'the contents...are not...intended to be prescriptive' as 'it is the responsibility of each school management authority (in consultation with teachers, parents and pupils) to devise a policy appropriate to their school's own particular circumstances'.

The landscape of practice is also diverse as boundaries exist between practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). As student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors interact, there is a need to negotiate boundaries between each community as there is potential for misunderstandings owing to different settings and priorities (ibid; Wang et al., 2022). Negotiations can interrogate how the competence of other communities of practice is 'relevant (or not) to that of another' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015:24). For example, the school placement guidelines (from the Teaching Council and/or the HEI) outlining the responsibilities of each partner in both the HEI and schools are compiled so both organisations

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[9] They and their are used at times as a singular agreement, rather than plural agreements, recognising gender plurality.

can jointly support student teachers, but without the knowledgeability of the role of the other, an aspect of support may be missing for student teachers. By placing this research into an interpretivist paradigm, it attempts to clarify any potential misunderstanding and confusion around the role of self and others within school-university partnerships.

Boundaries between communities of practice are considered 'learning assets' as crossing boundaries can result in new insights and advances in learning (ibid:25; Akkerman & Bruining, 2016). This is relevant for all members of the profession, not just newcomers/student teachers (Woodgate-Jones, 2012). For example, placement tutors and cooperating teachers can learn from student teachers (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Zaffini, 2018). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:25) therefore pose a valuable question: 'How can boundaries be used systematically to trigger a reflection process about the practices on either side?'. This correlates with the research questions as both the role of self and others in the context of school-university partnerships is investigated, consequently exploring whether reciprocal learning is a feature of the participants experiences. However, 'new insights are not guaranteed' from boundary-crossing 'and the likelihood of irrelevance makes engagement at the boundaries a potential waste of time and effort' for some members (ibid). While members of a community of practice may see engagement at boundaries as a waste of time, it will still contribute to identifying barriers and opportunities that could potentially hinder or enhance school-university partnerships, therefore it would not be a waste of time in the context of this research as it will contribute to furthering knowledge in this area.

2.5.4. Identification and dis-identification across the landscape of practice

In addition to acknowledging diverse communities of practice within a profession, landscapes of practice focus on the individual identities of its members. The stage and trajectory through

the landscape of practice 'shapes our experience of ourselves: practices, people, places, regimes of competence, communities, and boundaries become part of who we are' (ibid:26) and links back in with Figure 2.1. Engagement, imagination, and alignment are core components resulting in either identification or dis-identification amongst landscape of practice members. Engagement is getting actively involved in a community of practice. Engagement during school-university partnerships is occasional participation so it is a form of temporary participation (Wenger-Trayner, 2022). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:27) stress the importance of 'direct engagement in practice as a vehicle for learning the competence of a community', even if it is a temporary community of practice, just like the four-week placement in this study. Imagination involves constructing an image of how individuals see themselves within the landscape of practice in order to understand their role and identity within a profession. This relates back to the perceived role that members of school-university partnerships have of their position within the landscape of practice. Finally, practice should have an element of alignment to support effective engagement. In this study, alignment may take the form of following school placement guidelines to ensure student teachers meet the required teaching hours set out by the Teaching Council and the HEI. The three modes of identification are distinct from each other; however, a combination of engagement, imagination, and alignment is advocated because:

> Engagement without imagination or alignment is at risk of local blindness – because we have always done them this way. Alignment without engagement or imagination often leads to unthinking compliance...Imagination is needed to reflect, see oneself in a broader context...But imagination by itself can be floating.
>
> (ibid: 22).

Placing this quote in the context of this study, school-university partnerships are not a new concept (Trent & Lim, 2010), therefore continuing to do things 'because we have always done them this way' can hinder advancing and exploring ways of progressing school-university

partnerships. This is important in the context of the reported disconnect between HEIs and schools (outlined in chapter four, section 4.8). Moreover, unthinking compliance will not equip student teachers with the skills to advance their learning how to teach. To facilitate productive communities of practice across the landscape of practice, the members across the profession require a level of engagement, alignment, and imagination; however, as student teachers cross boundaries between communities of practice, they will experience identification and/or dis-identification as they do so.

As members cross the landscape of practice, they will identify or dis-identify with other members, the practice, and policies aligned to communities of practice: 'this ability to define our identities at multiple levels of scale is essential to locating ourselves in a landscape that extends beyond the practices we are directly involved in' (ibid). This brings the relevance of knowledgeability back into focus; even if you do not take on the identity or role of another, their location in the landscape of practice should be recognised. Figure 2.4 and 2.5 displays the intricacies associated with the process of learning to teach across the landscape of practice.
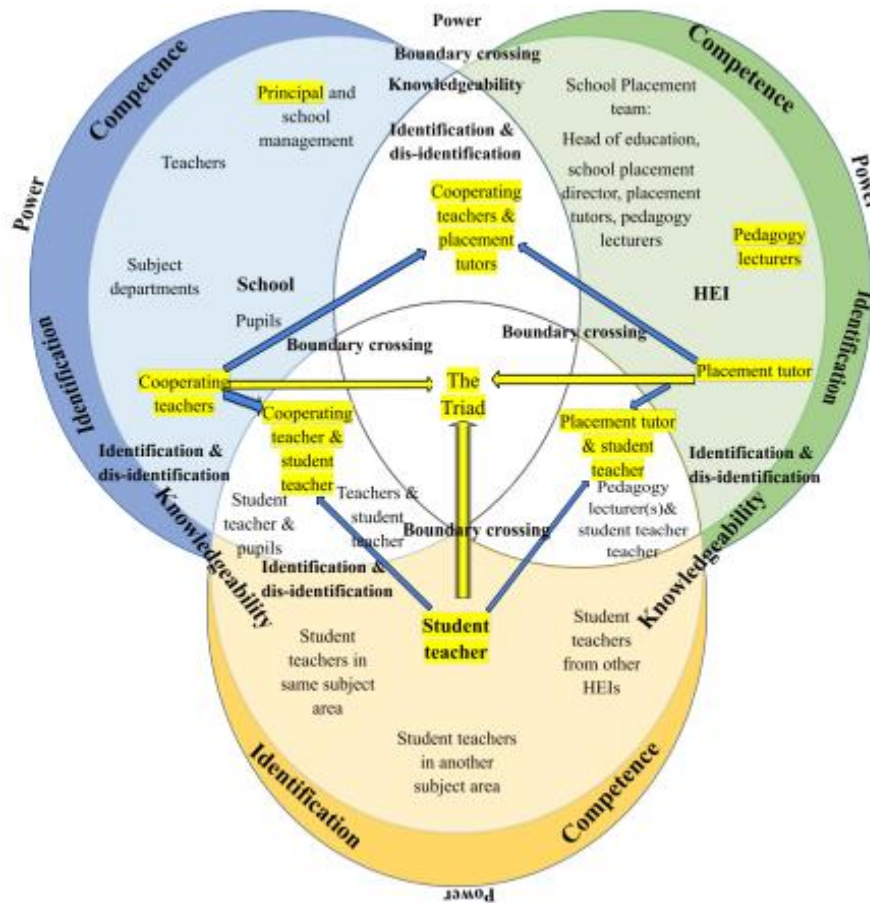
Figure 2.4: Visual representation of the advancement of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) into a landscape of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015): created to apply to student teacher learning. *This is not an exhaustive list of all the communities of practice that occur across teacher education but showcases the complexity of the landscape of practice. The highlighted sections are the core framework for this study, with the white sections representing school placement.
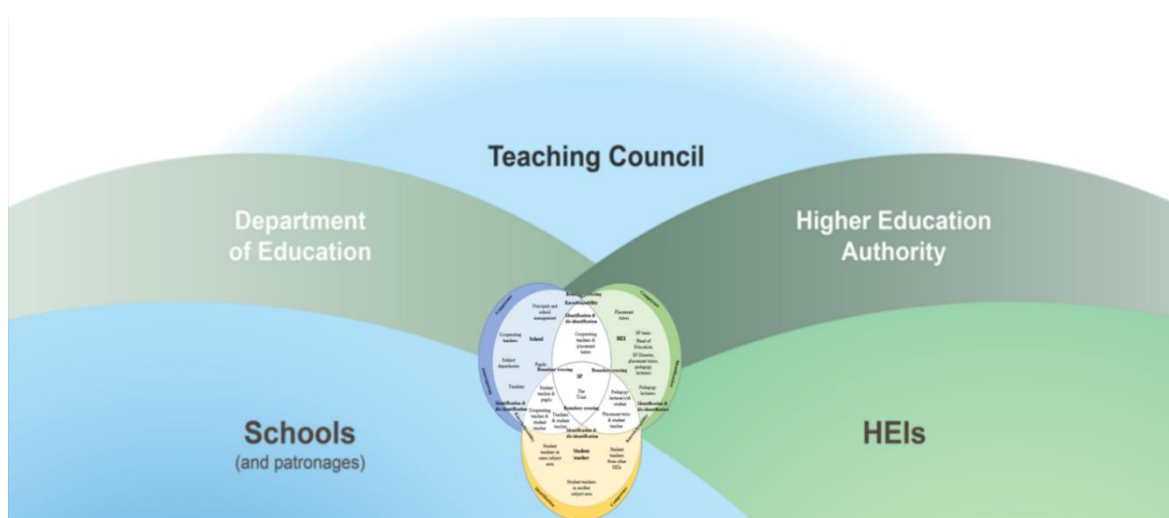
Figure 2.5: Visual representation of the landscape of practice of this research but in a wider landscape of practice. *For example, there are thirteen other post-primary Initial Teacher Education providers in Ireland.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter detailed how a social theory of learning framework pertains to the process of student teachers learning how to teach. While legitimate peripheral participation, communities of practice, and landscapes of practice are used to describe school-university partnerships, and the various spaces that individuals and groupings can occupy during ITE, it is important to note that this language is not typically used by members across the landscape of teacher education to describe the processes that they are involved in. Typically, language pertaining to the process of teaching is used instead, which can be through assessment guide sheets from the HEI or what is deemed 'effective practice' in the quality framework for teachers by the DoE. However, I have aligned the processes evident during school-university partnerships to a social theory of learning and the vocabulary associated with legitimate peripheral participation, communities of practice, and landscapes of practice as 'having a systemic vocabulary to talk about' can 'make a difference' and helps us 'to make sense' of 'our perception and our actions', which makes the learning process more visible (Wenger, 2018:224; Johannesson, 2022). This framework therefore helps to describe school-university partnerships, and how members experience competence, knowledgeability, boundary crossing, identification and dis-identification, as they work together in support of student teacher learning.

Chapter Three: A thematic review of policies

3.1. Introduction

The importance of school-university partnerships is long acknowledged in the Irish education system (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016), with the spotlight on teacher education policies beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present day. This chapter provides the policy context in which HEIs and schools are working (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Key policies related to this research area

Sources: Teaching Council (2011, 2020, 2021) and Department of Education (2023).

This chapter is thematically presented and draws on research that problematises school-university partnerships against the backdrop of policy development. Past policies in Ireland are referenced to elucidate similarities with current publications to highlight the continuation of some previously identified difficulties. Additionally, differences are outlined to ascertain policy changes that work towards overcoming challenges. The chapter begins with detailing the continuous call for school-university partnerships, along with key information regarding the vision for school placement. Challenges that have hindered school-university partnerships are then analysed, followed by supports and resources to assist partnerships.

3.2. The continuous call for school-university partnerships

The initial emphasis on school-university partnerships in Ireland can be traced to the *Review of Irish Education* (OECD, 1991) and the many reviews, papers, and working groups throughout the 1990s (Appendix B). Another Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report (2005) noted that links between schools and HEIs in Ireland were not utilised effectively, highlighting the slow pace of progressing school-university partnerships, indicating systematic failures; however, there was a lack of Irish teacher education policy at this point. The lack of policies changed with the establishment of the Teaching Council who advocated partnerships in policies from 2011 onwards (Appendix B). The importance of the international perspective on Irish ITE was evident with the *International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (Sahlberg et al., 2012). Again, stronger school-university partnerships were recommended, showcasing a consistent call to enhance these partnerships. From 1991 to 2019, partnerships in ITE were mentioned in publications without any significant detail, drawing criticism from HEI personnel: all of which are discussed in this chapter.

School-university partnerships have become more explicit in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* (Teaching Council, 2020:17), hereafter *Céim,* and the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2021a:6), with the additional segment of 'A Shared Vision for School Placement' which states:

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

This vision emphasises the importance of partnership between partners across the landscape of practice and recognises student teachers as key partners who also contribute to the profession. The shared vision for school placement includes a segment titled 'School-HEI partnerships', which was not present in previous iterations of Teaching Council publications. This addition, which is analysed in section 3.3.1, presents School-HEI partnerships as supporting professional collaboration and engagement with and in research by all teachers, fostering innovation in pedagogical practice for all teachers, and focuses on the learning needs of all pupils, and all teachers (ibid). In conjunction with this shared vision, the *Report and Action Plan of the School Placement Working Group* (Teaching Council, 2021b:16) name 'School-HEI partnerships' as a 'priority action' and suggest ways to recognise and build research capacity between schools and HEIs to enhance partnerships. These supports, along with others, are detailed in section 3.3.4.

Policy to support greater school-university partnerships is welcome, but policy alone does not guarantee that policy aspirations are translated into practice. As conceptualised by Ball et al. (2012) policy enactment includes the material (i.e., the policy document), the interpretation of that policy (i.e., individuals draw on different resources and experiences to understand policy),

and the discursive (i.e., digression from policy intentions due to the needs/context and experiences of individuals/organisations). As outlined, teacher education policy for the past three decades has not been sufficient in enhancing school-university partnerships, therefore, to understand what has hindered such partnerships in the Irish context thus far, the associated obstacles of policies are presented. This analysis compares elements of *Céim* and the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2020, 2021a) to ascertain if previous challenges are addressed. Following this, supports to assist the enactment of the aforementioned policies contained in the *Report and Action Plan of the School Placement Working Group* (Teaching Council, 2021b) are teased out.

3.3. Policy: both hindering and assisting school-university partnerships

This section outlines challenges associated with school-university partnerships, which include the vaguely defined concept of partnerships, the different approach to policy dissemination, and the imbalance of partnerships due the voluntary participation of schools versus the mandated approach for HEIs. Following this, supports and resources to assist school-university partnerships are detailed.

3.3.1. School-university partnerships: a vaguely defined concept

As seen in chapter one, many definitions can be applied to school-university partnerships, with Brisard et al. (2005) critical of their vagueness. Partnership has become a buzzword in education (Jones et al., 2016), with a presumption that it is a commonly understood term (Farrell, 2021). However, what partnership in teacher education means has been vague, or omitted, in some Teaching Council documentation. An analysis of Irish teacher education policy documents by Harford and O'Doherty (2016:39) concluded that partnership is 'loosely employed...to denote consensus and collaboration'. This was initially evident in the Teaching

Council (2011a) *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*, where partnership is excluded in the glossary of terms. Even though it is not explicitly explained, partnership is mentioned as a key guiding principle underpinning teacher education. The policy advocates 'new and innovative models' of school placement, emanating from a 'partnership approach, whereby HEIs and schools actively collaborate in the organisation of the placement' (ibid:13). Partnership in this context could be interpreted as a mere means of communication between universities and schools in the facilitation of practicum, therefore mirroring a work placement model (model types are outlined in chapter four, section 4.2). The policy includes the expectation of teacher education being 'designed and provided using a partnership model involving teachers, schools and teacher educators' (ibid:10). The term 'designed' is open-ended, without any specifics on what aspects should be co-designed, therefore it is difficult to decipher how this partnership should be realised. Regardless of whether one or both approaches are adopted i.e., facilitating school placement and/or co-designing teacher education, school-university partnerships are confined to the first stage of the continuum. No formalised place for the HEI in the induction or CPD stages of the continuum is discussed later.

Updated Teaching Council policies (2013:6, 2021a:3) define partnerships as 'the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners involved in school placement to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education', which addresses the above criticism of not defining partnerships. However, defining partnerships is not enough to understand school-university partnerships. While the definition provides an overview of partnerships, the specifics of what is required to enact partnerships is lacking. The 'absence of any real interrogation of what partnership means, how it can be nurtured, and what supports are required...means that policy decisions, made at the central level and which are implemented by practitioners are floundering' (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016:39), leaving individuals to interpret and potentially

digress from original policy intentions (Ball et al., 2012). While the Teaching Council (2013, 2021a:1) outline the roles and responsibilities of various partners in their *Guidelines on School Placement*, which they deem a 'clear blueprint' for supporting student teachers, they do not go far enough to detail and advise on the 'fundamental principles of partnership' (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016:47). In the 2013 guidelines, joint ownership of the process was not evident and clear procedures were omitted, such as collaborative planning and regular communication between HEIs and schools (ibid). The procedures were deemed only as 'bases for engagement', rather than true partnerships, as there was 'no shared understanding of the principles of teacher education' (ibid:47). Similar sentiments are expressed by Gorman and Furlong (2023:207) regarding the second edition, whereby 'the full fundamentals of partnerships' are not considered: this is addressed in the next section.

Céim (Teaching Council, 2020:4) defines partnership as 'the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education. These processes, structures and arrangements also include School/HEI partnerships which focus on improving learning and teaching'. This broadening of the partnership definition shows partnerships are not solely for organising school placement and can span the continuum of teacher education. As detailed in 3.2, the section on School-HEI partnerships added to *Céim* and the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2020, 2021a) provides a rationale on why partnerships are valuable, not just for student teachers but for pupils and teachers; however, it omits learning for the HEI. Fitzpatrick (2021) posits that little attention is given to placement tutors, while supports are being progressed for cooperating teachers and student teachers: this is discussed in 3.3.4. Although the HEI are omitted in the Teaching Council's rationale for partnerships, they are acknowledged when the Teaching Council (2021b:3) notes that school placement has mutual benefits for individuals as it 'exemplifies the connection of

professional learning from across the continuum of teacher education for experienced teachers, student teachers, schools and HEIs'. Despite this, Gorman and Furlong (2023) report that the language used in both policies essentially mean the organisation of school placement. Furthermore, consultations as part of the *Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement* (Department of Education, 2023a) identified the scope for better alignment between all stages of the continuum. This suggests that there is untapped potential for partnerships to span the continuum of teacher education, particularly as HEIs are not formally mentioned in policy documents beyond ITE i.e., in induction or CPD policies[10]. However, the DoE (2023a&b[11]) states that HEIs essentially play a role in the professional learning of teachers/Cosán by supporting cooperating teachers in their role, although the focus remains on student teacher learning. By confining the role of the HEI to ITE, there is a danger that partnerships revert to the traditional means of solely organising school placement. Scope to involve HEIs across the continuum to enhance partnerships is detailed in 3.3.4.

Gorman and Furlong (2023:199) build on previous criticisms of vaguely defined partnerships, even though the concept of partnerships is broadened, stating 'the term partnership is used as if there is a collective agreement on what constitutes a partnership and...what a good partnership looks like', indicating that there is not a clear agreement of what partnership entails. Moreover, Gorman and Furlong (2023) believe that the statement that student teachers 'experience a supportive model of placement which facilitates professional conversational engagement between all partners', implies that this is existing practice, which is not the case. Previous research (discussed in chapter four) tells us that school placement can differ greatly

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[10] *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework* (Teaching Council, 2017) and *Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning* (Teaching Council, 2016) respectively.
[11] An email response from the Department of Education.

for student teachers, and that conversations between all partners is not guaranteed (Young et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2018; O'Grady et al., 2018; Heinz & Fleming, 2019). Such presumptions potentially prevent important supports from being identified and provided.

If partnerships are seen as ambiguous, it raises the question of how can a range of partners formulate and sustain effective partnerships if they are unsure what partnership means or have different interpretations of policies? According to Farrell (2021:22), vague iterations of partnerships can act as a barrier to accessible and meaningful collaborations, making the management of partnerships 'esoteric'. That said, King et al. (2023:85) suggest 'the concept of partnership is deliberately framed flexibly to invite and foster innovation and autonomy among the partners in how they build strong collaborative processes'.

3.3.2. Policy dissemination: the difference in approach

Partners are consulted in compiling Teaching Council policies, which includes HEI and school representatives. It is not feasible to garner the opinions of all individuals that enact policy, but all partners are expected to draw on policies and guidelines in their practice. It is noteworthy that there is a different approach in the dissemination of key policies to both parties. The *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2013, 2021a) are distributed to HEIs, but not to schools (O'Grady, 2017; Teaching Council, 2023a[12]), thus the responsibility resides with the HEI to lead out on partnerships. The Teaching Council (2023a) state they do not send guidelines to schools because they do not 'have a direct relationship with schools'. Hall et al. (2018) found that HEIs do share documents with schools, while O'Grady (2017) reported that despite this, many cooperating teachers do not receive the guidelines. It is important to note

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[12] An email response from the Teaching Council.

that documentation is available on the Teaching Council's website so they are accessible. Perhaps the dissemination of policy directly to HEIs highlights that the HEI must comply with the guidelines, whereas schools do not have to.

The difference in approach is not limited to the dissemination of policy: as stated previously, the voluntary participation of schools in partnerships contrasts to the mandatory HEI adherence to policy, and this challenge is presented in the next section.

3.3.3. Voluntary versus mandatory participation in partnerships: the imbalance of partnerships

The Teaching Council's 2011 publications, *Initial Teacher Education: Guidelines for Programme Providers* and the *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* redefined the roles of HEI and school personnel. While school participation in school placement is voluntary, these publications increased their role in supporting student teachers, but schools were not consulted about their increased responsibilities (O'Donoghue et al., 2017). At the same time, ITE providers requested the Teaching Council to adopt a 'mandated (partnership) approach' with schools (Heinz, 2014:181). One reason was due to varying levels of student teacher support because of the voluntary nature of school participation (Young et al., 2015; Heinz & Fleming, 2019). The *International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (Sahlberg et al., 2012) added to the chorus of previous studies commissioned by the Teaching Council (Coolahan, 2007; Conway et al., 2009) that recommended structured school-university partnerships, involving sharing responsibilities between schools and HEIs, such as both parties being responsible for assessing student teachers. It was on foot of concerns of equity of school placement experience and initial lack of school consultation that negotiations were held between the Teaching Council, the DoE,

HEIs, principal associations, teacher unions, and the national parents council, leading to the 2013 Teaching Council publication of *Guidelines on School Placement,* which was in part informed by the Sahlberg et al. review (2012). Heinz (2014) described having guidelines as a positive step for partnerships; however, the school's role was subsequently diluted from the 2011 publications, and partnerships continued to rely on the goodwill of schools, with Hall et al. (2018:14) reporting that voluntary participation has resulted in school-university partnerships being 'hampered and dominated by the challenge of securing school placements'.

As schools can decide not to participate in school-university partnerships, partnerships are imbalanced from the outset, as schools are encouraged to participate in school placement and an 'undue burden' should not be placed on schools (Teaching Council, 2021a:5), while HEIs are 'directed to' comply, which is linked to the accreditation of their programme (Gorman & Furlong, 2023:208). With this stance, O'Donoghue et al. (2017:189) state that the guidelines are 'mainly aspirational'. Instead of mandating school participation, the Teaching Council (2021b) and the DoE (2023b) are in the process of incentivising[13] their involvement, such as recognising a school's contribution to school placement in school inspection reports and providing cooperating teachers with a digital badge as recognition for taking part in CPD to support student teachers: CPD for cooperating teachers is discussed in section 3.3.4. The need for incentives may be derived from the Sahlberg report (2019) whereby several ITE providers expressed concern that there is no support or rewards for cooperating teachers. Additionally, ITE providers called for national initiatives to support school-university partnerships as the onus should not reside solely with HEIs to assist cooperating teachers (ibid).

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[13] Financial rewards for schools who demonstrate good practice in school-university partnerships are being considered (Teaching Council, 2021b), but an email response from the Teaching Council stated that this scoping exercise and associated action are not being progressed at this time.

While incentives are welcome, the lack of formalised partnerships is criticised in much of the literature (Chapter Four) and even though many of these studies took place prior to *Céim* and the revised *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2020, 2021a), it is safe to assume the same criticism would remain for the updated publications as partnerships still rely on the goodwill of schools. It will remain to be seen if incentives are sufficient in the absence of the mandated approach for schools, although Gorman and Furlong (2023:207) believe 'unequal treatment in policy rhetoric ensures that the individualistic rather than collectivistic legitimacy reigns', thus pointing to 'differential expectations' for schools and HEIs remaining a challenge for school-university partnerships (ibid:205). On the contrary, Acquaro and Bradbury (2023) believe that mandated partnerships can hinder the potential of school-university partnerships, with Day et al. (2021:109) pointing out that 'collaboration cannot be mandated, it must be built'. These statements highlight that school-university partnerships are not just structural based as they also rely on individual relationships (Brisard et al., 2005, see chapter four, section 4.3). Additionally, chapter four outlines that even when schools opt to facilitate school placement, collaboration is not guaranteed, therefore supports to facilitate collaboration, beyond mandating partnerships are required. Furthermore, Maandag et al.'s (2007:167) investigation of different partnership models (outlined in chapter four, section 4.2) still resulted in schools being regarded as 'mainly...work placement locations', which emphasises the importance of building individual relationships (Brisard et al., 2005).

3.3.4. Assisting partnerships: supports and resources

Despite the advocation of school-university partnerships for decades, the specifics, with associated supports, have not always been forthcoming (Coolahan, 2017). The OECD (2005:108) noted 'problems in resourcing' and 'follow-through', showing little progress in advancing partnerships between 1991 and 2005; a theme that continued into the next decade.

The OECD stated funding was needed to reduce teaching hours and to support mentors in schools (Coolahan, 2017). As the Teaching Council drafted policies (2011a, 2011b), trade unions (Teachers Union of Ireland, 2011; Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland, 2011) advocated for similar support and resources, as well as CPD, to facilitate school-university partnerships. Despite this, the recommendations did not materialise. The trade unions requests were not unworkable as Droichead, the induction stage of the continuum, provides 'training of mentors', 'time for meeting with mentors' and 'discrete time set aside by the schools for the purposes of NQT[14] and mentor development' (Teaching Council, 2011a:18). This is noteworthy as the *Draft Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* (Teaching Council, 2010:5) explicitly stated that there is a 'problem of fragmentation across the continuum of teacher education...with insufficient linkages being made between the stages of the continuum', yet their approach to supports required, that are similar in nature, are not extended across the continuum.

Gorman and Furlong (2023) analysed a Teaching Council statement (2021a:5) that resources and supports are required amongst 'all education partners in pursuit of their shared objectives' and posit the pronoun 'their' insinuates that the Teaching Council is not included in this 'pursuit'. This suggests that partnerships are advocated by the Teaching Council, but not supported by them. However, the *Report and Action Plan of the School Placement Working Group* (Teaching Council, 2021b) outlines many supports, which in part acknowledges the challenges associated with the roles and responsibilities assigned to key partners. Challenges are most notable for teachers hosting student teachers, which has resulted in the formation of a Treoraithe Professional Learning Group[15], who are tasked with developing cooperating teacher

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[14] NQT is an acronym for newly qualified teacher.
[15] An email response from the Teaching Council stated that the current HEI offerings for Treoraithe/Cooperating teachers have been explored by this group.

CPD. This in turn should help 'towards a consistent quality of school placement', as cited in the *Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement* (Department of Education, 2023a:49). The Teaching Council (2021b) suggest three different CPD models[16] as a pilot: this has yet to begin. Elements of this support include guidelines and webinars for cooperating teachers to observe and engage in professional conversations with student teachers (ibid). Perhaps this will deal with the earlier criticisms of Gorman and Furlong (2023) whereby they suggest the Teaching Council (2021a:6) presumes student teachers 'experience a supportive model of placement which facilitates professional conversational engagement': maybe CPD on facilitating professional conversations will help here, as well as addressing the longstanding concern of no formalised support for cooperating teachers. As this group are in the midst of developing CPD, it will take time to determine if this approach is sufficient in supporting cooperating teachers and ensuring consistency for all student teachers in their placement schools.

While cooperating teacher support is being progressed, a formalised, national approach for CPD is not extended to placement tutors, with Fitzpatrick (2021:44) calling this is a 'lost opportunity'. Moreover, the *Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement* (Department of Education, 2023a:63) reported 'difficulties' amongst ITE staff, most notably part-time staff, in 'ensuring consistency in the provision' of student teacher support. There is also scope for CPD for HEI staff beyond ensuring consistency of student teacher support. Perhaps the inclusion of learning for the HEI is lost due to the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2021a:5) being underpinned by key assumptions that do not reference the HEI, which states school placement 'will enhance the school placement experience for student teachers, it will

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[16] Model A: a three-day programme where cooperating teachers attend professional development days outside the school. Model B: a whole school approach, whereby all teachers receive professional development. Model C: a combination of A and B, which includes two-day whole staff days and a one-day subject specific bespoke professional development.

enrich learning outcomes for both current and future pupils, and it will deepen the professional satisfaction and improve the status of teachers'. HEIs themselves identify areas of support that merit 'closer attention', such as 'keeping pace with curricular reform' and 'preparedness to teach in increasingly diverse classrooms' (Department of Education, 2023a:60): all of which could be built on through CPD for ITE personnel from schools, facilitating reciprocal learning between schools and HEIs. Indeed, the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2021a:20) state schools could 'facilitate HEI staff wishing to update their teaching experience', although it is unclear if this occurs in practice.

3.4. Conclusion

This policy review illustrates the importance placed on school-university partnerships in Ireland, while highlighting the slow progress in enhancing such partnerships, along with the many difficulties encountered. While school-university partnerships are problematised, the recent strides to rectify some challenges are welcome, but do they go far enough? As supports are currently being progressed, it will take time to ascertain if these supports will help progress partnerships. As the Teaching Council (2021b:4) put it 'while policy setting and regulation can be powerful forces for change and quality assurance, everybody who cares about quality teaching and learning must collaborate together in order to realise the exciting potential of this work'. This statement reinforces the earlier points that policy alone does not guarantee enactment, while highlighting the necessity of a range of partners across the landscape of practice to work collaboratively to ensure effective school-university partnerships are realised. This research investigates such collaboration in the context of *Céim* and the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2020, 2021a): all of which are discussed in the methodology chapter, but prior to that, the next chapter sets out the international and national perspective of key partners within school-university partnerships.

Chapter Four: Literature review

4.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature pertinent to this study's research questions of: 'What are the experiences of student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers in supporting student teachers in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?' and 'How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in enhancing school-university partnerships?' The databases and search terms used to locate relevant research papers are documented in Appendix C.

Firstly, the chapter builds on the policy chapter and presents different models of school-university partnerships globally, school-university partnerships as an evolving concept, the principles for structuring such partnerships, and the associated challenges. The proceeding sections detail the perceived role of each member of the triad i.e., placement tutors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers, along with influencing factors and supports attached to their roles. Subsequently, the role of principals and pedagogy lecturers are outlined. The concept of boundary crossing is then detailed, followed by dyadic and triadic interactions amongst the triad members. Power dynamics, pertaining to school-university partnerships, concludes the literature review. Finally, this chapter summarises key points from the reviews and states how this study can add to the school-university partnership discourse in Ireland.

4.2. Models of school-university partnerships

School-university partnerships having different purposes, along with contextual differences, has resulted in an array of partnership models (Mitchell et al., 2010; Farrell, 2021), with Acquaro and Bradbury (2023:218) attesting that school-university partnerships 'should never

be a one size fits all approach' as 'each context' and 'partnership' is 'unique'. This review focuses on models pertaining to student teacher learning. Furlong et al. (2000) describe two ideal typical partnership models that support student teacher learning: a complementary partnership and a collaborative partnership. Schools, HEIs, and student teachers are present in both partnerships, but their relationship to each other varies. Within the complementary model, formerly named the separatist model, the school and university are considered two separate entities, who do not converse, but have complementary responsibilities (ibid). Student teacher assessment lies with a school mentor, thus HEIs do not require placement tutors. It is the student teacher's responsibility to navigate and integrate the complementary approaches between their ITE programme and schools. School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)[17] in England, a school-led programme of ITE that can be affiliated with a university, is one such example of this.

At the other end of the continuum, the collaborative partnership model relies on teachers and lecturers collectively planning an integrated curriculum for student teachers (ibid). Knowledge from schools and HEIs are equally important and a consensus on good practice is not required as a contrast of opinion can be harnessed into a learning resource (McIntyre & Hagger, 1992). According to Furlong et al. (2000), true partnerships require collective responsibility for ITE provision, and this is evident within this model. In contrast to the complementary model, lecturers from the HEI visit the school to discuss 'professional issues' (ibid:81). The Oxford Internship model, established between the University of Oxford and schools in 1992, is one such example. This model aspired for schools to become fulltime partners with HEIs, which equally values the contribution of student teachers, HEIs, and schools (McIntyre & Hagger,

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[17] Not all SCITT programmes are affiliated with a HEI.

1992). Both the school and university facilitate conversations with student teachers on their progress, with student teachers setting personalised criteria to judge their own development, and the school and university work together to determine the gradual release of responsibility for each student teacher (ibid).

Furlong et al.'s (2000) research on these two ideal typical partnership models found that HEI-led partnerships were the most common partnership type. As the title suggests the HEI assumes leadership and the school agrees to take on responsibilities outlined by the HEI. It is similar to a HEI-based model of partnership, but responsibilities given to schools are more limited in the HEI-based model: the HEI assumes roles and responsibilities that the school could undertake 'such as HE [Higher Education] tutors visiting schools simply to assess student teachers' classroom practice when staff in schools were being asked to observe this on an ongoing basis' (Smith et al., 2006:148). Additionally, Brisard et al. (2005) identified how partners interact depends on whether partnerships are structural based or individual based. Structural relationships divide responsibilities between schools and universities, whereas individual relationships rely on human relationships, with both parties working together. The type adopted depends on how participating individuals and organisations view partnerships (ibid). As there are many partnership models globally, some elements can feature across models (Furlong, 1996). Elements from the partnership models described by Furlong et al. (2000) are identifiable in the five models of school-university partnerships described by Buitink and Wouda (2001, as cited in Maandag et al., 2007). With each respective model, the involvement and positioning of the HEI, the school, and student teachers can differ, with varying degrees of partnership, with some structural based, and others individual/relationship based (Table 4.1.)

Model name and countries that adopt it	Description	Structural or individual partnerships
Work placement model Germany	Student teachers undertake a period of practical experience in a school setting. The aim of this model is to provide student teachers with the opportunity to implement what they have learnt in their ITE programme. The HEI educates a coach within the school to supervise student teachers while on placement. It links to a HEI-lead partnership and HEI-based partnerships.	Structural: responsibilities divided ☑ Individual: collaborative responsibilities ☐
The Co-ordinator model France	It is similar to the work placement model, but the difference resides with the school having a central supervisor that oversees the competence of the student teacher, rather than it being determined by the HEI. The central supervisor is an experienced teacher who supervises the student teacher, coaches some of their colleagues in supervision of student teachers, and oversees the coordination of supervision. The school leads the partnership when the student teacher is on placement and therefore a placement tutor from the HEI it not required. Nonetheless, the HEI still retains ownership of the curriculum taught to student teachers on how to teach. It links to a complementary model.	Structural: responsibilities divided ☑ Individual: collaborative responsibilities ☐
A partner model Some "Training Schools" in England.	The school has a trainer in the school who, in addition to the ITE programme, educates the student teacher on how to teach. The school aids the student teacher with their professional development and supervises their progress. The school shares ownership of some the curriculum taught to the student teacher. The ITE provider determines the subjects to be taught by	Structural: responsibilities divided ☐ Individual: collaborative responsibilities ☑

	the student teacher and also supervises their progress. It links to a collaborative partnership model.	
The network model Some 'Training Schools' in England.	Similar to the partner model, the school takes ownership for some of the curriculum taught. A school team who has received input on teaching methods take responsibility for assisting student teachers in their teaching and professional development. The ITE provider develops pedagogies and research to enhance teacher education and covers content beyond knowledge obtained in a school setting. The collaboration between schools and the ITE provider are deemed intense, but the responsibility for student teacher progress lies with the ITE provider. It links to a collaborative partnership model.	Structural: responsibilities divided ☐ Individual: collaborative responsibilities ☑
A Training school model America Hong Kong	The school educates student teachers on how to teach. There are designated trainers in the school to provide this support. The role of the university is to develop pedagogies and educate school-based trainers. Examples are professional development schools. It links to a complementary model or the equivalent of a HEI-based model, but the school is the lead instead of the HEI.	Structural: responsibilities divided ☑ Individual: collaborative responsibilities ☐

Table 4.1: Models of school-university partnerships adapted.

Source: Buitink and Wouda (2001, as cited in Maandag et al., 2007).

As stated in chapter three, Maandag et al. (2007:167) investigated the five partnership models

and found that regardless of model type, most partnerships did not 'have any real integration

between the institution and the school' and 'schools are seen mainly as work placement

locations, separate from the institutions'. Ireland generally adopts the work placement model

(Conway et al., 2009); however, it differs slightly to the description in Table 4.1. as the

cooperating teacher, the equivalent of a coach, does not receive CPD to supervise or support a student teacher, instead an outline of their role is provided. Acquaro and Bradbury (2023:1) describes school-university partnerships that adopt a work placement model as a 'reductionist view of partnerships', because school-university partnerships are seen as a 'transactional activity', that 'negates the notion of reciprocity and squanders an opportunity for collaboration and development', while 'reinforcing teacher educators as the decisive voice in the partnership'.

ITE can also exist independent of university input. This is seen in England, where an emphasis on school self-assessment has led to the emergence of autonomous schools. Autonomous schools became part of school-led ITE provision, through School Direct, SCITT, or teaching apprenticeships (Foster, 2019; Heinz & Fleming, 2019) and do not require involvement from a university (Ng & Chan, 2012; Day et al., 2021). Smith et al. (2006:159) believes that school-based ITE programmes 'undermine the creation of a stable context for the development of partnership within teacher education' and consequently HEIs favour a HEI-lead model over collaborative models.

The models outlined are not an exhaustive list but demonstrates the variation in practice across countries. Additionally, as mentioned previously, partnership models expand beyond ITE in some countries, for example, Hong Kong's most common partnership type is the consultation model, which involves university personnel working with qualified teachers in progressing their professional development (Ng & Chan, 2012), which draws parallels with the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (Mitchell et al., 2010). Joint research between schools and HEIs are also evident in some global partnerships (Ng & Chan, 2012).

4.3. School-university partnerships: an evolving concept

As illustrated thus far, school-university partnerships play a key part in ITE, both nationally and internationally, with a variety of definitions and models in operation. This section presents school-university partnerships as an evolving concept, showcasing the complexity of these partnerships. As schools are encouraged to be more active in partnerships in Ireland, the hierarchical role traditionally associated with HEIs has been diluted, thus impacting the roles and responsibilities attributed to cooperating teachers, placement tutors, and principals (Jones et al., 2016). Even so, school-university partnerships are mostly developed and led by HEIs, with input from state agencies, and the school's input is generally absent, bar deciding whether to facilitate school placement (Farrell, 2021). Consequently, elements of a hierarchal approach remain. As detailed in chapter three, the concept of partnership in Ireland is vague (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016; Farrell, 2021; Gorman & Furlong, 2023), resulting in school-university partnership documentation lacking 'detail, particularly in relation to roles and responsibilities' (Farrell, 2021:22). This is stark considering the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2013, 2021a) outline key roles and responsibilities of partners, although it is credible considering there has been little support[18], such as CPD, for ITE/school placement policy enactment. This again shows the difference in approach towards HEIs and schools as CPD is provided to schools when new curriculum specifications are released, but CPD is not provided when teacher education policies are released, with HEIs developing their own CPD for staff, which can sometimes exclude schools (see section 4.4.3 and 4.5.4.). The lack of detail and support for partnerships is not a problem attributed to Ireland alone. A New Zealand study (Bernay et al., 2020) reported that individuals in schools and HEIs were unsure how to collaborate as there was no clear meaning attached to partnerships. While the literature is critical of the vagueness of school-university partnerships, it is important to note that

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[18] The Teaching Council have an annual engagement with HEIs, but it is an overview of developments, rather than professional development to accompany developments/publications.

partnerships, regardless of model type or associated definition, are complex and cannot be reduced to a set of instructions to follow. As Lillejord and Børte (2016:559) attest, partnerships are not 'static entities' and should be 'perceived and treated as dynamic and continuous processes'. This correlates with the research setting: at individual level, relationships are continuously changing, for example, schools host different student teachers for school placement each year, placement tutors interact with a range of student teachers and cooperating teachers across several schools, and the placement tutor may not work with the same schools, cooperating teachers, and student teachers each year. Additionally, there are changes in personnel annually with new student teachers entering HEIs, and some changeover in HEI and school staff. Due to the complexity and many variables in partnerships, previous studies on school-university partnerships are a useful resource to identify the principles for structuring such partnerships, along with their challenges: the following subsections do just that.

4.3.1. Principles for structuring school-university partnerships

Partnerships rely on relationships (Bullough et al., 2004; Bernay et al., 2020; Day et al., 2021), but relationships are challenging to build, yet are easy to dismantle (Bullough et al., 2004). Therefore, this section details suggested principles for structuring school-university partnerships. Kruger et al. (2009) believe partnerships are reliant on trust, mutuality, and reciprocity. Trust refers to being committed to the partnership, with each member contributing and benefiting from working together. Before contributing to a partnership individuals must realise that they have much to contribute (ibid). This is recognised by Holland (2021:246) who noted the willingness of teachers to act as a resource for other community of practice members was dependent on 'the degree to which they feel like experts'. Knowledge mobilisation is advocated, where partners identify their role in sharing knowledge, mirroring a social theory

of learning. In the context of sharing knowledge, clear communication between partners is necessary (Green et al., 2020).

According to Lillejord and Børte (2016), successful partnerships depend on their structure, which requires the division of work between members, who have clearly defined responsibilities. Clear expectations and what each member contributes to a partnership is deemed vital (ibid), with Chambers and Armour (2012) stating that a shared responsibility between schools and HEIs to enhance student teacher learning would result in genuine school-university partnerships. Mutually beneficial expectations agreed amongst members allows everyone to be viewed equally, which could be interpreted as dismantling a hierarchical approach which values what different members across the landscape of practice bring to partnerships (Bernay et al., 2020). However, when HEIs retain sole responsibility for meeting requirements for qualification, as seen in Ireland, it can hinder a joint approach in forming partnerships (Taylor, 2008).

Mutuality recognises that benefits are accrued from each member, while reciprocity places a value on what each member brings to the partnership (Kruger et al., 2009), thus building on the previous points of Chambers and Armour (2012) and Bernay et al. (2020). Partnerships should benefit the HEI and the school so partnerships are considered worthwhile and purposeful (Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Gorman & Furlong, 2023; Acquaro & Bradbury, 2023). Furthermore, partnerships are effective when members recognise that there are learning opportunities for all members, not just for student teachers (Kruger et al., 2009). These tie in with this study's framework which recognises each member of the partnership as learning

assets for one another (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), yet Acquaro and Bradbury (2023) report that partnerships globally do not build on the benefits for all partners.

Jones et al. (2016) prefer a collaborative model, over a complementary partnership model, i.e., when members work collaboratively towards a common goal, rather than HEIs and schools playing separate roles, as this can reduce hierarchical relationships, while also catering for the principles of trust, mutuality, and reciprocity. However, as stated, Ireland leans towards a complementary model (Conway et al., 2009), and while there is an implicit assumption that cooperating teachers and placement tutors work towards the goal of supporting the student teacher, when a cooperating teacher does not observe the student teacher, it limits their ability to provide the student teacher with feedback (Young & McPhail, 2015). The inconsistency in student teacher experience because of this is discussed later.

The aspiration to reduce hierarchical relationships within school-university partnerships, that build on the principles of trust, mutuality, and reciprocity, is also advocated by Farrell (2021) through her suggestion of professional learning communities. She suggests that professional learning communities should include school leaders, student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors, where structured time and space is provided for planning, the alignment of theory with practice, and the use of a common, shared language between practitioners. Adding to this, members are influenced by past experiences which they bring to school-university partnerships (Bernay et al., 2020), thus this would require teasing out in professional learning communities. Professional learning communities require leadership support (Farrell, 2021), with Lillejord and Børte (2016) also advocating leadership support for school-university

partnerships: the central role principals have in accommodating partnerships forms the rationale for including their perspectives in this study (detailed in section 4.7).

4.3.2. School-university partnerships: the challenges

While chapter three identified school-university partnership challenges, this section expands beyond policies and ascertains challenges with practice. Chapter two illustrated that school-university partnerships contain a vast range of communities of practice across a landscape of practice and section 4.3. noted the evolving concept of school-university partnerships, all of which are challenging. Furthermore, HEIs and schools are individual communities, with their own practices, norms, purpose, and routines (Mitchell et al., 2010; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Day et al., 2021), meaning partnerships 'tend to exist on the margins of both school and university life' (Mitchell et al., 2010:493), thus different priorities can strain partnerships (ibid; Reynolds et al., 2013). If both parties do not understand or show an interest in each other's differences, partnership can be challenging (Lillejord & Børte, 2016). In essence, knowledgeability between schools and HEI personnel is important (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). As the immediate priority of the HEI and school differs, student teachers must navigate between the expectations of the HEI and the school. For partnerships to be effective, Kruger et al. (2009) state the focus of partnerships should be on pupil learning so the needs of the school are met in conjunction with supporting student teacher learning. This illuminates the importance of considering the wider landscape of practice, as opposed to focusing on student teacher learning only.

Many studies describe school-university partnerships as dysfunctional (Chambers & Armour, 2012; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; O'Grady et al., 2018), with Lillejord and Børte (2016) reporting that most participants in these partnerships experience challenges. Some challenges identified

were disagreements, authoritarian claims to knowledge by some, and differences in expectations between the HEI and schools, with student teachers feeling they had to choose a side. A lack of time and resources to structure partnerships are also problematic (ibid; Jones et al., 2016; Farrell, 2021). Lillejord and Børte (2016) propose school-university partnerships should be built on model where no one party can lay ownership to knowledge on teaching, thus placement tutors and cooperating teachers need to consider both theory and practice in their interactions with student teachers and one another. This would result in placement tutors crossing boundaries into the world of practice in schools, and cooperating teachers crossing boundaries into the world of theory in HEIs. In one Irish study (Chambers & Armour, 2012), not entering the world of the other resulted in tensions between schools and one HEI, as there were differences of opinion regarding where student teacher learning primarily occurred. While the researchers stated that each member was devoted to teacher education, they did not work collaboratively, with 'a lack of parity within the school-university relationship' resulting in tension (ibid:176), which reemphasises Bernay et al.'s point (2020) that partners need to be viewed equally. Even if a model, as suggested by Lillejord and Børte (2016), was actioned, Chambers and Armour (2012) do not rule out negative forms of power or claims to authority featuring in partnerships. Despite challenges of school-university partnerships, Farrell (2021) noted that the goodwill and professionalism of teachers and school leaders in Ireland have ensured student teachers are facilitated on school placement. Additionally, she found that schools are content to partner with HEIs in support of mutual learning, such as schools availing of HEI CPD or participating in joint research, reemphasising the point in chapter three whereby partnerships can be facilitated across the continuum of teacher education.

The literature on school-university partnerships indicates that their structures are complex, as partnerships are not static entities, and they rely on relationships. Many partnerships are

described as dysfunctional, with the literature identifying trust, mutuality, reciprocity, clear expectations, and clear communication between partners as some of the principles needed to support partnerships. Additionally, the literature illuminates the importance of recognising that HEIs and schools have their own individual communities, with their own practices and priorities. Knowledgeability (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) is therefore central to partnerships: the following sections provide knowledgeability on the individual communities of placement tutors, cooperating teachers, student teachers, principals, and pedagogy lecturers.

4.4. Placement tutors

4.4.1. From a 'supervisor' to a 'placement tutor: what's in a name?

This section details the significance of the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2013) replacing the term supervisor with placement tutor. The increased focus on school placement in Ireland led to the reconfiguration of the roles and responsibilities of partners (O'Grady, 2017; Walsh & Dolan, 2019). Initially, the supervisor role was determined by each HEI, which centred on student teacher assessment, but the name changed with the expanded role of placement tutors, which now included the formative assessment of student teachers (Walsh & Dolan, 2019; Teaching Council, 2013). In the updated guidelines (Teaching Council, 2021a:4), placement tutors are defined as 'a person engaged by a HEI to support and mentor student teachers and evaluate their practice while on placement'. Despite this change, Walsh and Dolan (2019) reported that supervisors had already adopted a formative role in one HEI, indicating that in some instances practice was preceding policy. While changes in practice were occurring in HEIs, Hall et al. (2018:146) reported that many teachers still revert to terms of 'inspector', 'examiner', or 'college tutor' when speaking about placement tutors, surmising that there is a disconnect between policy aspiration and practice. The potential impact of this

is that placement tutors are associated with the old practice of primarily assessing student teachers, thus overlooking their formative assessment role.

The placement tutor term is not universal, with supervisor used in many countries. There are similarities between internationally defined supervisors and placement tutors (Table 4.2). Due to these similarities, international literature on HEI supervisors can be helpful in understanding placement tutors.

Term used and associated country	Description attributed to the term
Placement tutor. Ireland.	'A School Placement Tutor is a person engaged by a HEI to support and mentor student teachers and evaluate their practice while on placement' (Teaching Council, 2020:5).
Supervisor. USA (Columbia university, New York).	'Supervisors are resources for the student teacher, as well as for the cooperating teacher, and they serve as liaisons between the university and the field. Supervisors act as critical friends by observing and supporting student teachers' work with children/adolescents several times each semester, and providing feedback and suggestions to student teachers to help them improve, analyze or re-think their practice' (Columbia University, 2023).
Supervisor. Western Australia.	'University appointed supervisors...mentor the novices during their in-classroom learning'. 'The supervision is understood to be completed by experienced teachers who are employed specifically by the university to visit preservice teachers while on professional experience. They are trained by and liaise with academic staff who teach the theory, and act as the conduit between the university and the schools in which the novices are training' (Griffiths et al., 2021:476 & 481).

Table 4.2: Samples of definitions of a placement tutor (national) versus supervisors (international) to illustrate their similarities.

Sources: Teaching Council (2020), Columbia University (2023), Griffiths et al. (2021).

Even with similarities between supervisors and placement tutors, it is important to negotiate the meaning of terms so they are understood (Lee, 2011). A US study (ibid) reported one student teacher's desire to use the term 'coach' over 'supervisor' as supervisor had negative

connotations of an authoritarian figure that was judgemental, correlating with Meegan et al. (2013) who states the term supervisor implies authority, even if this is not the case. Contrary to the student teacher, Lee (2011) considered supervisor to be a positive term built on a supportive relationship, and a coach to be a negative and evaluative term. This example demonstrates that terminology may impact how a role is viewed and reverting to previous terminology of supervisor in the Irish context, or 'inspector' or 'examiner' (Hall et al., 2018), can unintentionally undermine changes in practice. There is little research on placement tutors in Ireland (Ievers et al., 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2021), thus drawing on international research can provide useful insights: the term placement tutor is solely used from now on as supervisor in the Irish context relates to old practice.

4.4.2. The role and responsibilities of placement tutors: from the perspective of self and others

Placement tutors may be a full-time HEI staff member, or a part-time staff member, that may be a practicing teacher, a retired teacher, or a retired teacher educator (Slick, 1998; O'Donoghue & Harford, 2010; O'Grady et al., 2018). While placement tutors do not feature in all ITE programmes, e.g., school-based ITE in England (Ievers et al., 2013), placement tutors are common in ITE programmes, with Bates et al. (2011:71) stating that they are 'a necessary and valuable player' in a student teacher's experience. The Teaching Council requirement for placement tutors in all Irish ITE programmes infers that this is also the case. The placement tutor role and responsibilities as per Teaching Council guidelines (2021a:18) are in chapter six, but the purpose of the reviewed literature in this section is to ascertain the perspectives of the placement tutor role from the viewpoint of placement tutors and other key partners.

The placement tutor role is multi-faceted (Hopper, 2001; Meegan et al., 2013; Walsh & Dolan; 2019; Teaching Council, 2020) and it involves the transition from a first-order practitioner to a second-order practitioner (Murray & Male 2005), where they assume the position of a teacher educator. Placement tutors monitor and advise on student teacher competence, ensuring HEI procedures and protocols are followed (Hopper, 2001; Nguyen, 2009; McCarthy & Quinn, 2010; Teaching Council, 2020), while also considering the needs of the school (Walsh & Dolan, 2019). Placement tutors are seen as the main link between HEIs and schools and must navigate and negotiate the relationship between both institutions (Hopper, 2001; Burns et al., 2016). As school placement depends on a school's goodwill, a responsibility falls on the placement tutor, a guest in the school (Hopper, 2001), to sustain a positive relationship between HEIs and schools (Ievers et al., 2013), potentially determining how successful partnerships are (Hopper, 2001). This places placement tutors in a vulnerable position (ibid): as articulated in Hall et al.'s study (2018:126), placement tutors must 'be ultra diplomatic in their engagement with schools', with some placement tutors 'afraid of offending the school lest all support is withdrawn for SP [school placement]'.

As previously stated, placement tutors formatively and summatively assess student teachers (Nguyen, 2009; Barahona, 2019; Walsh & Dolan, 2019; Teaching Council, 2020). This includes observations and discussions with student teachers, assessment of lesson plans, resources, and student teacher reflections (Barahona, 2019; McCarthy & Quinn, 2010), with many placement tutors using programme specifications to assess student teachers (Cuenca, 2010a; Hall et al., 2018; Barahona, 2019). Cuenca (2010a) cautions against viewing assessment as a box-tick exercise as placement tutors need to support the individual developmental needs of student teachers. This requires placement tutors and student teachers to build a strong pedagogical relationship. Placement tutors in Walsh and Dolan's study (2019) aimed to do so

by co-constructing key features of learning with student teachers. With this, placement tutors must balance student teacher affirmation and evaluation (Hall et al., 2018). This is particularly important as placement tutors also provide pastoral care for student teachers (Barahona, 2019) and this balance can be difficult if they need to help student teachers navigate personal and professional difficulties, while simultaneously ensuring that the HEI's standards are met (Walsh & Dolan, 2019).

Placement tutors note the promotion and nurturing of student teachers' reflective practice as key to their role (Hall et al., 2018), deeming themselves to be 'in the prime position' to 'help create openings to assist' student teachers 'in learning how to learn from practice' (Cuenca, 2010a:274). Student teachers are sometimes reliant on their placement tutors to support them in their reflections (Hall et al., 2018), with Barahona (2019) reporting that placement tutors were frustrated when student teachers over-relied on placement tutor feedback to complete personal reflections. Such barriers were overcome by Mauri et al. (2019) who structured weekly discussions and reflections between student teachers and placement tutors, which supported student teachers to critically reflect on their practice. Dolan and Hogan (2017) analysed audio-recordings of supervision between placement tutors and student teachers in one university and found that placement tutors helped student teachers reflect on their practice by probing them on their pedagogical decisions. With this, the placement tutor refrained from using their authority to tell student teachers what they should do, instead the placement tutor framed the power of their position in a positive light by bringing 'his/her own authority of experience to the discussion; not as an authority of position but rather as a framework to guide the questions and the discussions' (ibid:105). This practice placed a value on student teachers, who have 'much to contribute to the process and that he/she may have a rationale for practice that is different but no less valid to that of the tutor' (ibid). The studies in this section all point

to the significant role that placement tutors have in developing and supporting the critical reflection of student teachers.

4.4.3. Carrying out the role of a placement tutor: influencing factors and supports

In many European countries, including Ireland, teacher educators, such as placement tutors, do not register with a professional body and there is no formal qualification or formal induction for teacher educators (Dolan, 2019). In general, professional development opportunities are afforded to placement tutors in Ireland (Hall et al., 2018), which includes part-time placement tutors (O'Donoghue & Harford, 2010) and may include induction, shadowing an experienced placement tutor, and CPD on assessment and feedback which includes an emphasis on assessment consistency amongst placement tutors. Moderation also occurs through the appointment of two placement tutors to a student teacher (Murphy, 2010; Hall et al., 2018), which could be considered a form of professional development as placement tutors may discuss and offer their perspective on student teacher practice (Hall et al., 2018). This professional development is an important support for placement tutors (Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020) and while professional development occurs in some countries, it is not common internationally, with much of the literature critical of the lack of preparation, support, and CPD for placement tutors (Slick, 1998; Murphy, 2010; Bates et al., 2011; Burns & Badiali, 2015; Zeichner & Bier, 2015; Barahona, 2019; Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020).

In the absence of support, many placement tutors rely on their experience as a teacher to assist them in their role (Slick, 1998; Cuenca, 2010b; Murphy, 2010; Barahona, 2019; Dolan, 2019; Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020). Additionally, Murphy (2010) states that previous experience as a cooperating teacher can influence how placement tutors carry out their responsibilities.

Teacher educators have high levels of pedagogical knowledge from their experience as teachers (Dolan, 2019) but relying on first-order practice alone is problematic (Cuenca, 2010b) because placement tutors also require the skill of teaching pedagogical content knowledge to student teachers (Dolan, 2019) and a foundational knowledge of supervision (Burns & Badiali, 2015). Cuenca (2010b:39) acknowledges in his self-study that his 'principal misunderstanding as a novice field-based teacher educator was that my primary function was to share with my STs [student teachers] the tricks of the trade'. This mirrors the experience of the newest teacher educator in Dolan's study (2019) who shared the top tips for teachers on their first day working with student teachers. While Cuenca (2010b:37) does not discount using examples from previous experience to support student teachers, he concludes that placing an expectation on others to teach how he taught leads to 'a very myopic view' of teaching. Indeed, his original expectation of student teachers reproducing his practice could be seen as a form of power (Contu & Willmott, 2003), which curtails student teachers from exploring different ways to teach, thus restricting new learning (March, 1991). That said, not drawing on first-order practice in a second-order setting was a source of frustration for one part-time placement tutor in Slick's study (1998:822), who felt 'little, if any, credit or validation' for her teaching experience as there was a lack of opportunity 'to speak using her practitioner's voice'. This is echoed by Dolan (2019:189) who found 'little or no direct transfer of pedagogic knowledge and experience' from a first-order setting to a second-order setting, indicating that there is a gap in the provision of placement tutor professional development. These examples illustrate that there is an element of socialisation into the placement tutor role prior to embarking on it. However, changing positions across the landscape of practice does not mean that competence automatically transfers from one role to another as it entails a different skillset, but at the same time, the experience that individuals bring with them to their role is a learning asset and requires consideration.

To advance support for second-order practitioners, the establishment of learning communities is popular amongst the literature (Cuenca, 2010b; Walsh & Dolan, 2019; McCormack et al., 2019; Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020). Within learning communities, the complexity of the role, how to effectively facilitate and advance teacher education, and the identification and discussion of tensions encountered could be teased out collectively (ibid). McCormack et al. (2019) maintain there should be regular opportunities for such reflective capacity, with Diacopoulos and Butler (2020) suggesting that placement tutors would benefit from a critical friend to support their reflective practice. Dolan (2019) identified barriers to accessing such communities, namely financial and time constraints, along with not knowing how to gain access to professional development opportunities because it is not always made explicit that there are such opportunities for teacher educators. This is especially true for new or part-time teacher educators, and teacher educators may not think of exploring supports available, thus Dolan (2019) recommends that communities of teacher education, both locally and internationally, should be introduced to teacher educators as part of an induction. These learning communities would be congruent with Wenger's description of a community of practice.

4.5. Cooperating teachers
4.5.1. From a 'cooperating teacher' to a 'treoraí': what's in a name?

This section details the meaning behind cooperating teacher as this may impact how the role is perceived and explores the name change from cooperating teacher to treoraí[19] in Ireland. Cooperating teachers are described as practicing teachers who 'cooperate, as field-based teacher educators, with the tertiary institution that arranges the student teacher placement' (Goodfellow, 2000:25). Clarke et al. (2014) ascribes the origin of the term to three phases.

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[19] Treoraí' (singular), or Treoraithe (plural), meaning support or guide in the Irish language.

Firstly, in the 1950s as ITE gradually moved from traditional postsecondary institutions to universities, university staff desired academic status and prestige, thus attempted to distance themselves from the former postsecondary institutions. Secondly, financial cuts in the 1960s and 1970s saw the closure of many laboratory schools[20], therefore a place for student teachers to practice their teaching ceased. Thirdly, a 'baby boom' in the latter stages of the 20th century led to the urgent need for student teachers to practice their teaching so that they would be ready for the increase in pupil population. By this point, university staff considered themselves best positioned to support student teachers learning to teach, regarding themselves the experts; however in lieu of laboratory schools, the university required teachers to assist them in preparing student teachers through school placement (ibid). As the university had a hierarchical perception of their role, the teacher was expected to cooperate with the university, hence cooperating teacher was deemed an accurate term for their role. The origin of the name therefore equates to a form of power and over time this has become embedded in institutional norms and practices (Contu & Willmott, 2003).

Cooperating teacher remains a popular term for teachers working with student teachers during school placement but there have been some changes globally (Clarke et al., 2014). As universities sought to create better links with schools, some HEIs used the term mentor or associated teacher instead (ibid), although a US study (Hall et al., 2008) that involved mentors found that mentors still reverted to the perceived practice of a cooperating teacher, which was offering their classes to student teachers, while providing minimal support. In Ireland, the Teaching Council (2021a) have replaced the term cooperating teacher with treoraí in their updated *Guidelines on School Placement.* Treoraí, an Irish word, translates as a guide because

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[20] Laboratory schools were run by 'teacher training institutions' and were 'meant to be models for other schools to imitate'. They involved 'teacher training, demonstration, and experimentation' and were 'directly related to the research or teacher-training purposes of the universities' (Cucchiara, 2010:96).

it 'more accurately reflects the nature of the role of a teacher who supports and guides the student teacher during his/her school placement experience' (ibid:4). Despite a name change, the description of a cooperating teacher and a treoraí are very similar (Table 4.3), with the role and responsibilities in 2021 publication remaining the exact same as the 2013 publication, with the Teaching Council (2021b:3) stating 'the expectations of Treoraithe are no more and no less than those of co-operating teachers', indicating that it is solely a terminology change. For the remainder of this thesis, the term cooperating teacher is used for clarity.

Cooperating teacher (Teaching Council, 2013:5)	Treoraí (Teaching Council, 2021a:4)
'A co-operating teacher is a teacher in the placement school who supports and guides the student teacher and who acts as a point of contact between the HEI and the school. In a post-primary setting, a student teacher may be placed in a number of different classes and may, therefore, have a number of different co-operating teachers across a number of subject areas. In such circumstances, one teacher may take on a liaison role, seeking feedback from other co-operating teachers and acting as the point of contact for the principal and HEI placement tutor'.	'The term Treoraí, the Irish word for guide, replaces the term Co-operating Teacher and more accurately reflects the nature of the role of a teacher who supports and guides the student teacher during his/her school placement experience. In a post-primary setting, a student teacher may be placed in a number of different classes and may, therefore, collaborate with a number of different Treoraithe across a number of subject areas'.

Table 4.3: Definitions of a cooperating teacher and a treoraí as per Teaching Council *Guidelines on School Placement*.

Sources: Teaching Council (2013, 2021a).

4.5.2. Becoming a cooperating teacher and varying levels of participation

How one becomes a cooperating teacher can vary internationally, with some teachers opting to undertake the role, whereas others are asked to take on the role. This variation is explored as it can impact how cooperating teachers carry out their responsibilities. In some US states, there are eligibility criteria to become a cooperating teacher, such as several years teaching experience or a tenure/contract to work with student teachers (Matsko et al., 2020). Some US HEIs try to match cooperating teachers and student teachers to facilitate mutual benefits

between both parties (Snell et al., 2019), whereas Eck and Ramsey (2019) believe that cooperating teachers should be selected based on philosophically aligning with the HEI's pedagogical practices so the teachings of that programme are reinforced. Cooperating teachers that volunteer may carry out the role because it is enjoyable, to gain professional development credits, to give back to the profession, and the benefits it has for pupils (Snell et al., 2019). In Ireland, the role is voluntary (Young & McPhail, 2015) and it does not have eligibility criteria, apart from being a teacher, and the HEI does not pair up the student teacher with a cooperating teacher. Instead, it is typical that the principal selects the cooperating teacher, which can be based on several factors, e.g., the teacher's professionalism, timetabling issues, or compensating for an ineffective teacher (Harford & O' Doherty, 2016). Hall et al. (2018) maintain that cooperating teachers need to be chosen carefully due to their influence on student teachers, with Farrell (2020:134) stating that the selection process of cooperating teachers 'is an obvious gap in current policy and provision'. As previously stated, the role in Ireland is informal and is deemed a goodwill gesture from teachers (Ó Gallchóir et al., 2019), with Farrell (2020) establishing that most cooperating teachers were content to fulfil the role.

Clarke et al. (2014:166) report that how a cooperating teacher carries out their role is generally described in three ways by the 'teacher education community': as a classroom placeholder, a supervisor of practice, or a teacher educator, and places the role along a continuum to show the varying levels of participation (Figure 4.1).
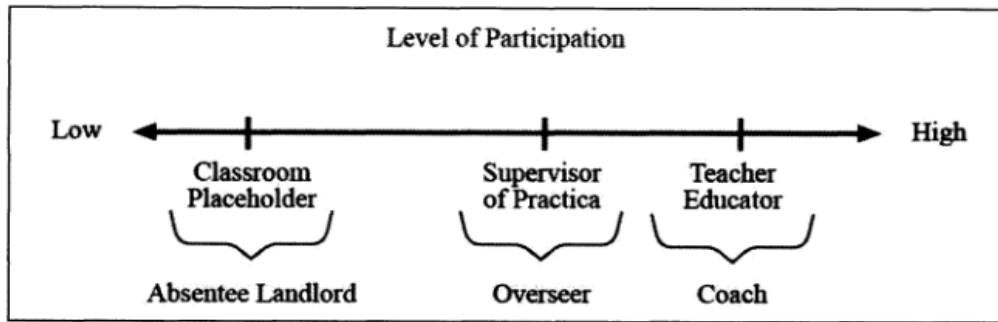
Figure 4.1: Level of cooperating teacher participation.
Source: Clarke et al. (2014:167).

The classroom placeholder/absentee landlord refers to minimal cooperating teacher participation, who changes places with the student teacher as the student teacher teaches their classes and assumes full responsibility of the class. This approach was commonly used in Ireland up until recently and is described as the 'sink or swim' approach to learning how to teach (Hall et al., 2018). In contrast, the supervisor of practice has a higher level of participation as the cooperating teacher oversees the student teacher's practice. This may involve observing, recording, and reporting on the student teacher's progress, with an expectation that the student teacher seeks their advice. Interactions are usually based on what the cooperating teacher can offer the student teacher (Clarke et al., 2014). The cooperating teacher as a teacher educator involves a greater level of participation, whereby they guide the student teacher by helping them reflect on practice, while providing their own observations and feedback. The cooperating teacher as a teacher educator implies that they have similar status as placement tutors, but with different roles and responsibilities (ibid). According to King et al. (2023), Irish policy views cooperating teachers as teacher educators, but Farrell (2020) found that most cooperating teachers in Ireland do not fit neatly into one category, but instead changed positions along the continuum based on the student teacher. For example, when student teachers displayed a lack of interest in cooperating teacher feedback, coupled with no formal requirement of the cooperating teacher's role, it led to cooperating teachers identifying as absentee landlord,

reinforcing the point that school-university partnerships are reliant on relationships. Mitchell et al. (2023) also found that cooperating teachers pulled back from supporting student teachers when their advice was disregarded. Additionally, Farrell (2020) extends the continuum to include the cooperating teacher as a co-inquirer, which involves high levels of participation as they undertake research and critical reflection with student teachers. This extension is important as student teachers in Ireland are now required to undertake research during one school placement and are encouraged to discuss their research plans with their cooperating teacher(s) (Teaching Council, 2020).

Clarke et al.'s. (2014) literature review on cooperating teachers found the above categorisation too simplistic. As a result, the researchers organised the participation of cooperating teachers into eleven categories, noting that some of the categories may overlap and a cooperating teacher may take on a several forms of participation. The categories are described in Table 4.4. and are supported by additional literature.

Category of cooperating teacher participation	Description with some examples
Providers of feedback	Providing quality feedback to student teachers (Clarke et al., 2014). In many instances, the rationale behind pedagogical decisions is missing and this has been identified in Irish research (Hall et al., 2018).
Gatekeepers of the profession	Providing the student teacher with formative and summative assessment, with summative assessment contributing to qualification (Clarke et al., 2014). As detailed, cooperating teachers in Ireland relay information to the HEI on how the student teacher is doing on school placement but are not part of the formal assessment process with the placement tutor (O'Grady et al., 2018).
Modelers of practice	Student teachers observing their cooperating teacher, and in many instances copying or mimicking what they have observed (Clarke et al., 2014). Graham (2006) reports a shift in culture is needed to move away from this practice.

Supporters of reflection	Cooperating teachers facilitate and engage in reflective practice with student teachers (Clarke et al., 2014).
Gleaners of knowledge	The interactions with student teachers that can help the professional development of the cooperating teacher due to the cooperating teacher reflecting on his/her own practice (Clarke et al., 2014) and is reported in many studies (Ganser, 2002; Young & McPhail, 2015; Snell et al., 2019; Farrell, 2020). A two-way learning process can be evidenced through cooperating teachers sharing methodologies, planning, and resources with student teachers (Young & McPhail, 2015) and by reflecting on their own teaching through observing student teachers teach their classes (ibid; Snell et al., 2019).
Purveyors of context	Cooperating teachers introducing student teachers to the school context that goes beyond the immediate role of teaching classes (Clarke et al., 2014).
Conveners of relation	Acknowledges the importance of the cooperating teacher and student teacher relationship and cooperating teachers should encourage student teachers to forge relationships with other school members (Clarke et al., 2014).
Agents of socialisation	Helping the socialisation of student teachers into the profession, thus require an awareness of how their communication, both implicitly and explicitly, can influence the student teacher (Clarke et al., 2014). Ó Gallchóir et al. (2019) calls for training and the standardisation of support to help student teachers with this socialisation into the profession.
Advocates of the practical	Mentoring the student teacher in the practical running of a classroom (Clarke et al., 2014).
Abiders of change	Acknowledges the hidden dimensions to a cooperating teacher's work which may impact the cooperating teacher's classes, such as providing student teachers with a level of freedom as they learn how to teach and being non-judgmental in this process (Clarke et al., 2014).
Teachers of children	Cooperating teachers are ultimately teachers of pupils; thus, they must balance the needs of their pupils, alongside the student teacher needs (Clarke et al., 2014). Gorman and Furlong (2023:208) note that the demands of additional responsibilities outside of a cooperating teacher's primary role of teachers as children, in conjunction with a lack of supports, result in cooperating teachers not functioning 'as teacher educators in ways expected by the HEIs or indeed the policy makers'.

Table 4.4: Categories of cooperating teacher participation as described by Clarke et al. (2014) and supported by additional literature.

Source: Clarke et al. (2014).

The categories formulated by Clarke et al. (2014) illuminate the variation in cooperating teacher practice, thus it is unsurprising that student teachers have inequitable support from cooperating teachers (O'Grady et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2018). The following section details the cooperating teacher role and responsibilities from the viewpoint of cooperating teachers and other key partners, which can help understand why there are different levels of support.

4.5.3. The role and responsibilities of cooperating teachers: from the perspective of self and others

As stated, this section outlines the cooperating teacher role from the perspective of cooperating teachers and other key partners, drawing on national and international literature, but their role and responsibilities as per Teaching Council guidelines (2021a:18) are provided in chapter six.

A key responsibility of cooperating teachers is to support student teachers as they pivot from being a student of teaching to a teacher of pupils (Ganser, 2002), which involves advice on the whole school experience (Hall et al., 2018). Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011) report that both cooperating teachers and placement tutors believe that the cooperating teacher role is to act as a mentor to student teachers, which involves offering advice, feedback, and support, while sharing knowledge and encouraging student teachers. Cooperating teachers in Snell et al.'s study (2019:90) outlined a variety of skills that they should possess, which includes 'the abilities to communicate, delegate responsibility, and offer constructive criticism...[be] organized, ethical and professional, pedagogically strong, and able to recognize student teachers' needs' and noted that 'patience and a love of children as important traits'.

Hall et al. (2018) reported that cooperating teachers provide useful advice regarding planning, the curriculum, classroom management, and supporting specific pupils. Just like Clarke et al. (2014) found, advice was mainly verbal and informal. Student teachers in Matsko et al.'s study (2020:42) expressed a desire for feedback that was specific, focusing on 'stronger instructional support' with 'more frequent and adequate feedback [with] a balance of autonomy and encouragement'. However, Hall et al. (2018) identified that some cooperating teachers are reluctant to provide student teacher feedback as they are unsure what to assess and how, particularly as they do not have standardised assessment criteria like placement tutors do. This can result in inequitable experiences for student teachers (O'Grady et al., 2018). To counteract this, Heinz and Fleming (2019) led an initiative that involved the researchers sharing the HEI's assessment criteria with schools, which supported cooperating teachers in assessing student teachers and had the added benefit of cooperating teachers reflecting on their own practice as a teacher.

Aligning with findings of Clarke et al. (2014), Hall et al. (2018:29) discovered that cooperating teachers typically articulated the what and how of pedagogical practice, but omitted the why, thus limiting post-lesson observations 'to the affirmation of student teachers existing pedagogical knowledge' offering 'little new sources of knowledge or meaning-making for students'. Snell et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of cooperating teachers being aware of pedagogical decisions they make, and why they make them, in order to communicate this to student teachers. These points demonstrate that it cannot be assumed that being an effective teacher equates to being skilled in supporting student teachers (Matsko et al., 2020) and cooperating teachers also require assistance as they pivot between being a teacher (first-order practice) to being a teacher educator (second-order practice). This bears similarity to the point made in 4.4.3. whereby individuals require an additional skillset as they move between

different positions across the landscape of practice, hence there should not be an assumption that being competent in one role equates to being competent in another role.

It is clear from section 4.5.2 that cooperating teacher practice can vary significantly, while this section highlights that cooperating teachers, placement tutors, and student teachers believe that cooperating teachers should act as a mentor, providing support, feedback, advice, and encouragement to student teachers. As a result, cooperating teachers require a myriad of skills to carry out their role. The role is not without its challenges as some cooperating teachers are reluctant to provide feedback because they are the unsure of what and how to formatively assess student teachers. The following section outlines proposed supports to assist cooperating teachers and identifies the influencing factors on their practice.

4.5.4. Carrying out the role of a cooperating teacher: influencing factors and supports

Much research recognises the influential role of cooperating teachers on student teacher practice (Weiss & Weiss, 2001; Clarke et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2018; Farrell, 2020), yet Young and Mc Phail (2015) found that cooperating teachers were neither adequately prepared nor supported in their role. In contrast, cooperating teachers in a US study (Ganser, 2002:384) felt prepared and supported in their role; but Ganser is sceptical of this and links a feeling of preparedness to potential low expectations due to a lack of professional development for cooperating teachers:

> …without clear expectations and high-quality training, cooperating teachers'…ability to enhance student teachers'…professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions may be minimized…[they]…may be relatively sanguine regarding their work as cooperating teachers…because the expectations are unstated, ambiguous, or minimal, and based roughly on what "comes naturally".

These examples highlight the ad-hoc nature of the cooperating teacher role, while much of the literature in Ireland is critical of such an ad-hoc approach (Heinz, 2014; Young et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2018; O'Grady et al., 2018; Heinz & Fleming, 2019; Farrell, 2020). Feiman-Nemser (1998) found many teachers do not view themselves as teacher educators, indicating the difficultly for teachers to pivot between being teachers of pupils to teacher educators. It is important to reemphasis a point in 4.5.2 here: how one becomes a cooperating teacher differs within and between countries, therefore it could be argued that those who are assigned the role may not identify as easily as a teacher educator as those who opt to become a cooperating teacher, or they may not be aware that they are considered teacher educators. As noted earlier, cooperating teachers may not function 'as teacher educators in ways expected by the HEIs or...policy makers' (Gorman & Furlong, 2023:208). One result of an ad-hoc approach is unclear expectations and responsibilities of cooperating teachers (Young & McPhail, 2016; Hall et al., 2018) and in some instances cooperating teachers are not aware of the Teaching Council guidelines which points to their 'marginalisation and lack of support' (Mitchell et al., 2023:12; Hall et al., 2018). A lack of clarity, coupled with a lack of communication on how to support student teachers, is a source of frustration for cooperating teachers (Young & McPhail, 2016). For these reasons, providing supports for cooperating teachers seems prudent. Supports suggested in the literature are now outlined, along with factors that can influence cooperating teacher practice.

The lack of cooperating teacher professional development is evident across the literature (Clarke et al., 2014; Ó Gallchóir et al., 2019; Franks, 2021), with many cooperating teachers in Farrell's study (2021) critical of this. This is not a universal issue, for example, cooperating teachers in Singapore and Australia undertake courses for their roles (Hall et al., 2018). All cooperating teachers in Farrell's study (2020) placed the responsibility for providing CPD with

the HEI, a finding similar to Hall et al. (2018). However, Ó Gallchóir et al. (2019) place some responsibility with the Teaching Council, who they believe should provide similar supports evidenced in the Droichead programme, whereby teachers engage in professional development for mentoring NQTs. Farrell (2021) also advocates that this feature of Droichead is extended to include ITE. Interestingly, the Teaching Council (2016:8) state CPD is a 'right' for all teachers, with the Cosán framework (Teaching Council, 2016:16) naming 'Mentoring/Coaching' as a learning process that can include cooperating teachers. As detailed earlier, working groups to establish cooperating teacher CPD is currently being developed so it remains to be seen if the Teaching Council will address this criticism.

Suggested CPD for cooperating teachers include mentoring, how to observe and provide formative feedback to student teachers, and engaging in research and innovative teaching practices (O'Grady, 2017; Hall et al., 2018; Hanly & Heinz, 2022), which could contribute to facilitating equitable student teacher support. Young and McPhail (2015) advocate the use of a school placement booklet, that outlines their role and expectations, as it helped cooperating teachers in their study become more confident in supporting student teachers. Additionally, Franks (2021) expresses the need for cooperating teachers to be provided with information about the stage of student teachers in their ITE programme, which could help reduce the reliance of student teachers merely mimicking the practice of their cooperating teacher (Hall et al., 2018). While financial resources are needed to facilitate professional development (Hall et al., 2018; Farrell, 2020), Ó Gallchóir et al. (2019) and Farrell (2020) also attest cooperating teachers need incentives, recognition, and accreditation to carry out their role.

In the absence of formal CPD, the quality of student teacher support can vary between cooperating teachers (Young & McPhail, 2015) as they are relying on their own intuition to support student teachers (Goodfellow, 2000; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Clarke et al., 2014). This is true of one cooperating teacher in Goodfellow's study (2000:28) who 'drew on her own knowledge and learning as she considered' how to support the student teacher. Moreover, as cooperating teachers once had cooperating teachers of their own, they may use past experiences to determine the understanding of their role and how to carry it out (Ganser, 2002). This was evidenced in the Johnson and Napper-Owen study (2011) when a cooperating mimicked the behaviour of her own cooperating teacher as a student teacher because she was unsure of her role. A lack of agency is evidenced in this example as the cooperating teacher wanted to understand how to carry out the role, but she took no steps to find out how to do so. Perhaps she did not know where to seek support. These examples demonstrate that professional socialisation into the cooperating teacher role can occur prior to teachers undertaking this role and they may rely on past experiences in lieu of support.

As there is no formal CPD for cooperating teachers in Ireland, some HEIs run their own initiatives; however, King et al. (2023) note that initiatives run the risk of disappearing. An example of a national initiative (Dunning et al., 2011) involved cooperating teachers designing their own responsibilities where they explored how to enhance and enact their role, with the study investigating the student teachers' experience of this support. Prior to the development of this model, the role of the cooperating teacher on this ITE programme was mostly vague, but it is important to note that this study was conducted prior to the publication of the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2013). Cooperating teachers volunteered to engage with workshops provided by the HEI prior to school placement and received observation and evaluation sheets to structure regular feedback sessions with student teachers.

This has similarities with the previously mentioned initiative by Heinz and Fleming (2019) who provided cooperating teachers with professional development through a partner school initiative, which involved cooperating teachers having a more active role in guiding, observing, and assessing student teachers. Both studies reported varying degrees of cooperating teachers supporting student teachers, with one student teacher in the former study stating that her cooperating teacher was still unsure of the cooperating teacher role. Not adhering to elements of the HEIs structure also featured in both studies. A student teacher in Dunning et al.'s study (2011) revealed the minimal use of the HEI's supporting documentation by a cooperating teacher, while Heinz and Fleming (2019) found that some cooperating teachers' feedback did not align with the HEI's values. Heinz and Fleming (2019) noted the voluntary nature of partnerships impacts engagement and that organisational and political issues can also impact engagement. One example of organisational and political issues is the focus on the role, through this initiative, being regarded as a means to gain promotion: this could be considered positive in terms of providing teachers with recognition for their work, or alternatively it could be seen as a negative as the focus may be on an external reward, rather than intrinsically helping student teachers. The positives of such initiatives were also presented by Dunning et al. (2011) as some interactions between cooperating teachers and student teachers increased, along with some student teachers becoming comfortable to approach their cooperating teacher for advice. Both studies serve as further examples that professional development does not guarantee cooperating teachers stick to agreed protocols or equitable experience for all student teachers as 'individual teachers will always interpret their own roles to a certain degree' (ibid:163).

The literature reviewed identifies the important and influential role of cooperating teachers within school-university partnerships and owing to the skillset and challenges associated with being a cooperating teacher, supports and recognition for the role are advocated. This is

important in the context of the cooperating teacher's primary role being that of a teacher to pupils, hence support is required so they can help student teachers too. The following section delves into the role that student teachers have in supporting their own learning, along with what influences their practice and the supports and challenges they experience.

4.6. Student teachers

4.6.1. The roles and responsibilities of student teachers: from the perspective of self and others

The Teaching Council (2020:5) defines a student teacher as a 'student who is engaged in a programme of initial teacher education'. Examples of other terms in the literature include pre-service teacher and trainee teacher: while the terms broadly refer to individuals learning how to teach, section 4.2 identified that learning to teach does not always mean a student teacher is affiliated with a HEI (Foster, 2019; Heinz & Fleming, 2019). The student teacher role and responsibilities outlined by the Teaching Council (2021a:19) are in chapter six: this section outlines the student teacher role from the perspective of key individuals across school-university partnerships.

Student teachers hold a dual positionality: being a student and a beginning teacher (Hanly & Heinz, 2022). Through school placement, student teachers practice, experiment, and advance their teaching, with student teachers learning from and contributing to the school community (ibid). Consequently, student teachers require the opportunity and power to explore their practice, as described by March (1991) in section 2.2.1. Student teachers consider their role as a learner and an observer, who should engage with feedback, reflect on practice, observe lessons, and share new methodologies with cooperating teachers (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009), while cooperating teachers and placement tutors describe the student

teacher role as a learner and reflective practitioner (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011). Some student teachers in Woodgate-Jones' study (2012) recognised that they provided support for teachers. As well as introducing new methodologies to schools, student teachers also helped teachers with technological difficulties, resulting in teachers reflecting on their own practice (ibid). These benefits mirror the experience of student teachers in the Johnston study (2016) and the Teaching Council's innovation report[21] (2021c). These studies highlight student teachers as legitimate peripheral participants hoping to gain acceptance into a community of teachers, but they are also learning assets to schools (Hanly & Heinz, 2022).

Beyond teaching and observing classes, student teachers strive to integrate into a school's community. For example, most student teachers in Hanly and Heinz's study (2022) were involved in extra-curricular activities and according to Sutherland et al. (2005) this helps student teachers blend into a school's community of practice. Furthermore, student teachers aim 'to be viewed as a credible presence' amongst pupils (Johnston, 2016:542), elucidating the importance of the acceptance of student teachers as a member of a community of practice of teachers, not just in the dyad with a cooperating teacher, but from the perspective of pupils as well. However, this engagement and contribution to a school community of practice can be difficult for some student teachers, with Johnston (2016) reporting that not all student teachers were able to achieve social or professional acceptance in schools. This validates the call from Ó Gallchóir et al. (2019) to help student teachers' socialisation into the profession. These points recognise that student teachers are influenced by a range of factors and individuals across the landscape of practice: influencing factors on student teacher practice is further investigated next.

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[21] 'The Teaching Council wished to compile a School Placement Innovation Report in celebration and recognition of the innovative practice that has been developed in school placement in response to COVID-19 measures. The Council did this in co-ordination with the Department of Education and HEIs as one means of drawing a spotlight on the excellent work of HEIs and schools during the pandemic' (Teaching Council, 2021c:4).

4.6.2. Influencing factors on student teacher practice

Professional socialisation into teaching begins many years prior to interactions with placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, and cooperating teachers (Eisner, 2003). Preconceptions on how to teach can be formed from years of schooling, which consist of observation and interaction with teachers (Lortie, 1975). Lortie (1975:62&63) refers to this as an apprenticeship of observation, which provides pupils with a 'specific' and 'limited vantage point' on teaching, resulting in a lack of awareness of pedagogical decisions made by their teachers because 'what students learn about teaching...is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical'. Consequently, what student teachers learn in ITE is seen through the lens of predeveloped beliefs that simplify the teaching process, which is deemed a significant barrier to student teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This is clear in Lortie's work, who attests that ITE has little influence on how student teachers teach, while Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981:7) report that learning in ITE is 'washed out' by school experience. Furlong (2013) also reports that the apprenticeship of observation plays a role in how student teachers want to present themselves as teachers. Lortie (1975) states failure to address preconceptions will result in lay theories influencing an individual's occupation, rather than aligning with the attitudes, values, and norms required of the profession. Oosterheert et al. (2002) place a responsibility with HEIs to equip student teachers with the skills to deconstruct and challenge their prior conceptions on how to teach so they can take such skills into their future practice.

However, the consequences of the apprenticeship of observation are not conclusive. Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) believe it is used as an excuse to explain the minimal impact of HEIs on student teachers' practice. Furthermore, Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) argue that it is unjust to suggest that student teachers' views are fated and remain static through school experience. Gleeson et al. (2015) found the impact of the apprenticeship of observation was eroded within

three years of their ITE programme, while Crowe (2020:279) believes that 'using the apprenticeship of observation as the primary explanation for conservative practices of pre-service teachers and their unsophisticated views of teaching, is limiting and ultimately unhelpful'. Moreover, Crowe (2020:282) believes the term apprenticeship of observation is problematic as she found that student teachers 'recollections of schooling were not simply descriptions of past experiences', instead it 'is an individual construct of memory' and student teachers who decide to become teachers when in school encode certain aspects of teaching. She suggests 'replacing the language of apprenticeship of observation with the language of autobiographical memory' as it 'opens up opportunities to problematise and explore the complexities of past memories in a more fruitful way'. Indeed, Flanagan Knapp (2012) problematised the apprenticeship of observation through inviting student teachers to document their beliefs on how to teach as they progressed through the programme, enabling them to both deconstruct their prior assumptions and compare their experiences with other student teachers. As a result, this illuminated their different past and present experiences, meaning the apprenticeship of observation was used as a learning opportunity to progress and evolve their learning.

The points above show that student teachers have begun the process of socialisation into a profession prior to embarking on their ITE programme. While some research problematises the apprenticeship of observation, it is not the only challenge encountered: the challenges, with required supports for student teachers, are detailed next.

4.6.3. Challenges and supports for student teachers

School placement can be fraught with difficulties for student teachers, resulting from internal and external stressors (Hanly & Heinz, 2022). Stressors include the high stakes nature of

assessment from their placement tutor (O'Grady et al., 2018), a lack of or little support from cooperating teachers and/or placement tutors, classroom management issues, heavy workloads, financial struggles, and not being invited to school meetings which imply student teachers are not full members of the school community (Hall et al., 2018; Hanly & Heinz, 2022). Hanly and Heinz (2022) recommend that schools put support structures in place to cater for student teachers' physical and mental wellbeing, along with their professional learning. Hanly and Heinz (2022:2383) also conclude that HEIs need to monitor 'individual students' situations and experiences carefully so that appropriate and individualised supports can be offered', which draws similarities to Cuenca's advice (2010a) to focus on a student teacher's individualised needs. In addition to this, Hanly and Heinz (2022) suggest that HEIs should help student teachers build a peer community of practice to support their professional development because student teachers can be a support for one another. However, student teachers may not want to show their vulnerability to HEI and school staff by availing of individualised support, indicating a covert form of power at play: power dynamics are outlined next.

Supports for student teachers are important in the context of potential power dynamics. An Irish study (Long et al., 2012) investigated the power negotiations of student teachers seeking support from teachers and concluded that in the absence of mentoring support, student teachers opted to become invisible learners, rather than ask for help. Similarly, O'Grady et al. (2018) identified that student teachers often silence their opinions due to power dynamics. As a result, some student teachers are not addressing their learning needs, feeling they must act like a qualified teacher, who cannot show vulnerability during school placement (Long et al., 2012). Additionally, one student teacher concealed her frustrations as she wanted a good reference from the school (ibid). Similarly, Hanly and Heinz (2022) found that student teachers were reluctant to discuss difficulties experienced in case it reflected badly on their reputation as a

teacher, which could impact their employability. While Dunning et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of student teachers acknowledging their lack of experience, and to seek support from cooperating teachers, the points above show that this is not an easy thing to do for a variety of complex reasons.

The literature reviewed pertaining to the role perception of the triad demonstrates that their roles are multifaceted, and all individuals experience challenges and require support to enact their role. The main focus of this study is on the triad, but it recognises that support from others across the landscape of practice is vital: while it is beyond the scope of this study to detail all members of the landscape of practice, I have included principals and pedagogy lecturers in this research. The roles are now detailed, along with the rationale for their inclusion.

4.7. The role of principals in school-university partnerships

Principals' perspectives on school-university partnerships are included in this study as principals[22] play a vital role in school-university partnerships (Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Fletcher-Nettleton & Barnett, 2016; Farrell, 2021), with partnerships ultimately dependent on principals providing access to their school community (Fletcher-Nettleton & Barnett, 2016; Gilbert et al., 2018; Day et al., 2021). Therefore, this section provides an overview of the role and influence of principals in school-university partnerships, along with benefits for principals engaging in same.

Most principals and deputy principals in Hall et al.'s study (2018) were aware of the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2013) that outlined their roles and responsibilities

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[22] The term headteacher is used in some countries instead of principal.

(Appendix D), with the majority acknowledging their usefulness. Despite this, cooperating teachers in Holland's study (2021) reported that principals do not always engage fully in the process. It is worth noting that the guidelines state that principals 'where appropriate' can 'delegate' their responsibilities 'to the deputy principal or other members of staff' so it is unsurprising that the level of participation can differ between principals (Teaching Council, 2021a:20). However, a Norwegian study (Raaen & Thorsen, 2019) report that principals, who have a formal role during school placement, do not always adhere to their range of responsibilities, with principals primarily focusing on the administrative side of school placement, indicating full engagement is not guaranteed when mandated. O'Grady (2017) queries whether schools see themselves as having a central role in ITE in Ireland and the importance they attach to school placement as most schools in her study did not have a school placement policy: a finding also reported by Hall et al. (2018). As a result, O'Grady (2017) suggests the mutual benefits of school-university partnerships need to be clearly communicated to principals. This seems prudent as cooperating teachers in Holland's study (2021) attributed a lack of engagement by principals to principals not realising the benefits of school placement. Contrastingly, principals and deputy principals in Hall et al.'s study (2018) and Gilbert et al,'s study (2018) were aware of the benefits for schools, such as school placement being a form of professional development for teachers. Other benefits include additional staffing and identifying future employees for a school (Wepner et al., 2021).

While administrative duties appear as the most prominent responsibility, principals have 'a key role in developing the kind of school culture which encourages student teachers, affirms teachers in their roles as professional mentors, and welcomes collaborations which strengthens schools as learning communities' (Ní Áingléis, 2009:17), showcasing that principals navigate a range of relationships across the landscape of practice. Regarding affirming teachers in their

cooperating teacher role, most principals in Hall et al.'s study (2018) expressed confidence in the capability of teachers to carry out this role. That said, they believe CPD for the role should be provided, indicating that principals place the responsibility of supporting cooperating teachers with the HEI or the Teaching Council, and not with the school.

The importance of relationship building between principals and HEIs is noted by Fletcher-Nettleton and Barnett (2016), who found that if a principal models open collaboration with HEIs, teachers will also collaborate with HEIs. In the same vein, cooperating teachers in Holland's study (2021) witnessed some teachers' perception of the HEI being negatively impacted when principals demonstrated a lack of value towards HEIs. This aligns with the previous point of Ní Áingléis (2009:17) whereby a key role of a principal is to welcome 'collaborations'. While these points unveil the need for principals to value HEIs, Hall et al. (2018) found there was a level of uncertainty amongst principals and deputy principals on whether HEIs take their opinion into account when formulating school placement requirements, which queries how much the HEI values principals beyond accommodating school placement.

4.8. The role of pedagogy lecturers in supporting student teachers learning how to teach
Many lecturers support student teacher learning, but this study focuses on lecturers that specialise in pedagogy (Boyd & White, 2017), thus pedagogy lecturers[23] are categorised as teacher educators. Just like placement tutors and cooperating teachers, the pedagogy lecturer role is a shift from a first-order practitioner to a second-order practitioner (Murray & Male 2005) but as noted earlier, there is no formal qualification or induction for teacher educators in

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[23] In some HEIs, pedagogy lecturers are referred to as methods lecturers.

Ireland (Dolan, 2019). Pedagogy lecturers can be full-time HEI employees, who have previously been a teacher (Johnston & Purcell, 2022), or part-time HEI employees who may be practising teachers. In some instances, pedagogy lecturers also undertake a placement tutor role. The rationale for including pedagogy lecturers in this research is that they support student teachers learning to teach, while preparing them for school placement and entering the school community post ITE programme. While lecturers are named as key partners in the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2021a), the Teaching Council do not distinguish between lecturers of foundation studies and pedagogy lecturers in their guidelines, and their associated role and responsibilities are not listed. This section therefore outlines the responsibilities attributed to teacher educators, who support student teachers learning how to teach, as described in the literature.

Loughran (2013:129) defines the 'pedagogy of teacher education...as the theory and practice of teaching and learning about teaching', which outlines the important role of pedagogy lecturers in supporting student teachers learning to teach. Shulman (1987) categorises the knowledge bases[24] that teacher educators must possess to support pupils as content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purpose and values. Pedagogy lecturers support student teachers in these knowledge bases by making 'pedagogical reasoning visible' (Loughran,

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[24] Content knowledge: Knowledge related to the subject being taught.
General pedagogical knowledge: Knowledge on the principles and structures regarding the organisation of teaching.
Curriculum knowledge: The curriculum to be taught to pupils.
Pedagogical content knowledge: Knowledge on how to teach a certain subject to pupils.
Knowledge of learners and their characteristics: Gaining an understanding of the needs of pupils.
Knowledge of educational contexts: Knowledge on the school context, environment, and community.
Knowledge of educational ends, purpose and values: Knowledge on the purpose and values that underpin education.

2013:130). This involves making tacit practices explicit to student teachers so they can learn the processes involved in teaching that extend beyond a set of instructions (ibid). This is inclusive of articulating the 'what, how, and why of teaching' (Loughran, 2006:14), which would deal with the earlier concern of cooperating teachers omitting the why of their practice to student teachers, yet student teachers need to possess the ability to link their learning from lectures to what they have observed or spoken about with their cooperating teacher. Another responsibility identified earlier was ITE programmes aiding student teachers to deconstruct their prior conception on how to teach (Oosterheert et al., 2002). In doing so, student teachers acquire 'new knowledge' about the process of learning to teach, which 'may re-shape their memories of schooling and past teachers', making their apprenticeship of observation 'malleable' (Crowe, 2020:280). Interestingly, Furlong (2013) believes that teacher educators can also be influenced by their own apprenticeship of observation, with Loughran (2014) arguing that the work of teacher educators is often simplified because of this. Despite this, teacher educators do not deconstruct and challenge their prior conceptions (as is advocated for student teachers), with Russell (2018) advising teacher educators to model the reflective practice they want of their students.

As mentioned previously, a hierarchy has often resided with the HEI in school-university partnerships, which has led to pedagogy lecturers being seen as the 'source of knowledge' on teaching (Bernay, 2020:316). Even so, some student teachers in a South African study (van Heerden et al., 2020) revealed they could not implement all the knowledge and skills advocated by their ITE programme, with some student teachers not seeing the relevance of what they were taught once they began school placement. This was not unanimous amongst student teachers as others felt lectures sufficiently prepared them for teaching. This example highlights that some student teachers can struggle to connect learning from the HEI to their school

placement so there needs to be more support between HEIs and schools to assist student teachers. Furthermore, partnerships have evolved to recognise there are a range of knowledge sources across the landscape of practice, thus communication and interactions across the landscape of practice is crucial to complement pedagogy lectures. Importantly, Loughran (2013:133) attests that 'a shared language matters' across the landscape of practice as 'teacher education hinges on the ability to "speak" with students of teaching (as well as colleagues and peers) in ways that help to make clear shaping factors in pedagogical relationships', which is important in the context of the reported disconnect between pedagogical theory and practice in ITE (Zeichner, 2010; Björck & Johansson, 2019).

The reviewed literature emphasises the complexity of school-university partnerships and the myriad of responsibilities that placement tutors, cooperating teachers, student teachers, principals, and pedagogy lecturers have when supporting student teachers learning to teach, with boundary crossing a necessary component to facilitate this: boundary crossing is discussed next.

4.9. Boundary crossing

The literature review thus far showcases the need for many partners to boundary cross to facilitate student teacher learning. The purpose of this section is to review the realities of boundary crossing. In this study, school placement provides the setting for boundary crossing (Nguyen, 2020). Kensington-Miller et al. (2021:370) notes that each community of practice comes with its own boundary and attests that 'for an effective landscape of practice, boundary crossings are necessary for learning to happen'. Boundary crossing can describe how professionals engage with different working environments, thus 'enter onto territory [they] are unfamiliar [with]' (Suchman, 1994:25). While Suchman (1994) refers to individuals entering

a setting they are unfamiliar with, there is a risk that individuals may perceive they are familiar with the work of another due to past experiences in a similar setting. For example, and as inferred earlier, student teachers may be familiar with schools, but it is from the perspective as a pupil, not a teacher, so beginning student teachers are entering into unfamiliar territory. Wang et al. (2022) refers to boundary crossing as the diversity in the routines and norms of an institution that extends beyond the physical environment, and it involves negotiations and changes in usual routines (ibid). As Figure 2.4. illustrated, there are many examples of boundary crossing during ITE, with learning happening at the intersection of boundaries (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021).

Student teachers and placement tutors physically boundary cross from the HEI to a school and even though cooperating teachers do not physically cross boundaries, they are supporting student teachers so there is a change in their usual routine, thus they are also boundary crossing (Wang et al., 2022). As individuals' cross boundaries, they may encounter new insights and/or misunderstandings between communities of practice, as well as experiencing power dynamics (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021). It can be difficult for student teachers to merge different perspectives they encounter as they boundary cross (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016), therefore student teachers need support from both cooperating teachers and placement tutors (Johnston, 2016). As stated previously, being competent in one community of practice does not necessarily translate as being competent in another (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Kensington-Miller et al., 2021), therefore cooperating teachers and placement tutors also require support. If individuals do not feel competent in a community of practice, it can result in individuals experiencing inferior feelings and distancing themselves from the community of practice (Kubiak et al., 2015). That said, boundaries can still exist between communities of practice where individuals share the same role/competence (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016). For

example, cooperating teachers supporting student teachers in the one school may have differences of approach or opinion and the same could be extended to placement tutors as two placement tutors are assigned to each student teacher in this study. Therefore, relationship building and respecting differing viewpoints within communities of practice are important (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021).

The reviewed literature demonstrates changes in routines during boundary crossing, with individuals potentially encountering new insights and/or power dynamics as they do so, hence relationship building, and negotiations are part of the boundary crossing process. The following sections review literature pertaining to interactions that happen as members of the triad boundary cross during school-university partnerships.

4.10. Interactions between members of the triad

The following sections detail the dyadic and triadic interactions of the triad to provide an insight into how student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors interact, or do not interact, during school-university partnerships.

4.10.1. Dyadic interactions between placement tutors and cooperating teachers

As outlined, the complementary school-university partnership model sees the responsibilities of placement tutors and cooperating teachers differ, with both roles intended to complement the other (Furlong et al., 2000; Hopper, 2001). Placement tutors 'have a wider base of experience on which to base their observations and judgements about trainees' stages and phases of development' because they work with larger numbers of student teachers, so Hopper (2001:214) advocates that placement tutors share their advice on supporting student teachers

with cooperating teachers. Hopper (2001) makes this suggestion because cooperating teachers are teachers who mostly focus on teaching pupils which requires a different skillset; however, cooperating teachers use first-order practice daily, so they can add further insights. Valuing both types of advice would align with Zeichner (2010:89), who advocates a 'non-hierarchical interplay' between teacher educators.

It is advisable that placement tutors and cooperating teachers interact, yet O'Grady et al. (2018:374) report a 'notable absence' in their interactions, indicating a 'missing link in the triadic relationship'. A student teacher in Farrell's (2021) study also noticed this lack of interaction. The work commitments of cooperating teachers mean they are not always available to meet with placement tutors (Hall et al., 2018), with Hopper (2001) stating that placement tutors need to be aware that cooperating teachers will prioritise teaching their pupils. This coupled with a lack of dedicated time to meet acts as a barrier for their interaction (Farrell, 2021). A cooperating teacher in Farrell's study (2021) suggests that placement tutors should provide schools with advance notice of their visit so they can formally arrange a time to meet. This unveils one impact of unannounced placement tutor visits to schools: if a cooperating teacher does not know when they are visiting the school, it reduces the opportunity for cooperating teachers to set time aside to interact with placement tutors. Additionally, by not sharing such information it potentially impacts the principle of trust towards the school and the student teacher. Furthermore, the lack of interactions can lead to tensions, as noted in Hall et al.'s study (2018:138) when some cooperating teachers felt 'a sense of indignation and perhaps disrespect' when placement tutors did not seek their opinion. This example supports Ievers et al.'s (2013) conclusion that a responsibility falls on the placement tutor to sustain positive relationships with schools. It also illustrates that seeking cooperating teacher input is one way

of the HEI demonstrating the principle of reciprocity i.e., valuing their role, yet the points above indicate that this is not straightforward.

Hall et al. (2018:100) describe conversations that do occur between cooperating teachers and placement tutors as 'hit and miss', indicating that interactions depend on the individuals involved. One concern expressed by placement tutors was the difficulty that cooperating teachers had in critiquing student teacher practice and instead they were acting as an advocate for student teachers who were not meeting expectations. Young and McPhail (2015) suggest such reluctance is because cooperating teachers fear it could impact their relationship with student teachers. Chambers and Armour (2012) proffer cooperating teachers not being involved in student teacher assessment, and perhaps feeling the assessment process is unfair and unbalanced, as reasons for acting as a defender of student teachers. That said, cooperating teachers in Hall et al.'s study (2018) did not express an interest in being involved in student teacher grading. Perhaps an unbalanced and unfair perception is the result of a short visit from a placement tutor, whereas the cooperating teacher is a constant presence in the school, or indeed cooperating teachers may relate to student teachers as they too have experience of being assessed as a student teacher. To reduce the reluctance of cooperating teachers critiquing student teachers, Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011) propose that placement tutors provide cooperating teachers with CPD on supervision and inform them of HEI expectations for student teachers and school placement. However, as seen in section 4.5.4., initiatives ran by Dunning et al. (2011) and Heinz and Fleming (2019) that included CPD did not guarantee cooperating teachers' full engagement with the process. Furthermore, the one-sided nature of Johnson and Napper-Owen's (2011) suggestion may be interpreted that the HEI knows better than the school. For example, Mtika et al. (2013) expounds the fragile nature of interactions: one cooperating teacher interpreted feedback from the placement tutor as a criticism of pupils and

emphasised that the HEI should be cognisant that the school was doing the HEI a favour by facilitating school placement and were in a better position to know their pupils. This emphasises the delicate nature of interactions between placement tutors and cooperating teachers and the importance of delving into and appreciating the competence of different communities of practice across the landscape of practice.

4.10.2. Dyadic interactions between placement tutors and student teachers

While student teachers generally highly regard placement tutor feedback (Hall et al., 2019), the variation in support and feedback is a concern of some student teachers, with several feeling the need to focus on certain placement tutor's expectations to succeed in school placement (Hall et al., 2018). O'Grady et al. (2018) acknowledges the challenge of differing expectations between placement tutors as it can depend on whether they are a retired teacher, a part-time staff member, or a full-time staff member, even though professional development aims for equity in student teacher support. By contrast, placement tutors in Hall et al.'s study (2018) emphasised the importance of consistency in their feedback and assessment through cross moderation, which demonstrates different perspectives amongst partners can occur.

Placement tutors in Walsh and Dolan's study (2019) and Fitzpatrick's study (2021) note the role of placement tutors is to provide student teachers with both support and assessment, with placement tutors in the former study aware that student teachers focused more on their summative role. Walsh and Dolan (2019) reported that placement tutors therefore preferred to co-construct feedback with their student teachers, which can contribute to relationship building. According to Fitzpatrick (2021), when placement tutors build relationships with student teachers it can help placement tutors become more comfortable with challenging student

teachers in their learning, as opposed to telling them what to do. However, Fitzpatrick (2021) found that the short timeframe for post lesson observation meetings can lead to placement tutors telling student teachers what to do, rather than listening to their perspectives; a finding that Burns and Badiali (2015) also report. This restricts conversations to surface level conversations which can hinder relationship building (Fitzpatrick, 2021). At times placement tutors in Walsh and Dolan's study (2019) felt they had to tell student teachers what to do and assert their professional stance to communicate appropriate feedback when there were strong differences in opinions. In some instances, student teachers did not want to agree with their placement tutor's feedback, for fear it would impact their summative grade, showcasing the impact of power dynamics within this relationship.

4.10.3. Dyadic interactions between cooperating teachers and student teachers

As the school placement period is short, the relationship between student teachers and cooperating teachers is formed quickly (Hopper, 2001). Student teachers in Hanly and Heinz's study (2022) described school placement as enjoyable when they had a positive relationship with cooperating teachers and when they were regarded as a team member within the school, such as the reciprocal sharing of advice and resources. Hall et al. (2018:11) suggests that student teachers should be provided with 'the opportunity to observe teaching, co-plan and co-teach with their CTs [cooperating teachers]', which was the case for a student teacher in O'Grady et al.'s study (2018:376) who found that it, along with the cooperating teacher observing the student teacher's classes, led to a 'reciprocal learning relationship'. The formation of reciprocal learning relationships was also reported in a study by Mitchell et al. (2023). Additionally, Mitchell et al. (2023) and O'Grady et al. (2018) found that cooperating teachers felt they had a sense of responsibility towards student teachers because they too required support from cooperating teachers as a student teacher. Within the former study,

cooperating teachers wanted to recreate the same support they received as student teachers. Within the latter study, the cooperating teacher initiated the mentoring of the student teacher as he attended the same HEI. While this could be commended because he may have experienced the same HEI expectations and can support the student teacher in this regard, it can also be laden with assumptions of what the student teacher needs based on his experience as a student teacher, which may differ from the student teacher's needs and experience. This is noteworthy as three out of the four cooperating teachers in this study graduated from the same ITE programme as the student teachers of this study (Chapter Six, table 6.2).

O'Grady et al. (2018) found that professional conversations between student teachers and cooperating teachers were not the norm and as mentioned previously, Young and McPhail (2015) suggest that many cooperating teachers find it difficult to critique student teachers as it could negatively affect their relationship. A lack of time to meet is also a challenge to engage in professional conversations (Young & McPhail, 2016; Hall et al., 2018; Farrell, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2023), thus cooperating teachers in O'Grady's study (2017) suggest they should have timetabled meetings. The necessity of meetings was acknowledged by student teachers in Johnston's study (2016) as expectations could be discussed, which in turn enhances their professional development. This is supported by Ferrier-Kerr (2009:793) who found that cooperating teachers and student teachers 'who identify and understand their own and each other's roles are more able to support the growth of the professional relationship' and this open communication allowed student teachers to seek support from their cooperating teacher as their school placement progressed. Discussions between this dyad in Johnston's study (2016) had varying levels of success as some student teachers succeeded in having productive conversations, while other student teachers struggled with this, mainly due to their cooperating teachers being busy with other responsibilities. In the latter scenario, some student teachers

were unclear about an aspect of their work but did not approach their cooperating teacher, resulting in some the student teachers not feeling like a member of their community of practice, which affected their confidence and motivation. There was also a variation in what the cooperating teacher focused on compared to what was important to the student teacher when planning lessons. In some instances, this led to conflicting pedagogical approaches, for example one cooperating teacher disregarded the student teacher's methodologies, leading to the student teacher feeling disheartened and pressurised to teach like the cooperating teacher (ibid). Similarly, a student teacher in O'Grady et al.'s study (2018) was frustrated with a lack of autonomy on how to teach the cooperating teacher's class and when their opinions were at odds with each other, student teachers would not voice their opinion. Such frustrations mirror the experience of student teachers in Johnston's study (2016) who felt undermined when teachers interrupted their lesson and overtook the teaching, jeopardising the trust and respect towards student teachers. Johnston (2016:543) also found that some teachers did not want to give student teachers responsibility for examination classes, which was perceived as their 'lack of confidence in the student's abilities', while Woodgate-Jones (2012) found schools are concerned about potential disruption to pupil learning during school placement. Interestingly, Drave's study (2008) found that cooperating teachers with more experience were less likely to collaborate with student teachers, with one cooperating teacher unsure that student teachers were ready to take on the responsibility of her class. The principle of trust is missing in these examples, which goes against student teachers learning to teach in a safe and supported space (Johnston, 2016). Instead, the power dimension of exploitation, without facilitating exploration (March, 1991), leads to the reproduction of practice and norms that allow unequal power relations to exist. Furthermore, the principle of reciprocity i.e., what each member brings to the partnerships is valued, is not evident. This places the student teacher as a temporary guest in a school, that is not an accepted member of a community of practice, and instead student teachers

are regarded as legitimate peripheral participants, in the form of an apprentice, who should mimic the cooperating teacher's practice. As a result, student teachers can feel marginalised, which negatively impacts their learning (ibid). This was not the case for all student teachers as some were encouraged to try out their own pedagogical approaches, consequently the experience of student teachers varied greatly, from them feeling part of a community of practice within the school to feeling completely isolated. Variation of student teacher experience due to differing levels of cooperating teacher support was also reported by student teachers in Hanly and Heinz' study (2022).

The literature reviewed highlights that interactions between student teachers and cooperating teachers varies considerably, with their relationship ranging from anything between dysfunctional to productive (O'Grady et al., 2018). When student teachers are supported by cooperating teachers it contributes significantly to student teacher confidence and acceptance into the community of teachers. In other instances, a lack of time and the cooperating teacher's other responsibilities act as barriers for fruitful interactions, with some student teachers opting to conceal their difficulties, rather than seek advice, thus isolating them from the school community. Furthermore, when student teachers are prevented from experimenting with methodologies it can negatively impact this dyadic relationship. These variation in experiences illuminate the need for consistent and equitable support for student teachers, which seems feasible in light of findings by Young et al. (2022:470) that reported that the COVID-19 pandemic led to cooperating teachers taking a more 'structured mentoring role' inclusive of 'observation, feedback and professional conversations' when placement tutors could not visit schools, resulting in enhanced interactions between cooperating teachers and student teachers.

4.10.4. Triadic interactions between placement tutors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers

Lillejord and Børte (2016) state that members of the triad are not equal; however, each party should be valued equally as they all have a vital role to play in effective school-university partnerships (Farrell, 2021), thus valuing the principle of reciprocity. When collaborative triads are forged, it can be significant in the professional development of student teachers (Steadman & Brown, 2011) and all members of the triad, with Mtika et al. (2013) advocating for cogenerative conversations to expand beyond the assessment of student teachers to allow for mutual gains.

Mtika et al. (2013) reported that triadic relationships, which involved placement tutors and cooperating teachers jointly observing student teacher practice, resulted in a more reliable overview of student teacher practice, as well as student teachers receiving consistent feedback. This approach led to cooperating teachers feeling recognised as a partner in ITE. Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011) also report that triadic partnerships are more effective when cooperating teachers have a more hands-on approach, with Nguyen (2009) emphasising that all voices need to be heard. Nguyen (2009:662) found that even when members of the triad did not share the same opinion, all perceptions had associated strengths and limitations and 'rather than insisting on reaching consensus, they worked hard at honouring each other's voice', an opinion that aligns with the landscape of practice framework. This finding differs to Lillejord and Børte's (2016) research mapping on school-university partnerships, which revealed that instead of members of the triad amalgamating their knowledge to enhance learning, tensions prevailed. This therefore results in overt conflict (Contu & Willmott, 2003), but it also reinforces Foucault's (1982) point that power results from individuals acting on the actions of others, hence individuals have the power to not act or react to others.

Much of the literature highlights differing expectations and power dynamics as sources of tension within triadic relationships, thus showcasing the negative impact of power differentials. Johnston (2016:543) describes potential clashes arising from some teachers being cynical about placement tutors, who they deem to be in an 'ivory-tower remoteness from classroom reality', that seek lesson plans that are 'overly time-consuming and remote from the practices of experienced teachers', while providing pedagogical suggestions that were 'unworkable'. Tensions also result from different expectations in relation to each other's role, particularly if these expectations are not discussed prior to school placement (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Nguyen, 2020). Lillejord and Børte (2016) reported that student teachers experienced loyalty tugs if they felt they had to choose the side of either their cooperating teacher or placement tutor when they had different opinions and expectations. Hopper (2001) maintains such differences can be challenging for student teachers who might be reaffirmed in their practice by cooperating teachers but asked to develop further by their placement tutors. It could be argued that the Irish system of school placement does not unearth or confront these difficulties as it is rare for cooperating teachers and placement tutors to discuss student teacher practice at length (Hall et al., 2018) so it may not be obvious to the placement tutor that their advice may conflict with the cooperating teacher. This highlights a potential flaw in support for the student teacher who may have to navigate this alone. O'Grady et al. (2018) also identified the differing expectations between schools and universities as challenging for student teachers in one Irish ITE programme, particularly when the cooperating teacher and placement tutor did not interact, thus the student teacher had to contend with this challenge alone. As a result, some student teachers believed that silencing their opinion, rather than sharing it with a cooperating teacher and/or placement tutor, was the best option. In such instances, the researchers suggest that student teachers should be made aware of their distancing behaviour so they can reflect on their interactions, or lack of interaction, with

cooperating teachers and placement tutors, highlighting that engagement, rather than avoidance, can support their professional development. Aligning with this, Conway et al. (2009: xix) state that school placement and ITE should prepare student teachers for 'active engagement in teaching as a professional learning community', with Young et al. (2015:28) maintaining that for the triad to work effectively, 'all participants must...have a voice in the process'.

According to Hopper (2001), the benefits of a three-way dialogue include providing space for the placement tutor to role-model professional conversations and mentoring of the student teacher and the cooperating teacher articulating their observations of student teacher practice so that any issues can be resolved. However, Mauri et al. (2019) identified sensitivities regarding a three-way dialogue, as some individuals in their study did not want to partake in triadic dialogues, which may be due to a poor relationship or lack of a relationship between triad members. One reason for relationship difficulties is the presence of power dynamics, which is explored in the next section.

4.11. Power dynamics

Kensington-Miller et al. (2021) reports that all landscapes of practice contain power relations, validating the points in chapter two (2.2.1) whereby social interactions inevitable involve forms of power. This is evidenced in many previously cited studies (Long et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2014; O'Grady et al., 2018; Walsh & Dolan, 2019; Mauri et al., 2019). As outlined in chapter two, how power manifests itself can either facilitate or impede relationships and learning, and some of the points in this chapter thus far have shown negative consequences of power dynamics, such as student teachers silencing their opinions. However, reemphasising the point

of Foucault (2000), power can be seen in a positive light when used for the productive formation of knowledge. To achieve this productivity of power, Day et al. (2021) maintains that successful partnerships are built on all parties willing to learn from each other, without one expertise valued over the other, aligning with the principles for structuring school-university partnerships as suggested by Kruger et al. (2009). Partnerships require 'mutual respect and shared values', 'heterarchical', rather than 'hierarchical' relationships', and the integration of 'expertise...to enhance the joint creation of knowledge...' where all partners have 'ownership' within the process' (Day et al., 2021:3). Johnston (2016) suggests that partners should discuss how to rebalance negative power dynamics during school placement, and they should give student teachers a voice on what type of advice and support they receive. Mockler (2013) suggests time and readiness are required to reduce power relations, where partners move away from preconceptions of each other and engage in joint knowledge creation. To shift from such preconceptions, Heinz and Fleming (2019:1304) 'emphasise the need to conceptualise' school-university partnerships 'as a social practice mediated by participants' identities, desires, perceptions, relationships and knowledge, as well as past, present and imagined future experiences', while teacher educators and policy makers need 'to pay attention to how existing identities, power relations and contractual responsibilities mediate, constitute and constrain ITE praxis'.

As stated in chapter two, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) acknowledge that power dynamics can lead to the acceptance or resistance of knowledge and/or competency amongst and across communities. In some instances, resistance is masked through practitioners creating 'an appearance of compliance while doing their own thing' (ibid:23), which links with the covert form of power that aims to avoid conflict (Contu & Willmott, 2003). O'Grady et al. (2018:375) also gives a nod to implicit power dynamics: one example was a cooperating

teacher becoming critical of a student teacher immediately prior to a visit from the placement tutor, with the researchers suggesting this may be due to the cooperating teacher being 'self-conscious or insecure in her capability as a mentor and was thus setting up deniability if the university tutor considered the lesson to be of low standard'. Power differentials also prevented some placement tutors in Hall et al.'s study (2018) from suggesting that student teachers observe other teachers' classes because they, along with the student teacher, were guests in the school so did not feel they could do so, again mirroring a covert form of power and rendering them powerless within the school community (Contu & Willmott, 2003). These examples show there can be a range of power differentials at play, that can be both implicit and explicit. It is therefore clear that power relations require consideration during school-university partnerships as they can impede relationships and, in some instances, lead to false compliance or resistance, rather than genuine partnerships, highlighting that power is not viewed in a positive light (Foucault, 2000). Consequently, this study investigated the experiences of key partners to ascertain if there was such false compliance and explore ways to move beyond mere compliance to a form of collaboration for school-university partnerships.

4.12. Conclusion

The reviewed literature demonstrates the complexity of school-university partnerships as partnerships are not static entities and they are constantly evolving. Additionally, the literature illuminates the multifaceted roles and responsibilities of key partners, which contributes to the complexity of partnerships. Furthermore, the literature illustrates the inequity of student teacher support, with some student teachers opting to become invisible learners during school placement due to power dynamics, while other student teachers are positively supported. The literature suggests three principles to structure effective school-university partnerships, which include trust, mutuality, and reciprocity (Kruger et al., 2009), and while some studies show

success in achieving aspects of these principles, along with strides in some initiatives to build partnerships, there are inconsistencies in dyadic and triadic interactions that ultimately lead to unstable school-university partnership structures. The instability of partnerships is further exacerbated with a lack of resources and professional development, and an unbalanced approach to partnerships whereby they are mandated for some and an opt in for others.

This study contributes to the conversation on school-university partnerships through the lens of a social theory of learning frame. The use of this framework allows for a myriad of experiences and opinions to be garnered: how this was achieved is detailed next in the methodology chapter.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This study explored the perspectives and interactions of key partners in supporting student teachers learning to teach in one ITE programme and was guided by two research questions:

- What are the experiences of student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers in supporting student teachers in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?

- How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in enhancing school-university partnerships?

The methodological approach to investigate the research questions is presented in this chapter. The rationale for an interpretivist paradigm, along with its accompanying ontological and epistemological stance, and qualitative methodological approach is provided. My positionality and axiological assumptions are discussed. The research design is detailed, stating the site of research, the research participants, the methods used, and adherence to ethical protocols. The mode of reflexive thematic analysis used concludes the chapter.

5.2. Adopting a post-positivist paradigm

A post-positivist paradigm stems from the ontological position that individual experience can lead to multiple realities, with different realities co-existing (Cohen et al., 2018). The literature review highlighted the various realities of school-university partnerships amongst individuals, while this study attests that knowledge is produced through exploring the understandings and views of student teachers, cooperating teachers, placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, and

principals, which is subjective and personal (Ritchie et al., 2013), thus post-positivism is the most appropriate paradigm. Interpretivism, an iteration of a post-positivist paradigm, is applicable for this research as 'the central endeavour...of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience...efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within' (Cohen et al., 2018:19). In this study, the interpretivist paradigm takes the ontological position that reality is created by student teachers, placement tutors, cooperating teachers, pedagogy lecturers, and principals, and considers their various perspectives on their roles and collaborations during school-university partnerships (Scotland, 2017). From such investigations, the findings provide recommendations to help structure school-university partnerships, which is detailed in chapter eight. It is essential to note that participant viewpoints are open to subjective interpretation by the researcher, based on the researcher's experience and worldview (Cohen et al., 2018). With this, interpretive validity requires interrogation. Interpretive validity 'refers to the degree to which the qualitative researcher accurately understands research participants viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences and portrays them in the research report', thus providing 'a valid account of these perspectives' (Johnson & Christensen, 2017:300&301), all of which is detailed in section 5.8.

5.2.1. Epistemological stance: the need for a constructivist approach

An epistemology based on constructivism is appropriate as learning to teach is a social process. Knowledge and understanding on how to teach does not occur in isolation (Schwandt, 2000). Instead, constructivism, aligning with a social theory of learning, is built on the premise that individuals are active participants in making sense of their environment, acknowledging that 'truth and meaning...are created by the subject's interactions with the world' (Gray, 2018:22). However, the environment is not the same for each research participant (Figure 5.1). The

cooperating teacher's and principal's environment is the school and the student teacher and placement tutor temporarily visit the school during school placement. Typically, cooperating teachers and principals do not visit HEIs for the purpose of school-university partnerships, yet the cooperating teacher's role expands during school placement, as they now assume the role of both teacher and teacher educator. Student teachers' primary setting is the HEI but with the aim of working in the school setting and must navigate both environments during school placement. A level of ambiguity and contradiction arises for student teachers through transitioning between a school and a HEI because they are both a student and a teacher. The environment of the pedagogy lecturer and the placement tutor is in the HEI; however part-time placement tutors may be working in a different setting, meaning that part-time placement tutors could have up to three workplace settings during school placement. A part-time placement tutor may experience levels of ambiguity and contradictions, particularly if a classroom-based teacher, where their environment is the school but is navigating the HEI environment at the same time, especially if they find a disconnect between both settings. While these examples detail the physical work settings of each partner, the purposeful environment also differs between the school and the HEI as the school represents the teaching of subjects to pupils, whereas the HEI involves teaching student teachers how to teach pupils. A constructivist epistemology caters for the complexity of these physical and mental environments as it analyses the multi-layered process in which knowledge is formed (Neimeyer & Levitt, 2001).
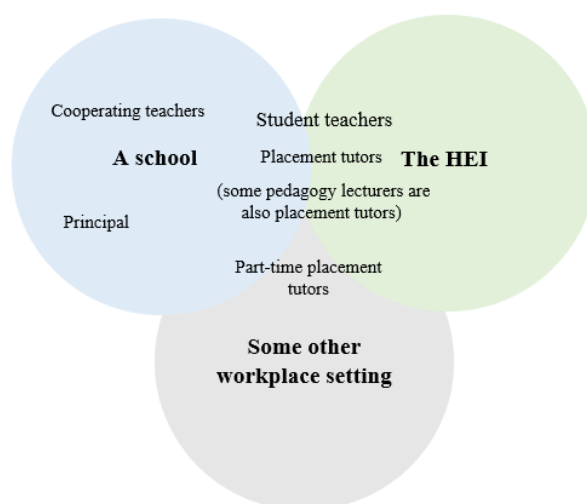
Figure 5.1: The workplace environments for each research participant.

5.2.2. Methodological approach: accessing experience and opinions across the landscape of practice

My epistemological stance, aligning to an interpretivist paradigm, meant a qualitative approach was most appropriate as I acknowledge the importance of hearing different individual experiences to better understand their practice. This influenced the open-ended nature of the research questions (Gray, 2018). Qualitative research seeks to understand the lived experiences of participants when there is either a dearth of information on a phenomenon, or to acquire new insights on a topic (ibid). The latter applies to this study: new insights on school-university partnerships is timely with the publication of *Céim* (Teaching Council, 2020) and the global focus on school-university partnerships. To facilitate a qualitative approach, open-ended questions were included in all research instruments to 'empower individuals to share their stories' (Creswell & Poth, 2018:45). Qualitative research therefore allows for an insight into participants thoughts, rather than surface level interpretations (Cohen et al., 2018). The research design provides an account of a 'larger picture' i.e., the landscape of practice, reporting 'multiple perspectives' and 'identifying the many factors involved in a situation' (Creswell & Poth, 2018:44).

Qualitative research aims to 'minimise the power relationships...between a researcher and participants' (ibid:45); however, qualitative research does not guarantee that power differentials will not impact participant responses. Additionally, as I carried out the research in my workplace, it increased the chances of power dynamics affecting the study: the steps taken to address this are discussed in this chapter.

5.3. Positionality: my insider and outsider position across the landscape of practice

I am an insider in some aspects of this research (Rowe, 2014) and as positionality can impact this research, I must acknowledge it (Brooks et al., 2014) (Figure 5.2).
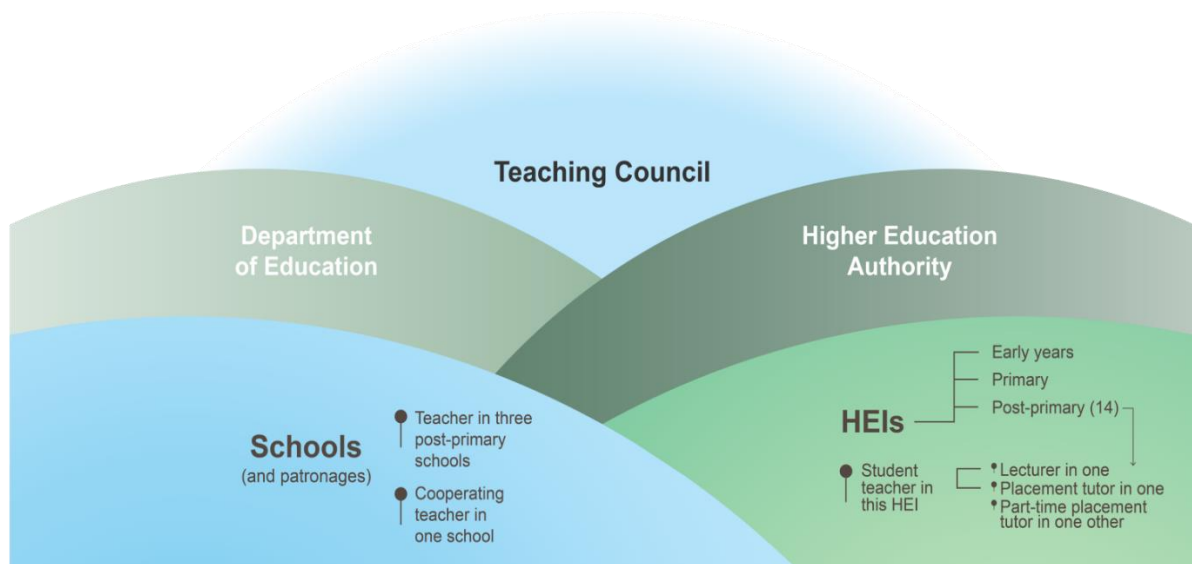
Figure 5.2: The positions/roles on the landscape of practice that I have occupied.[25]

My insider position relates to working as a pedagogy lecturer and a placement tutor in the HEI in which this research is set. I teach pedagogy modules, where the aim is to prepare and support student teachers in becoming a teacher, which includes preparation for school placement. As I design and deliver pedagogy lectures, as well as being a placement tutor as part of my job, there is a commonality in the language of my lectures and the assessment criteria that guides

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[25] This illustration was created with the help of Novartis Business Services.

placement tutors during school placement (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As a result, I am an insider of the HEI, as opposed to a 'disenfranchised outsider' as noted in the literature review, whereby many part-time placement tutors can feel like an outsider to the HEI (Slick, 1998). While not aligning with a disenfranchised outsider, I am aware that a part-time placement tutor has the same responsibilities as a full-time placement tutor, but they can experience the role differently (while also recognising that full-time placement tutors may have different experiences to each other). Furthermore, I was a part-time placement tutor for another HEI and in that context, I could relate to the feeling of a 'disenfranchised outsider' (ibid). For that reason, I recruited both full-time and part-time placement tutors for this study. The selection process is outlined in section 5.4.1.

Regarding the triad of this study, I am positioned closest to the full-time placement tutors and student teachers as we share the same working environment. Common expectations and intentions are communicated between student teachers and placement tutors during lectures, school placement briefings, and during school placement, which correlates with Rowe (2014:3) who attests 'the closer the researcher is positioned to the participants, the more likely that there are common expectations, intentions and power equity'. However, as I assess student teachers as a placement tutor, there is not power equity. To account for power relations with student teachers I did not recruit student teachers that I have been a placement tutor for. I also ensured their anonymity so they would not be identifiable to readers of the research, most importantly their lecturers, placement tutors, cooperating teachers, or principals. This is further addressed under ethical considerations (section 5.7).

Common expectations and intentions are prevalent amongst placement tutors; however, discrepancy in power equity cannot be fully ruled out between myself and placement tutors as

I was reporting findings of how placement tutors carried out their role, and there was potential for some findings to not align with the practice encouraged by the HEI. To limit the potential of placement tutors withholding aspects of their practice I emphasised that this study was not being carried out through this particular HEI, but through Maynooth University and their name would be replaced with a pseudonym. The information sheets and consent forms reinforced confidentiality and anonymity (Appendix E): this is discussed further under section 5.7.

I am not positioned as closely to cooperating teachers as I am to other triad members (Rowe, 2014). I do not work in the same setting as cooperating teachers, so I am not considered an insider, but I am not fully an outsider either. I have been a cooperating teacher previously. That said, my most recent cooperating teacher role was seven years ago so there have been policy changes since then. Moreover, I did not recruit cooperating teachers that I have worked with as a placement tutor because power dynamics could interfere with the process, therefore I am more so an outsider than an insider.

While I have identified my insider and outsider positions for this research, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009:61) suggest that:

> …as researchers we can only ever occupy the space between. We may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher...we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions.

Brannick and Coghlan (2007:70 as cited in Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) refer to potential 'loyalty tugs' in insider research. This is something I considered before carrying out this research in my workplace. I contemplated how to deal with potentially printing critical findings associated with how my colleagues and I carry out our roles. I had to decide whether the advantages outweighed the potential challenges. I concluded they did as I could better

understand the experiences and opinions of individuals and groupings across the landscape of practice and therefore could enhance my practice and contribute towards forging fruitful school-university partnerships for all parties.

An advantage of insider research is that I had easier access to participants to carry out this study; this is detailed in section 5.4.1. Another advantage is that insider status can result in participants being more open with the researcher since the researcher may be an accepted member of their community, thus leading to more in-depth data (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). On the other hand, colleagues may not feel comfortable to answer all questions honestly (Gray, 2018). I therefore considered having someone outside the HEI conduct the interviews and focus groups. After due consideration, I decided against this as I concluded that it could curtail the level of probing that may be required: I felt better positioned to probe responses as I had conducted a literature review on the research area. Furthermore, through probing and being involved in the process myself, it helped me clarify responses with participants in real time to help me reflect on their experiences. As I decided to conduct the interviews and focus groups myself, I did my utmost to encourage honest, open conversations and I had to take the responses given by participants at face value. As discussed above, power dynamics may impact how a participant responds to questions posed. My attempt to reduce potential power dynamics is discussed further later.

Aligning my positionality within an interpretivist paradigm, I acknowledge that I do not hold all the answers about the experiences of student teachers, cooperating teachers, placement tutors, and pedagogy lecturers by virtue of occupying these positions. Due to my insider status, I had to remember that 'holding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group' (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009:60) and 'even if it were possible to 'match'

biography-experience-identity profiles, there would always be significant points of difference' (Brooks et al., 2015:8). As a result, I aimed to construct knowledge with participants, that allowed their realities to be recognised, while acknowledging that their experiences cannot be generalised to others in their position. Reflecting on these points made me more aware of the discipline required for this research, all of which is explained throughout this chapter (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

5.4. The research design: accessing voices and positionings across the landscape of practice

The components of the qualitative research design are now detailed, which includes the site of research, the recruitment and selection process of participants, the data collection methods of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and qualitative questionnaires, and associated pilot studies, and the ethical protocols.

5.4.1. Site of research and the research participants

The research site was one concurrent ITE programme in Ireland (Chapter One, section 1.2.1). The concurrent structure was chosen due to my own familiarity with the programme, and because the Ed D programme is built on the premise of practitioners researching and enhancing their own practice (Maynooth University, 2023), therefore conducting researching in my workplace would support me in my job. The advantages and disadvantages of choosing my workplace as the research site was detailed in section 5.3. I sought and received permission to conduct this study from the Head of the School of Education and the Registrar of the HEI, in conjunction with receiving ethical approval from Maynooth University (Appendix F).

A non-random sampling technique of purposive sampling was chosen to recruit participants. Purposive sampling facilitates access to 'knowledgeable people' (Cohen et al., 2018:219) as it invites 'persons with specific characteristics to participate' in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:239). The specific characteristics for this study were student teachers on the concurrent post-primary ITE programme, post-primary placement tutors, and pedagogy lecturers from the same ITE programme, and cooperating teachers and principals in post-primary schools linked to the ITE programme that hosted student teachers in 2022. Within purposive sampling, criterion sampling was applied (Table 5.1) so participants met the 'particular criterion being studied' (Cohen et al., 2018:219). I originally hoped to recruit triads of a cooperating teacher, a placement tutor, and a student teacher that had worked together for this study, but that was dependent on the participants responding/consenting to this study. The response rate, detailed below, resulted in only one triad taking part in this study. There were also three sets of dyads, but some participants were not connected to other participants of this study (see Table 6.3).

Research participant	Inclusion criteria	Rationale
Student teachers	In second year of their ITE programme in the one HEI. Their first school placement.	Student teachers will have had no previous experience or interactions with placement tutors and cooperating teachers.
Placement tutors	Full-time or part-time placement tutor in the one HEI that worked with second-year student teachers. The placement tutor must have visited the second-year student teacher(s), therefore excluding placement tutors who had a professional dialogue with a student teacher.	An equal mix of both full-time and part-time placement tutors was sought because their experiences may differ due to their level of involvement with the HEI, thus facilitating multiple perspectives, aligning with a post-positivist paradigm. To exclude full-time or part-time placement tutors would reduce the possibility of contributing recommendations to both types of placement tutors. A placement tutor that did not have an onsite visit, and had a professional dialogue instead, was omitted from this study because communication was all online and the placement tutor did not visit the school, and due to the limited number of participants in the study, those that physically visited student teachers and cooperating teachers in schools were the focus.
Cooperating teachers	Currently a cooperating teacher for second-year student teacher(s) from the HEI.	Their experience of supporting student teachers needs to relate to the cohort of student teachers participating in this study. For example, student teachers in the latter stages of the programme may interact differently or receive a different level of support from cooperating teachers.
Pedagogy lecturers	Currently lecturing on pedagogy to prepare student teachers for school placement in the same HEI.	They have currently interacted with student teachers in preparation for school placement.
Principals	Hosting student teachers from the same HEI.	ITE programmes and structure of school placement can differ across HEIs, so it is important to get principal perspectives of school-university partnerships in relation to this HEI only. *It cannot be discounted that principals will not draw on experiences with other HEIs.

Table 5.1: Inclusion criteria and rationale for recruiting participants.

To recruit student teachers, I emailed all second-year student teachers from my Maynooth University email address, instead of my work email address, to highlight to student teachers that I was contacting them as a researcher as distinct from their lecturer (Appendix E). Five student teachers responded: one student teacher, randomly selected, took part in the pilot interview, while the remaining student teachers were included in the study. As there were more than 140 student teachers in this year group, this was a low response rate. The low response rate may be attributed to student teachers being on school placement and did not have time to participate. On reflection, I sent the invitation too close to school placement, instead I should have sent the email invitations once student teachers were finished school placement. Additionally, power dynamics could not be discounted as student teachers may worry their assessment could be impacted if they disclosed their opinions on the HEI, placement tutors, and pedagogy lecturers, especially as their summative school placement assessment had not been finalised by the time of the interview data collection.

To invite placement tutors and cooperating teachers to the study, the HEI's school placement office emailed the invitation to placement tutors and cooperating teachers on my behalf due to General Data Protection Regulation constraints (Appendix E). Eight placement tutors responded: two placement tutors did not fulfil the criteria as they had online professional dialogues with student teachers instead of an onsite school visit, and one placement tutor did not respond after their initial expression an interest. From the remaining placement tutors that were eligible, two were part-time and three were full-time placement tutors. I chose four placement tutors to have the same number participants as student teachers. To decide on which placement tutors to include, I chose the two part-time placement tutors, and from the full-time placement tutors, I chose those with the most and least amount of experience in the role. The full-time placement tutor that did not take part in the main study took part in the pilot instead.

The placement tutor profiles, with pseudonyms, are outlined in Table 5.2 and are expanded on in chapter six.

Participant *PT is used as an acronym for placement tutors*	Full-time or Part-time	Number of years as a placement tutor in the HEI
PT1	Full-time	1
PT2	Full-time	20-30*
PT3	Part-time	1
PT4	Part-time	3

Table 5.2: Profiles of participating placement tutors. *The exact year is not given for PT2 to ensure anonymity. The same rationale does not apply to PT1 as there were many first-time full-time placement tutors that academic year.

In relation to cooperating teachers, there was a low response rate of two cooperating teachers. Subsequently, when a reminder email was sent, another cooperating teacher volunteered. I required a fourth cooperating teacher to take part so there was an equal number of participants from the triad: the final cooperating teacher was recruited through word of mouth from a participating cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher profiles, with pseudonyms, are outlined in Table 5.3 and are expanded on in chapter six.

Participant *CT is used as an acronym for cooperating teachers*	Number years teaching	Number of years as a cooperating teacher
CT1	27	15
CT2	6	6
CT3	13	1
CT4	14	11

Table 5.3: Profiles of participating cooperating teachers.

I sent an email invitation to all six pedagogy lecturers in the HEI (Appendix E). This is a low number, so it was manageable to include all individuals: the response rate was four pedagogy lecturers. To contact principals, I retrieved email addresses from school websites and contacted forty-five schools that I knew hosted student teachers from the HEI. The response rate was low at three and when I sent a reminder email, the response rate increased to eight: in two cases, the deputy principal responded instead of the principal.

It was hoped that this sampling method provided a good representation of school-university partners within this one HEI, and this in turn has led to recommendations for their partnerships, although these findings are not aiming to be generalisable (Cohen et al., 2018). The recommendations are detailed in chapter eight.

5.4.2. Methods of data collection

Research instruments that allow participants to openly share their perspectives are vital, thus semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and qualitative questionnaires were chosen. Each instrument, with associated participants (Figure 5.3), are now detailed.
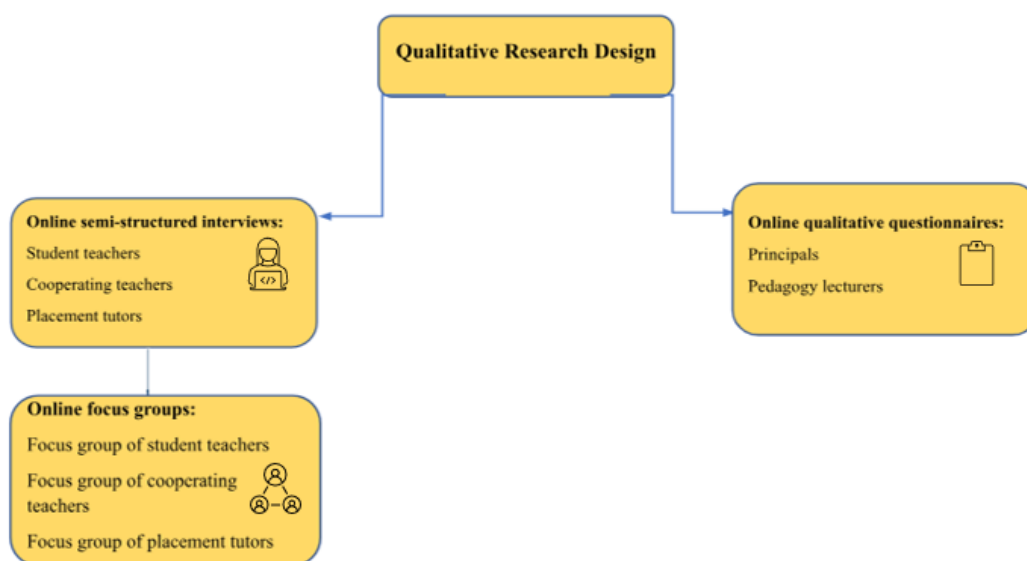
Figure 5.3: Qualitative research design.

5.4.2.1. Semi-structured interviews: individual members of the triad

The first stage of data collection was semi-structured interviews with four student teachers, four cooperating teachers, and four placement tutors, where I aimed to gain an understanding of their perceptions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2012) 'to unfold the meaning of their experience' (Creswell & Poth, 2018:3). The qualitative interviews aligned with the interpretivist paradigm as they allowed for 'ambiguity and contradictions' as 'they occur in participants', by catering for different perspectives and lived realities of the participants (Cohen et al., 2018:511). The responses contributed towards co-constructing information in relation to both research questions and I subsequently interpreted the responses, which is detailed in section 5.8. and the proceeding chapters (Cohen et al., 2018).

Considerations for conducting interviews

Before interviewing, I considered how prior assumptions owing to my positionality could interfere with the interviews. I planned the questions carefully, resulting in all questions being open-ended, allowing research participants to share detailed information on their thoughts and experiences (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) (Appendix G). I planned probes to help participants expand on their answers (ibid; Gray, 2018), which catered for new or unexpected issues to be dealt with as they arose, rather than answers being restricted by predetermined questions (ibid). While I considered my positionality from my own viewpoint, a challenge of insider status is the possibility of participants presuming that I can relate to their opinions and experience 'and therefore fail to explain their individual experience fully' (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009:58). This occurred once when one placement tutor stated, 'I know we've had these discussions before...'. The significance of the skill of probing was important in this scenario so that the placement tutor was encouraged to clarify her position.

Power differentials negatively impacting interviewee responses was another consideration I tried to address to facilitate as honest and open conversations as possible (Mears, 2017). I assured participants that their opinion and experiences were valuable, that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, and they were informed of the ethical protocols to ensure their anonymity during and after interviews (Appendix E). As I work with participants beyond the scope of this research, I emphasised that the study would not be spoken of in an informal setting outside the remit of the study to safeguard against future power dynamics.

I wanted the interviews to be as unintrusive as possible (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018) so I worked around what suited the participants: the interviews were online which allowed participants to choose a location for interviewing that was most convenient for them and removed the need to travel. Moreover, I originally considered conducting interviews during school placement but found that the timing was unsuitable as it was a pressurised time for some participants, so I changed all the interviews to post-school placement. The timing change potentially meant more fruitful conversations could happen, as participants had time to reflect on the experience. With that change, I approached the process of arranging and conducting interviews in the same manner with each participant, so each sub-group was treated equally (Gray, 2018).

The interviews spanned a three-month period (Figure 5.4), and once they were completed and a level of data analysis was applied to each interview (described in section 5.8), I moved to the second phase of data collection, the focus groups.
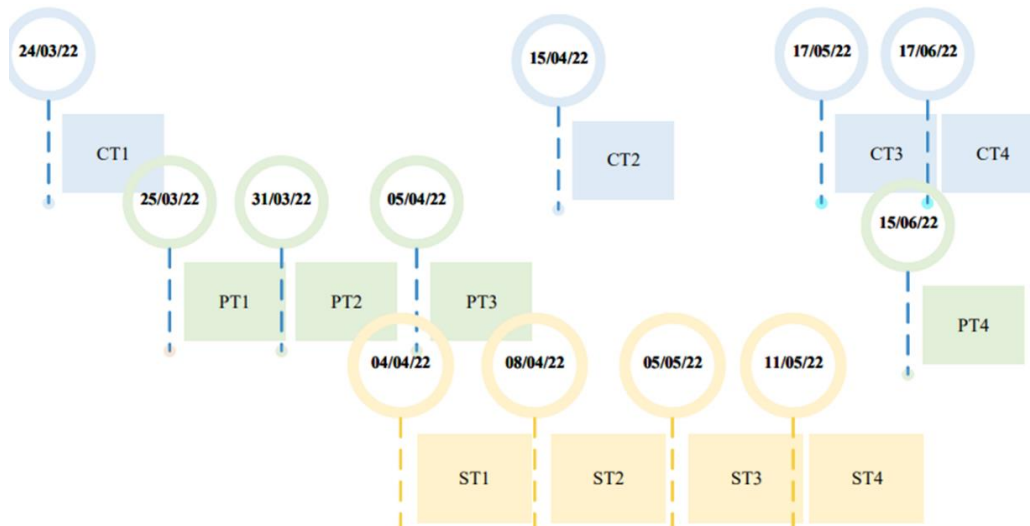
Figure 5.4: Interview timeline.

5.4.2.2. Focus groups

Once the interviews were concluded and preliminary analysis was completed, I structured topics and questions for the focus groups (Acocella & Cataldi, 2019). The focus groups were also conducted online via Microsoft teams and consisted of the same participants from the interviews, with the participants grouped according to their role i.e., a focus group of student teachers, a focus group of cooperating teachers, and a focus group of placement tutors: the rationale for this is detailed later. While semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their individualised experiences and perspectives, the use of focus groups meant some of these insights could be further explored in a group setting. This therefore provided an additional layer to the epistemological standpoint that there is no single reality as it clearly showcased differences, as well as similarities, in experiences and realities of the participants. Focus groups allow for 'shared and unshared attitudes and experiences' to be identified (Gray, 2018:461) and ascertained if there was a collective viewpoint from participants about their role, the role of other members of the triad, and the opportunities and challenges associated with school-university partnerships (Silverman, 2014). Moreover, it allowed for social interactions and communication to happen in real time between a community of practice. This meant that participants could listen to other viewpoints, which can trigger thoughts that may not have been

126

considered during individual interviews, leading to new insights for participants (Gray, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). While participants spoke of their interactions and communications with others in their interviews, levels of interactions and communication could be witnessed using focus groups (Cohen et al., 2018). On this note, it was a means of exploring if the participants possessed comfort in having conversations with members of a community of practice. It gave an insight into 'understanding the (everyday) use of language' of participants when speaking about the process of supporting student teachers learning to teach and school-university partnerships (Gibbs, 2017:190).

Structuring the focus groups

Focus groups with members that had the same role was chosen for a variety of reasons. One reason for this was to create a safe space for participants to express their viewpoint (Gray, 2018) as there are potential power relations between the triad, such as placement tutors summatively assessing student teachers. School placement is high stakes for student teachers in this ITE programme as a failed assessment means that they cannot progress to the next year. Even if the placement tutor and the student teacher have not worked together on school placement, the placement tutor may be a lecturer of the student teacher or could be appointed as the student teacher's placement tutor in subsequent years. While the professionalism of the placement tutor is not in question, it could impact the comfort of a student teacher to contribute to the discussion, therefore I did not want student teachers to feel powerless in such a scenario. This is just one example of power dynamics that could emerge, and with this being an interpretivist study, I wanted to understand potential power dynamics if it was mentioned by participants and provide them with the opportunity to expand on this if appropriate. Additionally, if I used heterogeneity focus groups i.e., a focus group of a cooperating teacher, placement tutor, and student teachers, one or two members of the triad could potentially

dominate the discussion, suppressing the voice of others, leading to more power differentials whereby individuals could feel powerless within a focus group.

Another reason for structuring focus groups according to their individual role was to allow participants to hear various perspectives from those considered to be in the same role/community of practice as them. I use the term 'considered' here mostly in reference to this study's cooperating teachers. The cooperating teachers were from different schools; therefore, they are not colleagues of each other, meaning they have not experienced being in a direct community of practice with each other[26]. Cohen et al. (2018) believes that focus groups are more productive when they are made up of participants who do not know each other. Participants not knowing each other in this instance is advantageous: if cooperating teachers from the one school took part in this study, the findings would only be representative of one school's experience, limiting the opportunity for multiple realities being shared. This structure contrasts with the student teachers who may know each other from studying in the same ITE programme. That said, it is not guaranteed student teachers know each other as they may be in a different class group to other participating student teachers, or they may not have interacted with each other owing to the large number of student teachers in their year. In relation to the placement tutors, the placement tutors meet for professional development days and may work together supporting the same student teachers; however, if the placement tutors did not have the same student teacher on school placement, they may have limited interactions. Returning to the point of hearing different perspectives from those that have the same role, listening to others invites participants to reflect and elaborate on their own positioning, and realities of their role compared to how others carry out the same role (Gibbs, 2017; Gray, 2018).

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[26] Even though one cooperating teacher was recruited by word of mouth by another cooperating teacher, they have not worked together.

Considerations for conducting focus groups

One potential challenge of focus groups is an imbalance in contributions from participants, with some members dominating the discourse (Gray, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). From conducting individual interviews, I had a sense of how comfortable and forthcoming, or not, participants were with their answers. I planned prompts, probes, and phrases to redirect questions to give all participants a chance to voice their opinion and experiences. At the same time, I was cognisant not to offend participants by moving away from their points, therefore my use of language was predetermined. Like interviews, I sent the topics and questions to all participants prior to the focus group (Appendix H), affording participants the opportunity to reflect on the topics prior to meeting in a group environment, which may have helped their level of participation.

The focus groups spanned a three-week period (Figure 5.5): there were intervals between each focus group so I could bring insights from one focus group into another focus group. The focus groups were then analysed, which in turn required me to return to my analysis of interviews and extract pertinent themes from a combination of both methods (discussed later).

24/10/22	09/10/22	15/10/22
Focus group of cooperating teachers	Focus group of placement tutors	Focus group of student teachers
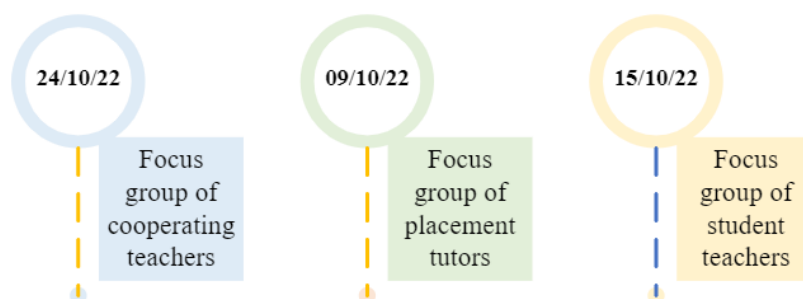
Figure 5.5: Focus group timeline and structure.

5.4.2.3. Questionnaires

While the focus of this research was the triad, it was important to include representation of other partners across the landscape of practice that support student teachers, therefore I

gathered data using online questionnaires for pedagogy lecturers and principals that host student teachers from the same HEI (Appendix I). I did not use questionnaires in the traditional sense of gathering large amounts of data. Instead, I used qualitative questionnaires with small cohorts. As stated, the sample of pedagogy lecturers (n=4) and principals (n=8) was small, so it was feasible to use 'more open and word-based' questions than what are usually associated with questionnaires: this invited detailed responses from participants, again aligning with an interpretivist paradigm (Cohen et al., 2018:474).

An advantage of using questionnaires, that was not possible for interviews and focus groups, was that I was not present when participants were completing the questionnaire. This had a dual advantage, it meant that my insider status or axiological assumptions were less likely to interfere with participants responses. It also allowed participants more time to think through their responses. There were disadvantages to this as I could not probe any of the responses given and this formed the rationale for not using questionnaires for student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers as they were the core focus of this study. To counteract the disadvantage of not being able to probe principals and pedagogy lecturers' responses, there was space to elaborate after several questions, and the concluding question gave participants the opportunity to add anything that they considered important that was not in the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were created via Microsoft forms as it was easy to create and collect answers, but more importantly answers were secure on my Maynooth University account. As alluded, the questions were mostly qualitative in nature, and for questions that required a quantitative response, such as yes or no, there was space for the respondent to elaborate on their answer. The questionnaires were categorised into sections to help cluster topics and clarify

the aim of the questions being asked (Cohen et al., 2018). The pedagogy lecturer questionnaire explored the lecturers' experiences and opinion on 1. how their role supports school placement, 2. the work of placement tutors, 3. the work of cooperating teachers, and 4. school-university partnerships (Appendix I). The principal questionnaire investigated the experience and opinions of principals on 1. how they structure school placement in their school, 2. the expectations and role of the HEI, 3. expectations and role of the cooperating teacher, 4. expectations and role of the placement tutor, and 5. school-university partnerships (Appendix I).

5.5. Pilot study

The interviews and questionnaires were piloted before the main study. The focus groups were not piloted as there were not enough research volunteers to structure pilot focus groups. As stated earlier, one full-time placement tutor took part in the pilot interview, rather than the main study. For cooperating teachers and student teachers, I piloted the interviews with a cooperating teacher that I worked with previously and a student teacher from a different year group as I did not want to take away from the pool of potential participants for the main study. For the same reason, I piloted the questionnaire with a pedagogy lecturer in a different HEI and a principal in a school who did not host a second-year student teacher in the 2022 academic year.

For both methods, piloting helped ensure that the questions were clear, that they contributed towards answering the research questions, and that the questions were not leading. From piloting the interviews, I noticed I had not gained enough understanding on the role perception of individuals; therefore, I added in the Teaching Council's (2021a) roles and responsibilities from their *Guidelines on School Placement* as an artefact during the main interviews for cooperating teachers and placement tutors. I did not use this for the student teacher interviews,

instead it was used prior to the focus group: I sent the guidelines in the form of a questionnaire[27] and I brought some of the responses to the focus group (discussed in chapter six). The rationale for using a different approach for student teachers was that I did not want to overwhelm student teachers with the list of their roles and responsibilities prior to receiving their school placement grade as it may have influenced their responses. By the time of the focus groups, student teachers had received their results.

For the pilot interviews, I sent the questions to the participants in advance, affording participants time to think through the questions. The pilot interviews revealed that some questions led to repetitive responses, and there was one question where the interviewee was unsure what the question was asking, therefore some questions were restructured.

The pilot interview also helped me with my interview skills, as well as identifying whether my axiological assumptions appeared during interviews. I recorded the interviews on Microsoft Teams, so it was useful to watch my interactions with participants that were not immediately evident during the interview. In one pilot interview when a participant stated an aspect of their experience that reflected my experience I interjected with a response 'I also find that'. It was important to counteract this for the main interviews, as it is important to have consistent interactions with all interviewees (Gray, 2018) and while I had an awareness of this during the pilot interview, it was only when I looked back at the recorded interview that I noticed that this reaction against a mainly neutral reaction to other responses may indicate to participants that I preferred some responses over others. It was important to notice this prior to conducting interviews and focus groups, but this neutral stance may have resulted in some participants

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[27] The list of roles and responsibilities (provided in chapter six) were inputted as questions into a Microsoft form and student teachers had the option to select either agree, disagree, partially agree but not fully, or unsure what this role and responsibility means.

during the interviews asking 'did I answer that right?': in a way they were looking for approval on their responses. I reassured participants that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, as reacting positively or negatively towards answers could lead to potential interview bias (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018).

Piloting was crucial for the questionnaires as I was not present when they were being filled out, so if a question was unclear, it could have affected the response rate to that question, which could spoil part of the data (Cohen et al., 2018). Like the interviews, piloting the questionnaire reduced the number of questions as there was a level of repetition evident. Furthermore, piloting determined how long the questionnaire would approximately take to fill out. The short completion time was used as a method to encourage pedagogy lecturers and principals to engage with the questionnaire.

5.6. Axiological assumptions: research transparency and trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers are involved in the research process, meaning they cannot be an unbiased observer (Ormston et al., 2014). The knowledge and experience that researchers possess can impact this bias (ibid), which is undeniable in this research; thus, it is important to make my axiological assumptions explicit (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The axiology, i.e., the values and ethical standards, I hold are important to acknowledge to avoid personal values from preventing a truly interpretivist study, such as presenting findings that describe my experiences, rather than the participants' experiences (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Reflexivity is core to the trustworthiness of the study (Probst & Berenson, 2014; Mackieson et al., 2019). It refers to both the mind of the researcher in conjunction with their actions during research activities. Therefore, my axiological assumptions associated with my positionality and the reflexive actions I used to contribute to the trustworthiness of this study are now outlined.

Firstly, I reflected on the roles I have occupied in school-university partnerships (section 5.3), and I challenged my assumptions as a means to demonstrate that other individuals could have different viewpoints and experiences (Appendix J). At different stages of the process, I returned to my self-reflection notes: for example, during data collection when I recognised similar experiences to my own, I rewatched that section of the recording to check if I used prompts or probes to direct the line of questioning towards my own experience. As stated previously, piloting was a useful strategy to try curtail this, as I had stated 'I also find that' to a response in one pilot interview, thus made a conscious effort not to do this again. However, I cannot guarantee that I did not have an impact on the answers given by participants, as already noted, one placement tutor stated 'I know we've had these discussions before': by virtue of working with some placement tutors prior to this research, they could have some insights into my opinions pertaining to school-university partnerships. Even so, I did not share my perspectives on the research area with any participant.

Additionally, I had conversations with my supervisor that resulted in useful feedback in editing and finalising the questions used in all methods, which helped remove bias phrasing of some questions, being clearer what the question meant, and ensuring questions were open-ended. Table 5.4. illustrates one example. I also used the technique of relaying/summarising some of the answers given in interviews and focus groups to 'keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research' (Creswell & Poth, 2018:44) and added in the reflexive approach of 'member checks' as a means of checking my understanding of participants responses: for example, I summarised aspects of participant responses, followed by questions such as 'Did I get that right? Did I understand you correctly?' (Probst & Berenson, 2014:823). To further help with trustworthiness and to avoid selective hearing on my behalf, when respondents made a point

that was new or surprising to me, I revisited the rest of the dataset to see if it was something

that occurred in other pieces of data, that I may have initially overlooked.

Draft interview question for cooperating teachers and placement tutors	Revised question
<u>What</u> challenges or difficulties do you associate with school-university partnerships? *This question is leading, implying there are challenges and difficulties associated with school-university partnerships.	**<u>Are there</u>** difficulties, obstacles, and/or disadvantages associated with school-university partnerships? *This question is more open-ended with the participant given a better opportunity to express their opinion.

Table 5.4: Sample of a redrafted interview question.

The peer review strategy also assisted the validity and reliability of this study (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). As noted in the previous paragraph, conversations with my supervisor helped

me challenge my assumptions throughout the research process and to reflect on what led me to

interpret the data in the way that I did: I documented all our meetings and revisited these notes

often. Furthermore, I was cautious of presenting a biased viewpoint of my workplace, so I

sought my supervisor's assistance in checking if this was coming across in the phrasing of my

writing. In all drafts of chapters sent to my supervisor, I left comments to the side of the word

document, stating when I was uncertain of how I was presenting the research: my supervisor

then responded to these comments in written feedback, and we discussed this further during

supervisory meetings. In conjunction with this, I collaborated with another student on the Ed

D programme, who acted as a critical friend and queried some of my interpretations and

provided his own interpretations at times: all of which I considered when redrafting my writing

(Figure 5.6).
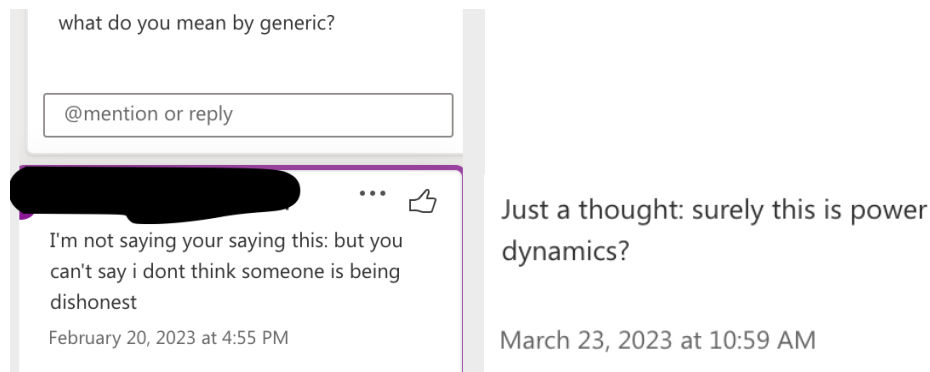
Figure 5.6: Sample of peer feedback.

5.7. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Maynooth University's ethics committee (Appendix F). To achieve ethical approval, I adhered to the procedural ethical considerations of informed consent, avoidance of harm, privacy, and anonymity. I also addressed relational ethics and presented the findings of this study ethically. Each ethical consideration is now detailed.

The first step was to seek ethical approval (Brooks et al., 2014; Hammersley, 2017). Completing the application highlighted key junctures in which ethical practices required attention. Ethical considerations happen beyond data collection; therefore, ethics were addressed pre, during, and post data collection (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell & Poth, 2014). Part of the ethical application was to complete information sheets and consent forms that would be sent to participants (Appendix E). While participants were over the age of eighteen and could provide informed consent, HEI gatekeepers were contacted prior to this because the HEI is easily identifiable (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Gray, 2018). Once I received approval from the HEI, contact was made with potential participants via email (as detailed in section 5.4.1). The Bcc function was used in all email communication so no participant could see who else was contacted. Gatekeepers of schools were not required as no school is easily identifiable and specific schools are not the focus of this study. The information sheets detailed the nature

of the research, how the research would be conducted and what participation would involve (Punch, 2014; Hammersley, 2017), and that participation was voluntary (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Gray, 2018). Participants signed a consent form; however informed consent was rechecked verbally during the interviews and focus groups and participants were made aware they could withdraw their data up until the data was irreversibly anonymised (Punch, 2014; Hammersley, 2017; Gray, 2018). At the start of the questionnaires pedagogy lecturers and principals were asked to choose whether they consented to the study or not, with participants informed to only submit the questionnaire if they consented to their responses being used: they were informed that upon submission their consent could not be withdrawn as neither their names nor email addresses were collected.

While this study should not pose a risk to participants, I considered how to reduce and cater for psychological stresses should it arise (Gray, 2018). From the student teacher's viewpoint, school placement is high stakes, therefore I was potentially adding to student teacher stress by interviewing them during school placement: the interviews were subsequently changed to after school placement. Additionally, asking all participants to comment on school placement, which is part of their professional environment, could potentially be harmful to participants if they are identifiable, particularly if they have been critical of their workplace (ibid). To minimise this risk, I used pseudonyms for participants. Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality from interviews and questionnaires. Anonymity was not guaranteed for the focus groups as participants meeting each other automatically resulted in anonymity and confidentiality being compromised (ibid). I therefore could only 'exercise…partial control' of participants' identities and contributions (Hammersley, 2017:61). I informed participants on the information sheets, on their consent forms, and at the beginning of the focus group of the importance of confidentiality amongst participants, but it could not be guaranteed. I requested

participants not to share information outside of the focus group. It is also important to note that while the interviews remained confidential, questions that were asked in the focus groups did come from interviews, so I phrased questions in a way that did not identify participant responses (Appendix H). While I do not identify participants, participants could potentially identify themselves in questions during the focus groups. In conjunction with this, as this study involves one HEI, there is the potential that the placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, and student teachers could be identifiable. Again, this is why pseudonyms were used, and in one of the participant biographies I omitted the exact number of years they have worked in the position (Hammersley, 2017).

Additionally, questions based on participant experience e.g., boundary crossing, power dynamics, hierarchies, etc, could be distressing if the participants had negative experiences. Participants were therefore provided with full information around the study and were given a copy of questions prior to interviews and focus groups, which further contributed to informed consent. That said, Johnson and Christensen (2014:139) point out that 'it is often necessary to engage in some degree of deception to conduct a valid research study' as 'sometimes...providing full disclosure...will alter the outcome and...in such instances, it is necessary to...withhold information from the research participants'. In relation to the interviews, I used the Teaching Council guidelines (2021a) on the roles and responsibilities of placement tutors and cooperating teachers as an artefact, but I withheld it from research participants prior to their interview because if the participants read the guidelines for the specific purpose of their interviews, it could interfere with their responses on what they perceived their role to be. Probing and prompting questions were also not shared with participants as they were dependent on the responses during the interviews and focus groups, but participants were informed there would be some probing questions based on their answers.

Again, participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until the point that the data was irreversibly anonymised, and this was particularly important due to withholding some questions prior to interviews. Participants also had the option of adding additional information or withdrawing information after the interview and/or focus group had taken place.

The right to privacy was also considered. This had relevance when probing participants, for example, when I questioned student teachers on the feedback they received from placement tutors, I emphasised that I was not looking for the specific feedback, but how they experienced the process of feedback. Furthermore, participants were made aware of supports available if they were distressed or affected by the study (Gray, 2018) (Appendix E).

As discussed, research instruments were conducted online and all information (e.g., consent forms, transcripts) were held electronically, thus online ethical considerations were accounted for (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Gray, 2018). Participants were sent a link to join the Teams meetings, but I manually 'admitted' each participant, therefore no one could join without permission. I removed all names and identifiable features from transcripts and the use of a key that identified participants were kept on a separate secure OneDrive document, that could not be accessed by anyone else (Hammersley, 2017).

Relational ethics was vital owing to my positionality as power dynamics could potentially impact this study (Brooks et al., 2015): to reduce this, I monitored the consent of the participants throughout the research process. Again, while I had written consent from participants, I reinforced to participants, both during and post data collection, that they could withdraw their consent until data was irreversibly anonymised (Punch, 2014; Johnson &

Christensen, 2014), or withdraw specific information given and there were no repercussions for withdrawing consent, nor did they have to provide a reason for their withdrawal.

Carrying out research in one's workplace carries some 'ethical dilemmas' (Brooks et al., 2015:13), particularly if a researcher is investigating a topic that they have responsibility for. While I have sought to minimise other workplace ethical dilemmas, as detailed above, I mostly discount this dilemma as I am not solely responsible for school-university partnerships, nor do I have overall responsibility for school placement in the HEI. Instead, I am part of the landscape of practice, and I am not presenting my perspective, but I am seeking to find out the perspectives of others.

Finally, ethics must be adhered to when reporting findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Findings should be reported accurately and without exaggeration (ibid). Presenting topics and questions to focus group participants was one way of checking my interpretation of responses given during interviews. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) caution against siding with some participants and only providing one-sided or positive viewpoints. To do so would go against the post-positivist nature of this research and the research questions were specifically designed to highlight different perspectives. The next section further demonstrates my ethical approach to data analysis, particularly in relation to coding and creating themes.

5.8. Data analysis

To begin, I prepared and analysed the data for each research instrument over three phases. The first phase involved the interviews. I partially analysed the interviews prior to conducting focus groups so findings could inform the questions brought to the focus groups. I then returned to the analysis of the interviews. I analysed the focus groups in the second phase. The third phase

was analysis of the questionnaires. How the data was prepared for analysis is outlined, followed by the process of reflexive thematic analysis that I employed.

5.8.1. Preparing the data for analysis

As stated, the interviews and focus groups were conducted via Microsoft Teams, so I used the transcription function, along with video recording the interviews and focus groups to capture this data. Once I downloaded the transcripts, I removed participants' names and any other names they mentioned and assigned pseudonyms to each (Chapter Six, section 6.2). Other possible identifying features, such as place names, were removed and replaced with vague iterations such as 'town' to avoid identifying the participants through their location. While the transcription through Microsoft Teams was helpful, there were a lot of edits to be made to ensure each transcript was accurate. The videos were rewatched and edits were made to the transcript before working through the data. Rewatching the videos and pausing at several intervals helped me become familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). The questionnaires did not require the same level of tidying up because the responses were typed by the respondents; however, the responses had to be downloaded. Names were not collected on the questionnaires and no pseudonyms were used for the questionnaires. Once all the data were anonymised and tidied up, I uploaded the interview and focus group transcripts to the data analysis software programme MAXqda (Given, 2008). The questionnaires were not uploaded to MAXqda because they were short so I could analyse them by hand.

5.8.2. Reflexive thematic analysis

As qualitative research attempts to explore issues that lie beneath the surface of participant responses (Cohen et al., 2018), I used reflexive thematic analysis for data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Thematical analysis 'is a method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset' (ibid:4). Thematic analysis is useful to investigate 'the

perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights' (Nowell et al., 2017:2), further highlighting its suitability for this research and its alignment with a post-positivist approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022b). Reflexive thematic analysis broadens the original concept of thematic analysis as it brings the researcher's reflexivity to the fore. Reflexive thematic analysis acknowledges the researcher as a resource who must extract themes from the dataset and is 'inherently subjective, emphasizes researcher reflexivity, and rejects the notion that coding can ever be accurate—as it is an inherently interpretative practice, and meaning is not fixed within data' (ibid:2). For this reason, the reflexive approaches adopted (section 5.6) were important. My approach to generating codes and themes is detailed in the remainder of this chapter: through sharing my reflexive thematic analysis approach, I hope to increase the probability of others extracting similar codes and themes, thus furthering the trustworthiness of this study.

As outlined, there were three parts to data collection, and each method went through the process of reflexive thematic analysis that involves a six-step process (Figure 5.7). Step one was familiarising myself with the interview dataset before I could conduct the focus groups, but the six steps, as related to each method, are now detailed simultaneously as they followed a similar pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022a).
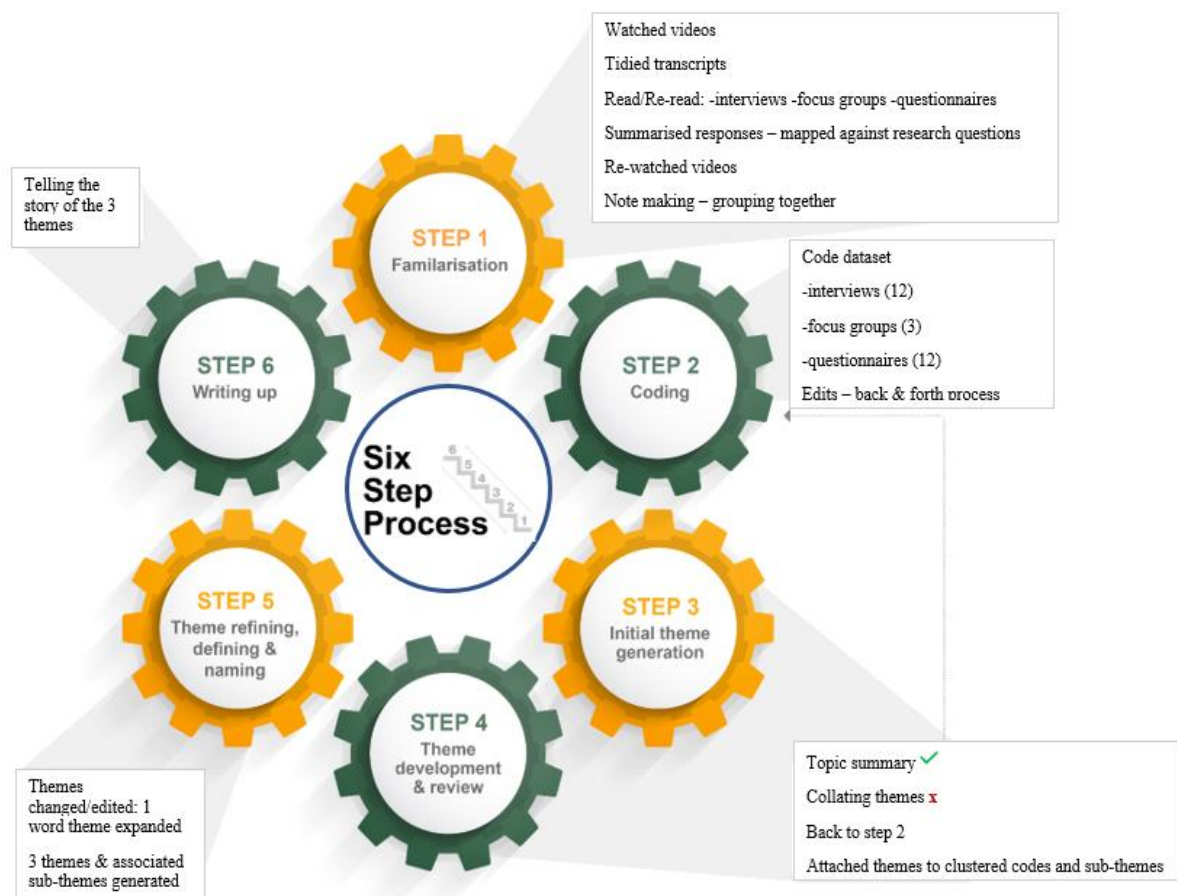
Figure 5.7: Overview of how the six-step process (Braun & Clarke, 2022a) was applied to this study.

Step 1: Familiarising myself with the dataset

I read and reread the interview and focus group transcripts and questionnaire responses to familiarise myself with the data. At this point I had uploaded the transcripts to MAXqda. To familiarise myself with the data in a manageable way and ensuring I did not miss important pieces of information, I took one response at a time and noted initial ideas and thoughts that could contribute to units of analysis onto MAXqda and manually onto the questionnaires. On a separate document, I summarised responses, and mapped them against the research questions (Appendix K). Once I became familiar with the data, I rewatched the interviews and focus groups, allowing me to become immersed in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). I then noted similarities that appeared in the questionnaires. The second stage of familiarisation was to

move beyond immersion and 'to critically engage with the information as data, rather than simply as information' (ibid:42). I revisited my literature review and noted similarities and differences with the dataset (Appendix K). The third stage in data familiarisation was note-making but this occurred during both the first and second stage of working through the dataset. The initial notes were grouped together and expanded on as I went through stage one and two. Once I was sufficiently familiar with my dataset, I began the coding process. There were points throughout the subsequent stages of reflexive thematic analysis where I returned to step one to ensure I was providing trustworthy interpretations.

Step 2: Data coding

When I was familiar with my data, I began coding the dataset. Codes refer to attaching labels to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). As stated, this was done through MAXqda for the interviews and focus groups and by hand for the questionnaires. Firstly, I coded the interviews, then the focus groups, and finally the questionnaires. This was not a linear process as the codes I assigned to focus groups and questionnaires forced me to revisit my codes from the interviews and either change or develop the initial code. Figure 5.8 shows a sample of finalised codes. Many initial codes were changed during step three of reflexive thematic analysis: this is detailed later. This back-and-forth process of assigning codes was a useful basis to begin data analysis (ibid).
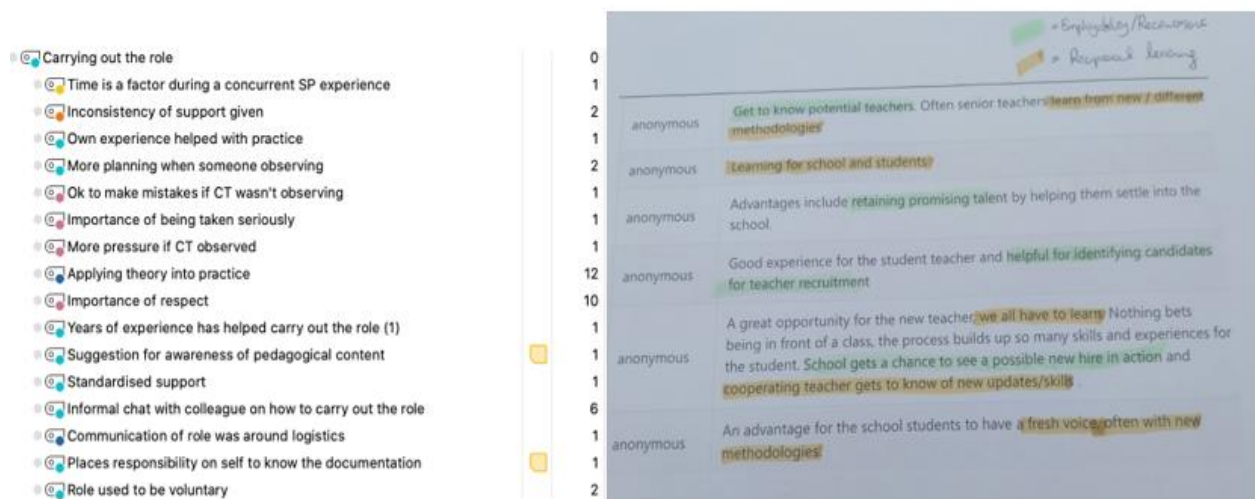
Figure 5.8: Sample of codes generated: an overarching code with associated sub-codes. *The image on the left are the codes created on MAXqda for the interviews and focus groups and the second image is the questionnaire coded by hand.

The feature of MAXqda I found most beneficial was using a combination of Boolean indicators through the cross-comparison function (Appendix K), allowing for comparisons to be easily made between and across transcripts/participants (Given, 2008). The use of technology for this function was welcome as I may not pick up on or keep track of such comparisons through a manual paper system of coding with a very large dataset. As the questionnaires were short, I did not have this concern for the questionnaires.

While MAXqda was helpful in organising my data for analysis, the data still had to be interpreted by me, not through a software programme (Cohen et al., 2018): elements of the six-step process of reflexive thematic analysis (namely step 1 to step 3) were utilised through MAXqda. Most codes aligned with a deductive approach, this is where the literature review and the theoretical framework supported the analysis of the research, while also helping to separate my own axiological assumptions when analysing data of other people's experiences (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). After I had deductively coded the dataset, I identified additional information that was important for this research, thus I also created inductive codes.

Creating both inductive and deductive codes is an advantage of using reflexive thematic analysis. The deductive and inductive approaches are outlined in Appendix L.

Step 3 and 4: Initial theme generation and theme development and review

In my first iteration of the findings from the interviews, I provided a 'topic summary', rather than collating 'themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2022a:77). This meant that I reported 'all the different responses' relating to the research questions: I reported what each member of the triad stated their role was in school-university partnerships, and the perceived role of others, rather than presenting 'a pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept' of school-university partnerships (ibid) (Figure 5.9).
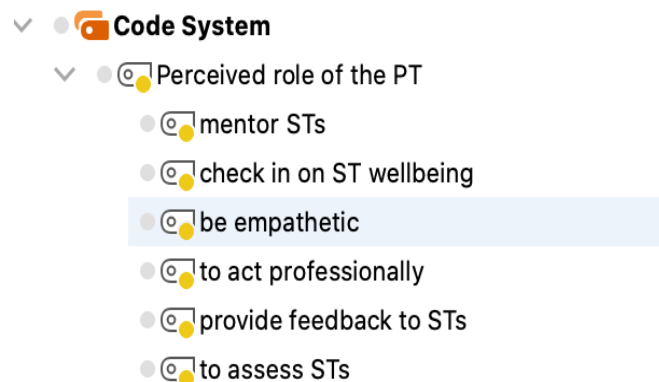
Figure 5.9: Sample of codes that led to topic summaries, rather than themes.

I then revisited the procedure for generating themes and subsequently grouped codes together that were similar in nature. I had done some aspects of this during stage two, the generation of codes, but tidied it up during this stage, and now attached a theme to the codes. Instead of providing topic summaries, I 'clustered patterning across the (my) dataset- not just within a *single* data item' (Braun & Clarke, 2022a:79) (Figure 5.8).

The themes I generated were the bigger picture of the dataset, and as they had many layers, I attached sub-themes to the themes to tell a story of the dataset. Figure 5.10 shows one sample of considered themes and associated sub-themes that occurred towards the latter stages of theme development.
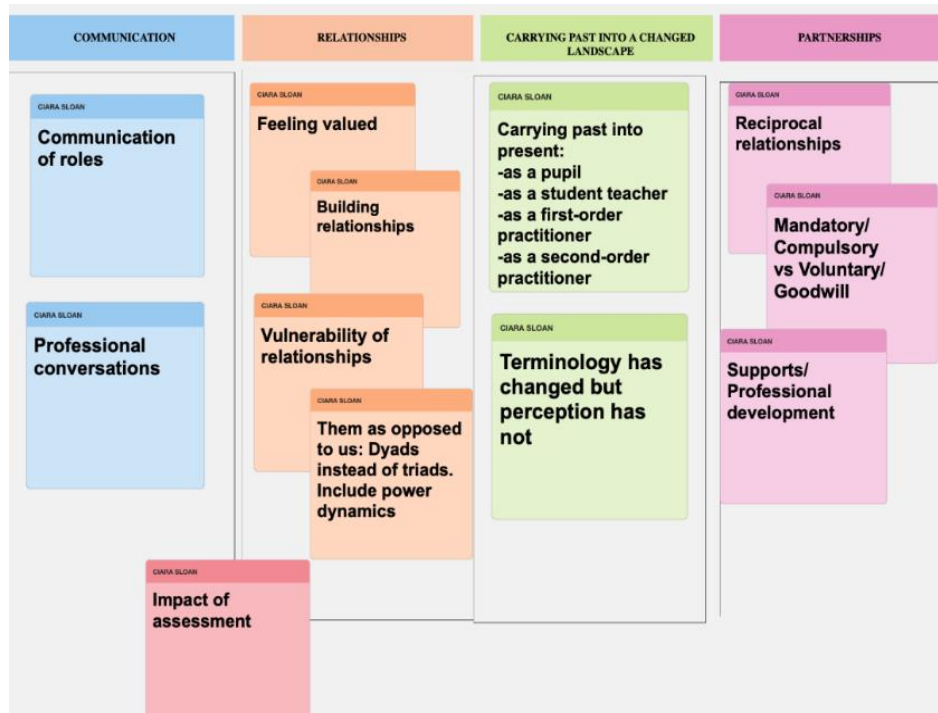
Figure 5.10: Sample of one iteration of considered themes and associated sub-themes.

I read over the dataset attached to each sub-theme, which brought me to step five of refining, defining, and naming the themes.

Step 5 and 6: Theme refining, defining, and naming and writing up

I took Braun and Clarke's advice (2022a:79) of not becoming 'too attached to early-developed themes'. Some of the earlier themes included 'past experiences', and 'challenges of partnerships', but they did not best represent the dataset and instead spanned across themes, rather than being the theme. In the latter iteration of themes (Figure 5.10), some of the themes were only one-word so it did not signpost what the theme entailed. For example, the theme

'communication' is too broad to tell the story of the data. The themes were refined and developed through conversations with my supervisor that helped me articulate key patterns and themes across the dataset, and challenged my thinking further, while identifying if some themes were not telling of the bigger picture. The themes, with associated sub-themes, are presented in the next chapter, and the codes that led to theme development are in Appendix L.

The final step was writing up the analysis, which aims to communicate the overall story of what the themes reveal about the research topic (Nowell et al., 2017). I strived to write an 'analytic narrative' in which the themes, accompanied by sample data extracts, are described, discussed, and interpreted to tell the story of the participants (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2022a): the remaining chapters do this.

Chapter Six: Findings

6.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining the participant biographies. Secondly, the three overarching themes, 'the impact of communication on practice', 'the complexity of relationships across the landscape of practice', and 'forming and supporting partnerships', with their associated sub-themes, are detailed.

6.2. Participant biographies

Acronyms of CT (cooperating teacher), PT (placement tutor), and ST (student teacher) are used as pseudonyms for participants: to distinguish between participants a number is attached to each acronym e.g., CT1, CT2. Pseudonyms are not assigned to pedagogy lecturers or principals, but identities remain anonymous. The biographies of the triad are expanded on from section 5.4.1.

Participant	Full-time or Part-time	Number of years in the role	Placement tutor in another HEI(s)	Experience as a cooperating teacher
PT1	Full-time	1	No	No but was a mentor teacher in the UK system
PT2	Full-time	20-30*	No	No
PT3	Part-time	1	No	Yes
PT4	Part-time	3	No	No

Table 6.1: Participating placement tutors' biographies (expanded). All placement tutors are past graduates of the HEI. Both full-time placement tutors are also lecturers on non-pedagogy related modules. *The exact number of years in the role is omitted to ensure anonymity.

Participant	Number years teaching	Number of years in the role	Has been a cooperating teacher in another school(s)	Is a cooperating teacher for student teachers in another HEI(s)	Experience as a placement tutor
CT1	27	15 Is also a Droichead support teacher	No	No	No
CT2	6	6	Yes	No	No
CT3	13	1	No	No	No
CT4	14	11	No	No	No

Table 6.2: Participating cooperating teachers' biographies (expanded). *CT1 is the only cooperating teacher that is not a past graduate of the HEI.

All student teachers were second-year students who have not participated in any other ITE programme, and this was their first school placement experience.

There were three dyads and one triad amongst the participants (Table 6.3): the data for dyads and triads are presented simultaneously with all the data, but when their interplay is relevant, it is flagged in the findings and discussion. In total, inclusive of principal participation, fifteen schools affiliated with the one HEI were accounted for in the dataset.

Dyads	Triad
PT1 and ST1	PT3, CT3, ST3 *PT3 and CT3 know each other as they were both student teachers in the HEI at the same time.
PT2 and ST2	
PT2 and CT2	

Table 6.3: Participant dyads and triad. PT4, CT1, CT4, and ST4 were not connected to other participants of this study.

The next section details each theme: the use of *italics* throughout the text indicates direct quotes from participants.

6.3. Theme one: The impact of communication on practice

The theme 'the impact of communication on practice', with its sub-themes, are represented in Figure 6.1.
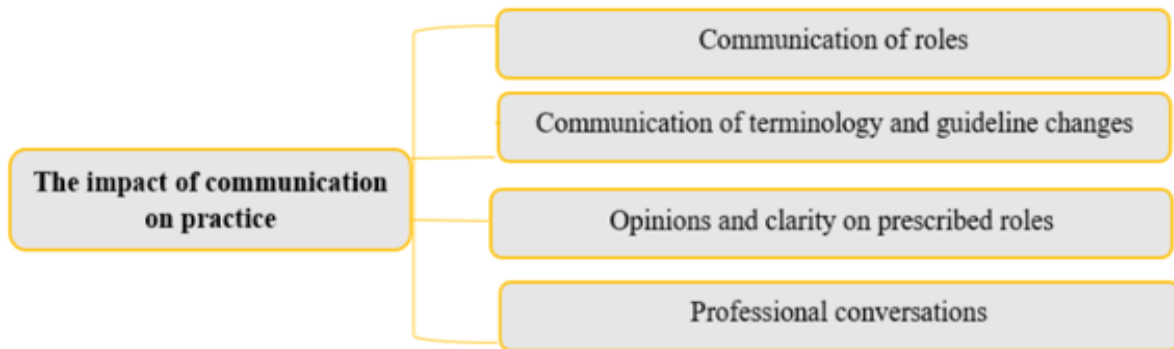
Figure 6.1: Theme one: the impact of communication on practice and associated sub-themes.

6.3.1. Sub-theme: Communication of roles

The sub-theme 'communication of roles' is based on two overarching codes, 'the what: documentation' and 'the how: communication'. Both codes have additional codes attached to them (Appendix L).

Placement tutor and cooperating teacher awareness of formal documentation is presented in Table 6.4, showing that not all cooperating teachers were aware of documentation, which differed to the placement tutors.

Aware of the Teaching Council guidelines	Aware of the HEI guidelines
Yes: CT1, CT2. PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4.	**Yes:** CT1, CT2, CT4. PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4.
No: CT3, CT4.	**No:** CT3.

Table 6.4: Cooperating teacher and placement tutor awareness of school placement guidelines.

CT1 stated *'the literature is excellent'* in supporting the cooperating teacher role, indicating that she is familiar and content with both sets of documentation. While CT2 knew about the Teaching Council guidelines, she did not '*know them as exact as that'*. A lack of awareness of both sets of guidelines was evident from the outset with CT3, who prior to discussing the Teaching Council guidelines queried *'just to make sure I didn't miss something...was there a booklet of information...or anything sent out to us about how to…[carry out the role]?'* and when CT3 was informed of the guidelines, she stated *'I wasn't aware of the Teaching Council...information...I should go and look at those'*. CT3 owned the responsibility to be aware of such guidelines:

> *...that's my own fault…it's all there...I haven't read the Teaching Council guidelines, I didn't read the booklet from the college, I'm sure I got it...from my management.*

While CT4 was not aware of the Teaching Council guidelines, she was aware of the HEI guidelines but does not always receive them: *'often it's the head of department that get them...you might never see the letter'*. CT4 does not actively ask to see guidelines that arrive in the school, and unlike CT3, CT4 places the responsibility with the school, stating there should be a *'school policy'.* These examples show the mediation of information between the HEI and cooperating teachers: the principal receives the documentation and is expected to pass

it on to cooperating teachers. The sharing of guidelines by principals can differ, meaning it is not guaranteed principals will share the guidelines (Table 6.5).

Principals' responses regarding school placement guidelines	Principal responses (n=8)
Share the Teaching Council guidelines with cooperating teachers	2
Share the HEI guidelines with cooperating teachers	3
Do not share any guidelines if the cooperating teacher has carried out the role before	2
Share only relevant sections of guidelines with cooperating teachers	1
Do not share any guidelines with cooperating teachers	1
Have their own school placement policy	3
Principals that have a school placement policy that have consulted the Teaching Council guidelines	0

Table 6.5: Principal responses regarding school placement guidelines. *Seven of the eight principals were aware of both sets of guidelines.

This variation in familiarity with documentation amongst the cooperating teachers, and principals passing on documentation to cooperating teachers is noteworthy as the guidelines are intended to support and direct cooperating teachers in carrying out their role. While CT4 expresses the need for a school policy, some schools do have a policy and the principals that have a school placement policy did not consult the Teaching Council guidelines (Table 6.5): one principal, that has a school placement policy, was unaware of the Teaching Council guidelines, indicating their guidelines are not regarded as necessary.

All placement tutors were aware of the Teaching Council and HEI guidelines (Table 6.4). Like CT2, PT1 was *'aware'* of the Teaching Council guidelines but *'wouldn't have known them in detail'*. PT4 is provided with both sets of guidelines annually by the HEI, highlighting the difference in distribution of documentation across the landscape of practice: placement tutors receive documentation first-hand from the HEI, whereas cooperating teachers are reliant on the principal to share documentation. Even though placement tutors are aware of the Teaching

Council and HEI guidelines, it does not guarantee engagement with documentation, as voiced by PT3 in relation to the HEI guidelines:

> *I never read it as [it] seems like a 500-page manual [that] is completely overwhelming...I thought I'm out of here because there's no time...I couldn't read that in my own job, never mind say on top of my own job.*

This finding accentuates the secondary nature of the placement tutor role, particularly when part-time. Similarly, PT4 revealed *'I don't think I read it',* reiterating that receiving documentation does not ensure engagement with it.

The Teaching Council and HEI guidelines are not the sole source of communication pertaining to the roles of the triad. CT2, CT3, and CT4 received logistical information about the student teacher from school management: *'these are the dates...the student teacher's school-based email...the classes...that would be most suitable'* (CT3), but the level of detail differed, from a basic email to a forwarded email to meeting with the student teacher prior to school placement. Despite the deputy principal forwarding on HEI guidelines to CT3, she stated *'nobody really knows do you actually read it?'*, indicating that the email can go unread and placing responsibility elsewhere, even though CT3 previously placed a responsibility on herself to become familiar with documentation. CT3 believes that emails do not *'have a whole lot of impact, it's as if we need the spoken word'* and therefore wants more accessible information, suggesting the use of video clips to condense information and the option to email the HEI with any clarifications. In contrast, CT2 attests there *'is good communication'* from the HEI regarding the *'set criteria'* during school placement. Despite *'good communication',* the timing of the student teacher's visit hinders its effectiveness: *'it's a bad time in the year...so with the requirements of cooperating teachers...I don't have time to look at it'* (CT2).

In summation, the reliance on principals to pass on documentation to cooperating teachers, email communication with a lack of direction on what to do with the information given, communicating logistics only, and the timing of communication, have been identified by the participating cooperating teachers as hindering the clarity of their roles.

The placement tutors' experiences differ due to the availability of professional development from the HEI. PT1 spoke of an induction which included receiving school placement documents and *'support through a mentoring programme'*:

> *I was guided through the microteaching program... looking at...assessment of the lesson plan to assessment of the lesson delivery and looking at feedback and leading in that feedback session but with the support of that experienced practitioner...and I had an onsite visit with another placement tutor.*

Likewise, PT3 and PT4 shadowed an experienced placement tutor and attended pre-school placement meetings. PT2 stated that *'in-career development'* and *'various courses'* *'have been offered and provided'* over the years from in-house support.

Support from the HEI is echoed by the student teachers, while highlighting a consistency in approach for student teachers. The student teachers referred to lectures, placement tutors, and school placement briefings, as sources of support: *'we were briefed...we were told this is the work we want you to do before going on placement'* (ST4); *'making sure...you're...following the rulebook'* (ST2).

The findings thus far accentuate the differences in how each member of the triad is communicated with. Student teachers and placement tutors receive guidelines first-hand from

the HEI, as well as attending school placement briefings and professional development, but this is not extended to cooperating teachers. By virtue of different settings, i.e., the cooperating teacher not being in the HEI, the passing on of documentation is reliant on principals, and this does not always happen. Perhaps this does not always happen because the primary focus of schools is the teaching of pupils, which is inferred through CT2's comment earlier that information is given at a *'bad time in the year'*. Information that is passed on from principals to cooperating teachers mostly focuses on the logistical arrangements of school placement and in lieu of receiving and/or engaging with guidelines or receiving CPD, CT4 states *'I'm really just poking around in the dark'*.

6.3.2. Sub-theme: Communication of terminology and guideline changes

PT2 pinpoints a change in the school placement *'discourse...in the last ten years...and possibly as far back as twenty years'* and attributes change to the *'commencement of the Teaching Council'*: the changes in the last ten years align with the publication of the 2013 Teaching Council guidelines, bringing a *'clearer focus into the precise roles of different bodies in the preparation of teachers'.* Despite the Teaching Council guidelines detailing the roles, the findings indicate it has not had the desired impact on all partners as they may not have read the guidelines or are unaware of their existence. PT2 displays an insight into changes because she experienced the changes in her placement tutor role. PT1, PT3, and PT4 did not carry out the role prior to the 2013 Teaching Council guidelines, thus may not have the same awareness of changes. Perhaps the experience of being a cooperating teacher for fifteen-years explains why CT1 is the most content and familiar with the Teaching Council and HEI guidelines as she carried out the role prior to 2013. However, this theory does not extend to CT4 who commenced the role before the Teaching Council guidelines.

As stated, the revision of the Teaching Council guidelines (2021a) changed the term cooperating teacher to treoraí. CT1 was aware of the name change through *'Twitter'* and CT3 was aware through a *'conversation in the staffroom'*, indicating changes were passed on second-hand and were informal. Neither CT2 nor CT4 were aware of the name change. CT2 refers to the change as another *'buzzword out at the moment'*, alluding to potential policy fatigue. Both CT2 and CT3 feel *'there needs to be an occasion made of it'* (CT3).

All placement tutors were called the inspector by cooperating teachers and student teachers, with PT4 also being referred to as a *'supervisor'*. PT1 posits the term inspector impacts the *'supportive'* aspect of the placement tutor role, and *'is unsure if there's cohesion'* between how she views her role and how student teachers and cooperating teachers view the placement tutor role, thus believes *'a name change needs to come with a culture change'* (discussed in section 6.4.3). PT4 attributes this to cooperating teachers drawing on their own experience as student teachers: *'that's what they had themselves when they went through the process, so they still see you as the supervisor'*. Outdated terminology gets passed on to student teachers, as is evident with three student teachers using the term inspector. CT2 and CT3 relied on the past to inform the present and drew on *'what was done for me when I was on teaching practice'* (CT3). It is noteworthy that CT2 and CT3 were student teachers prior to 2013, therefore elements of teacher education have shifted since then. Moreover, it shows some cooperating teachers are relying on memory, rather than the Teaching Council or HEI guidelines, with no support forthcoming to rectify this. Likewise, PT1 was a student teacher prior to the Teaching Council guidelines, and how she carries out the role is influenced by her *'own experiences...when I was a student'*, despite having received an induction. These examples show that the apprenticeship of observation can extend to cooperating teachers and placement tutors.

This sub-theme indicates that the guideline development and associated terminology only reach some partners. Like sub-theme 6.3.1. if the guidelines are not read, it is unsurprising that some individuals are either unaware of changes or if they are, information comes from secondary sources. When participants lack clarity or awareness of guidelines, legacy issues of previous terminology and practice permeate the current landscape of practice, with individuals relying on past experiences to influence their practice instead. As stated, the Teaching Council guidelines were used as an artefact to seek participants' opinion on their role: this was particularly important for those who were unaware of their roles, and this is discussed next.

6.3.3. Sub-theme: Opinions and clarity on prescribed roles

Showing the Teaching Council guidelines to cooperating teachers, placement tutors, and student teachers revealed whether participants understood their responsibilities, along with their opinions. Principals' thoughts on what is agreeable in relation to the cooperating teacher role was sought (Table 6.6).

6.3.3.1. Teaching Council's role and responsibilities of cooperating teachers versus perceptions of cooperating teachers and principals

Roles & Responsibilities	Cooperating teacher responses	Principal responses
Introduce the student teacher to: the pupils, the classroom, the teacher's plan of work for that class, class rules and procedures, and the roles of other staff directly involved with the pupils in the class	All agree. CT2 is unsure what is meant to be done with 'other staff directly involved'.	All agree.
Afford the student teacher opportunities to observe their teaching (and that of their colleagues).	All agree.	All agree.
Inform the student teacher regarding pupils needs and attainments.	All agree. CT3 thinks attainment is too vague or	All agree.

	ambitious: would like clarification or examples.	
Assign the teaching of areas of the curriculum to the student teacher while retaining the primary responsibility for the progress of the pupils.	All agree. CT2 thinks 'primary responsibility' should be *'joint responsibility'* between cooperating teachers and student teachers.	7 out of 8 agree.
Discuss the student teacher's planning and resources with them as appropriate.	All agree. CT3 thinks there needs to be more specifics: do's and don'ts for level appropriate.	6 out of 8 agree.
Observe the student teacher's practice and provide oral or written feedback to the student teacher in an encouraging and sensitive manner.	All agree. CT1 does not give written feedback. CT2 feeds back orally but does not give written feedback but thinks it could be a good idea. CT3 thinks yes but no to too many observations. More specifics needed: how much observation. CT4 agrees but not to written feedback.	6 out of 8 agree.
Encourage, support and facilitate the student teacher in: critical reflection on their practice, the use of a variety of teaching methodologies and in engaging with and responding appropriately to feedback from pupils.	CT1, CT2, and CT4 agree. CT2 states it must be in a nice, sensitive way. CT4 agrees apart from feedback from pupils. CT3 disagrees: it's the role of the HEI: vague, wishy-washy and do everything for the student teacher.	5 out of 8 agree.

Encourage the student teacher to seek advice and support where necessary.	CT1, CT2, and CT3 agree. CT4 disagrees: they could ask if they wanted to but could guide them to the placement tutor.	7 out of 8 agree.
Allow student teachers to teach independently, as their competence develops (in line with HEI requirements for the particular placement), and as deemed appropriate by Treoraí and the principal.	CT2 and CT4 agree. CT1 thinks it depends on the school, their needs and their pupils: for practical classes and additional educational needs. CT3 disagrees: Could be something to develop. Need more specifics: *'saying leave them alone and then they're covering themselves'*.	All agree.
Work collaboratively with the student teacher, the school placement tutor and the school principal.	CT1, CT2, and CT4 agree. CT4 agrees but principal vaguely (just signs off on timetable). More collaboration needed with the placement tutor. CT3 disagrees: *'I don't know how you could work collaboratively with the tutor'*: not feasible, nor is it feasible with the principal.	All agree.
Advise the principal of any serious concerns regarding a student teacher's practice or professional conduct.	CT1, CT2, and CT3 agree.	All agree.

	CT4 would contact the HEI instead of the principal unless it was severe.	
Have discretionary time while student teachers teach independently to facilitate engagement with the student teachers at other times.	All agree.	4 out of 8 agree.

Table 6.6: Teaching Council's role and responsibilities of cooperating teachers versus perceptions of cooperating teachers and principals.

Source: Teaching Council (2021a).

While cooperating teachers mostly agreed with the Teaching Council's responsibilities, there were certain aspects that some cooperating teachers felt resided with the HEI or placement tutor instead. CT3 believes it is the HEI's responsibility to encourage, support and facilitate student teachers in critical reflection, in methodologies, and responding to pupil feedback. Similarly, three principals did not see this as a cooperating teacher's job. CT4 posits that placement tutors should encourage student teachers to seek advice and support where required, with one principal agreeing that this is not the cooperating teacher's role. This raises the question whether the student teacher misses out on support if the cooperating teacher does not agree with an aspect of the role, placing the responsibility elsewhere.

Some roles appeared unclear to CT2 and CT3 as some were *'too vague...I could do with a clarification'* (CT3). Greater clarity could support CT3 in interactions with placement tutors as she is unsure how she could work collaboratively with placement tutors. The lack of *'the spoken word'* described earlier (CT3), and in the absence of professional development, it is not surprising that there is some ambiguity attached to the Teaching Council guidelines.

6.3.3.2. Teaching Council's role and responsibilities of placement tutors versus perceptions of placement tutors

Roles & Responsibilities	Placement tutor responses
Ensure that the student teacher is appropriately supported in all matters pertaining to the placement.	PT1, PT2, and PT4 fully agree. PT3 half agrees: Not just the responsibility of the placement tutor: includes the school placement office and student teacher too. Some things the placement tutor cannot be responsible for, '*not our job'.*
Observe the student teacher teaching and engage them in a dialogue when giving constructive feedback.	All agree.
Assess the student teacher's practice in accordance with the HEI's requirements.	All agree.
Reinforce with the student teacher key considerations regarding teaching and learning in accordance with the HEI policy.	PT1, PT2, and PT4 agree. PT3 has not read guidelines from the HEI: if it is in the guidelines then yes, if not then no.
Encourage the student teacher to engage fully in the life of the school.	All agree.
Discuss with the Treoraí good practice in class planning and the use of teaching and learning resources.	PT1 and PT2 agree. PT3 does not do this but thinks it could be beneficial. PT4 disagrees.
Support the Treoraí and student teacher in engaging in reflective dialogue.	PT1 and PT4 agree. PT2 thinks training is required for cooperating teachers. PT3 places responsibility with HEI.
Collaborate with the Treoraí/Treoraithe and acknowledge their role in supporting the student teacher.	All agree.
Discuss the student teacher's practice and experience with the Treoraí, as appropriate.	All agree.

Are open to learning from the principal, Treoraí/Treoraithe and other staff within the school.	All agree.
Engage with the principal in relation to the student teacher's practice and experience, as appropriate.	PT1, PT2, and PT4 agree. PT3 unsure: depends on the principal.
Acknowledge the role, work and commitment of the host school and Treoraithe in supporting student teachers on placement.	All agree.
Are cognisant and respectful of the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school, school policies, the school timetable and any special school-based arrangements.	All agree.
Ensure that the student teacher is supported and assessed by two or more school placement tutors, at least one of whom has relevant curricular/subject expertise. It is a requirement that all student teachers are supported and assessed by two or more Placement Tutors. From May 2022, at least 50% of all School Placement Tutors shall be registered as teachers with the Teaching Council in accordance with the Routes of Registration as outlined in the Teaching Council Registration Regulations (2016). Prior to qualification, a student teacher shall be summatively assessed at least once by a registered teacher, during their programme of initial teacher education. *Interaction with other placement tutors.*	All agree. PT4 agrees but not with the part that it needs to be a subject expert.
Offer additional supports to student teachers experiencing difficulties while on school placement.	PT1, PT2, and PT3 agree. PT4 disagrees.
Provide guidance and advice to the student teacher regarding their suitability to be a teacher.	PT1, PT2, and PT3 agree. PT4 disagrees.

Table 6.7: Teaching Council's role and responsibilities of placement tutors versus perceptions of placement tutors.

Source: Teaching Council (2021a).

The placement tutors agreed with many of the Teaching Council's prescribed responsibilities. Unlike cooperating teachers, placement tutors did not seek clarity on what was meant by any of the responsibilities, possibly indicating that the professional development for placement tutors removed any ambiguities. Alternatively, it may be because placement tutors can consult with each other, something that is not as readily available with cooperating teachers. Or it may

be because of my insider role as a HEI staff member so placement tutors may not wish to reveal their uncertainty regarding their role. PT3 does not discuss good practice in classroom planning and use of teaching and learning resources with cooperating teachers but thinks it could be useful. PT4 does not carry out this responsibility, nor does she think cooperating teachers should have to *'deal with paperwork'*; however, this responsibility is open to interpretation as it does not necessarily state cooperating teachers should read through lesson plans and resources. PT3 points to a difficulty with supporting the cooperating teacher and student teacher in engaging in reflective dialogue:

> *Oh God, reflective dialogue...reflection is probably one of the hardest skills...to teach anybody, myself included and not everybody is comfortable doing it so then...let's all do it together...it's the responsibility of the college to support the treoraí and the student teacher to engage in reflective practice, the college then need to support whoever is the placement tutor, I wouldn't have received support in doing that...so maybe that's support...I needed before I'd be able to do that with others.*

There is an assumption that individuals can automatically engage in reflective dialogue. PT3 places the responsibility with the HEI to support the collective engagement in reflective practice, with PT4 recommending professional development. PT4 does not think it is the placement tutor's role to offer student teachers additional supports, instead support should be provided from a qualified professional. PT2 notes that placement tutors could redirect student teachers to the appropriate support services. PT4 is the only placement tutor who asserts that it is not the responsibility of placement tutors to decide if student teachers are suitable for the profession because the role is to support student teachers to become teachers.

6.3.3.3. Teaching Council's role and responsibilities of student teachers versus perceptions of student teachers

Roles & Responsibilities	Student teacher responses
Engage constructively and collaboratively in a broad range of professional experiences as part of the school placement process.	All agree.
Meet with the principal and Treoraí/Treoraithe to plan the placement having regard to the breadth of activities set out on school placement	ST1, ST2, and ST4 agree. ST3 unsure what this means.
Recognise their stage in the learning-to-teach process and how this should inform their interactions with the school community.	All agree.
In collaboration with the Treoraí and other teachers in the school as appropriate, seek and avail of opportunities to observe and work alongside other teachers.	All agree.
Take a proactive approach to their own learning and seek and avail of support as a collaborative practitioner.	All agree.
Prepare and deliver lessons to a standard commensurate with their stage of development and in line with HEI requirements and the policies of the host school (in particular homework, assessment and other relevant teaching and learning policies).	All agree.
Be familiar with the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies.	All agree.
Always be conscious that pupil needs are paramount and that a duty of care pertains	All agree.
Engage with constructive feedback from school placement tutors, Treoraithe and principals	All agree.
Engage with other student teachers in the context of peer learning, insofar as practicable.	All agree.
Work towards becoming critically reflective practitioners.	All agree.
Engage with all in the school community in a respectful and courteous manner.	All agree.
Recognise that they have much to contribute to the school community.	All partially agree, not fully.

Support the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school.	All agree.
Have due regard for the ethical values and professional standards which are set out in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.	All agree.
Respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information gained while on placement.	All agree.
Participate fully in each placement to develop their teaching skills and meet the placement requirements of their HEI.	All agree.

Table 6.8: Teaching Council's role and responsibilities of student teachers versus perceptions of student teachers.

Source: Teaching Council (2021a).

The student teachers agreed with most of the Teaching Council's responsibilities and there is more of a unity in the responses given by student teachers than the cooperating teachers and placement tutors; it is unclear why this is, perhaps there is an element of power dynamics at play where student teachers think they should comply with set guidelines. The only uncertainty was whether student teachers can contribute to the school community. This was brought to the student teacher focus group so it could be explored further (detailed in 6.4.1).

The findings from sub-theme 6.3.3. convey that participants mostly agree with the Teaching Council guidelines. In some instances, there are differences of opinion; however, no responsibility is rejected across the board, with clarity required for some responsibilities.

6.3.4. Sub-theme: Professional conversations

There are many layers to participating in professional conversations and this is represented in the generated codes (Appendix L). Professional conversations may be formal or informal and differ depending on who the individual is speaking to, with some participants opting to

withhold their full opinion. The desire for more structured communication, which could help alleviate the uncertainty of conversation boundaries, was expressed by some participants. The following section details the intricacies in having professional conversations amongst and across the triad.

6.3.4.1. Conversations about student teacher practice

Conversations between cooperating teachers and placement tutors

All placement tutors sought feedback from cooperating teachers on student teacher progress, and all cooperating teachers stated their feedback was sought from the placement tutor they worked with. Three student teachers stated their placement tutor and cooperating teacher spoke about their progress, while ST3 stated *'not that I know of'* when asked whether CT3 and PT3 spoke about her practice. This was not the case as CT3 and PT3 both said they spoke in detail about ST3's progress: this is described shortly.

Many conversations between cooperating teachers and placement tutors tended to be generic in nature, i.e., did not provide specifics on student teacher pedagogical practices and engagement during school placement. CT1, CT3, and CT4 describe conversations with placement tutors as *'very polite'* and were just *'general'* questions lasting *'five minutes'* (CT1). CT3 felt her opinion was *'like an afterthought...it was nice to be asked but...it didn't feel like a formal requirement'*. PT3 also describes interactions with cooperating teachers as minimal, with dialogues reduced to cooperating teachers saying *'hello',* the student teacher is *'doing great'* and that meant the cooperating teacher felt their part was *'done'*. Comparatively, PT3 does not initiate conversations beyond this, inviting generic conversations; this could be explained in part when stated:

I don't know...my expectations of them [cooperating teachers]...it wasn't communicated to me what the cooperating teachers had been told...therefore, I literally said...I'm the placement tutor, can you give me some feedback on the student? Thanks again for taking them...am I asking them for feedback about their teaching and learning? Am I asking have they shadowed? I wasn't told so therefore I had no expectations...I would send them a very generic email and some gave me a generic email back and others gave me very detailed emails.

Again, the shift of responsibility to another is evident as PT3 suggests she should be told about the expectations of cooperating teachers, despite it being in the HEI guidelines. When conversations are generic, and withhold valuable opinions on the student teacher's practice, it raises the question if such dialogues could be considered professional conversations and if professional responsibilities are inadvertently overlooked. Not all conversations between placement tutors and cooperating teachers were generic. Both CT3 and PT3 spoke of how knowing each other impacted their conversation. PT3 explains she had more detailed conversations with cooperating teachers she knew personally: *'...there was one or two, that I had a good sit down with, but we knew each other, so maybe that was why'.* This made a difference to PT3's conversations with cooperating teachers: *'I got very frank conversations from [them]...whereas the others, I didn't know them, and it was very generic...so unless you have a relationship with them...it was different'.* CT3 revealed she would have generic conversations with placement tutors she did not know, but was comfortable to speak about ST3's progress because she knew PT3: *'I...personally know the tutor...I gave her a good rundown of how our student teacher was getting on but if I didn't know somebody I would curtail what I'd say...make sure it was vague'.* CT3's reasons for this are detailed later; however, the use of *'our student teacher'* infers a shared responsibility towards the student teacher, but only when CT3 is comfortable with a placement tutor.

PT2 and PT3 have noticed some cooperating teachers masking their full opinions: *'some cooperating teachers are more upfront...but others there's this sense that they're trying to protect the student teacher so they're not always as forthcoming or as honest as they could be'* (PT2). PT4 draws on power behind discourse as it is not only what cooperating teachers explicitly say that provides her with information on a student teacher's practice: *'a question I ask is would you employ this teacher?...how long it takes to answer this is very telling'*.

This scenario is not common to all participants. CT2 stresses the need for honest feedback with both student teachers and placement tutors: *'you have to be honest because they are never going to improve'*. PT1 believes *'it's important that you are the same to both...the student teacher and the cooperating teacher...I think cooperating teachers appreciate that and...in turn feeds into a positive conversation'*.

Despite variations in professional conversations, their importance is recognised. According to PT4 this is partially due to the different vantage point cooperating teachers have: *'I remember...thinking...she's good [the student teacher], but if you listen to the cooperating teacher...I wasn't seeing half of it...'*. CT3 speaks of this vantage point over PT3: *'I mentioned one thing, she said [PT3] oh, she never told me that, that explains it... I was able to communicate...a few things that the tutor won't be told'*.

PT1 advocates for more links between cooperating teachers and placement tutors because of the cooperating teachers' perspective:

> *...the treoraí are the placement tutors' eyes and ears and they're...that supportive link to the student teacher, there's a need to create that relationship with them, they're on the ground day-to-day, they see their practice, so...maybe creating...more formalised links in*

relation to professional dialogues occurring more regularly with the placement tutor and treoraí.

This different vantage point is noted by one pedagogy lecturer: *'it is not possible for us to monitor student teachers through their placement, but the cooperating teacher can'.*

The language in the previous quotes of *'eyes and ears'* and *'monitor'* implies power dynamics: cooperating teachers may not see this as their role, particularly as some placement tutors have noted that cooperating teachers may withhold information at times, and CT3 and CT4 describe a difference of opinion on informing placement tutors of student teacher practice (discussed later).

PT4 emphasises the importance of speaking with cooperating teachers as she is a part-time placement tutor who has not met the student teacher before:

> *...the first I've seen student teachers is my pre-school placement meeting, and you're trying to get an idea of what kind of teacher they are, and...it is so important that you get the feeling from the cooperating teacher.*

Despite the importance placed on conversations between placement tutors and cooperating teachers, all cooperating teachers refer to the brief nature of these interactions because *'there's not a time set aside'* (CT4) and cooperating teachers are usually *'going to class'* (CT2). The student teachers noticed minimal interaction between their placement tutors and cooperating teachers; this is represented by ST4: *'Two of the teachers...would have spoken to my tutor for five minutes'.* CT2 and CT4 think it is important the cooperating teacher's viewpoint is sought, even if it needed to result in *'a follow up email'.* PT1 experienced cooperating teachers not

being available due to teaching and proposes there should be scheduled times for conversations, and refers to the logistics in scheduling visits for several student teachers:

> *...it can be logistically hard to schedule...the physical timing of onsite visits and availability of treoraí. I think maybe looking at scheduling that in a more structured way to have that dialogue.*

CT3 spoke of a free class period when PT3 visited ST3 and this led to a comprehensive discussion with PT3; however as outlined, CT3 revealed she was more open in her conversation due to personally knowing PT3:

> *...when PT3 came...I must have been off...she had that [assessment] sheet out, that she was filling in and as she was filling it in she said...would you agree, have you anything to add...we must have been together for 25 minutes...that felt comprehensive, that felt like what the student deserved...to make sure I could say anything good I had to say about her.*

There is a desire from some cooperating teachers to have specific guidance to engage in professional conversations:

> *I'd be happy to [engage in professional conversations], if there was a structure in place beforehand...if I had a paragraph explaining the cooperating teacher will discuss for 20 minutes a week X, Y, and Z...I would comment on the beginning, middle, and end, or the time scale of the plan, for me it'll be more important, I mean the objectives, you know...all the language and the measurable verbs...I kind of let that go, because...it's like...you know our own language, what have you taught them? What have you covered?'* (CT3).

This implies the language used to structure professional conversations will differ to the conversation between placement tutors and student teachers and indicates the language of teachers differ to the language of second-order practitioners. The lack of a common language potentially impacts professional conversations between cooperating teachers and placement tutors.

CT4 articulated the desire for pre-planned conversations as it would support cooperating teachers in looking for specific information regarding student teacher progress: *'...if there was a set of questions that they ask the cooperating teacher, that the tutor would email beforehand...so I know what to look for'.* This suggestion could be restrictive as it might impact the cooperating teacher's professional judgement on what is important regarding student teacher practice. On the contrary, this could be interpreted as a desire to be prepared for professional conversations so that the cooperating teacher can think through their answers, and it can fill in potential gaps of information that a placement tutor could overlook on a school visit. That said, an element of power differentials is evident when the cooperating teacher sees their role as reporting on student teachers to placement tutors, particularly in the absence of the student teacher, which reflects PT1's point of cooperating teachers being the placement tutor's *'eyes and ears'.*

These findings imply that many conversations between placement tutors and cooperating teachers are surface level. Despite this, they are considered crucial due to the different vantage point cooperating teachers have by virtue of working daily with student teachers. Scheduled time to facilitate conversations is advocated amongst participants. Prior relationships between cooperating teachers and placement tutors proves advantageous in delving deeper into student teacher practice. The importance of relationship building between members of the triad is detailed in section 6.4.4.

Conversations between cooperating teachers and student teachers

Professional conversations between student teachers and cooperating teachers focused on seeking advice and were mainly informal. At times student teachers approached cooperating teachers, and other times cooperating teachers initiated conversations:

> *...if I had a question, I felt comfortable going up and asking them and then if they noticed something, they were happy to just be, I think you should put this in or...this would work better* (ST2).

> *...a lot of the time, they just came up to me and offered help...so I didn't really have to approach them, but they did help but it was informal...* (ST3).

ST2 stated that when cooperating teachers *'sat in the class, they had...helpful feedback and it helped with other lessons...'*. CT4 detailed how the student teacher approached her when a lesson *'didn't go well...so we looked at strategies then together for the next day...'*.

Interactions between CT3 and ST3 is described by ST3 as *'small talk'* and they did not discuss her progress. CT3 details their minimal interaction: *'she wasn't really interested in engaging, I was wondering why, maybe they're not required to...I remember after ours...we had to write something after... but she never came up to me'*. A lack of communication is evident, with gaps in what responsibilities individuals have because of this, which is exacerbated by CT3 not engaging with the Teaching Council or HEI guidelines; instead CT3 draws on her experience as a student teacher.

The scenarios described above are mostly informal, despite this, ST2 and ST4 convey that conversations are still carefully navigated and there is a limit to what they ask cooperating teachers:

...you're less formal [with other student teachers], you're like...does anyone have any ideas...can you help me? Whereas with the cooperating teacher it's would you consider helping me?... With students, you're...in the same boat...even if you think it's a stupid question, I'm more comfortable asking another student than I am a cooperating teacher (ST2).

This indicates that there are limitations in professional conversations between cooperating teachers and student teachers, with student teachers afraid of appearing incompetent. Perhaps this fear is associated with a hierarchy between cooperating teachers and student teachers, with the student teacher wanting to impress the cooperating teacher or to be seen as a colleague, rather than needing help. It may also depend on the collaborative culture within a school and if student teachers see experienced teachers supporting each other, it may be easier for them to ask for help. These points illustrate that the school and cooperating teachers have a role in setting the tone for collaboration. Indeed, ST3 recounts that the formality of conversations depended on how cooperating teachers spoke to her: *'...it was formal with some....just depending on how they talked to me first'*. ST3 therefore follows the lead of the cooperating teacher, rather than leading interactions. CT1 spoke of the importance of informal and open conversations in place of professional conversations at times, thus striving to break down hierarchical roles between student teachers and cooperating teachers:

> *...in that initial meeting she was enthusiastic but when she got closer to placement, she became nervous so it was good that we had the initial meeting because she was able to contact me, and I was able to offset most of the nerves...I said...I can't help if I don't know so the conversation needs to be open.*

ST1 describes a more formal approach due to *'a department in the school over school placement'* i.e., there were teachers assigned to specifically support student teachers on school placement. The school actively collaborated with ST1, providing her with the opportunity to follow up conversations with teachers:

> *..there was a lot of meetings with the school...of how we got on, how our lessons were planned, their schemes of work and I got a good bit of collaboration and feedback from*

teachers...not just the cooperating teachers...they gave me feedback on my documents...when you're in the college, they teach you about different teaching strategies...but when you go into the school and hear a word your ears pop up and you're like oh what's that? It was interesting to hear what other teachers were using.

The cooperating teachers placed the responsibility on student teachers to initiate professional conversations, which was mirrored by all student teachers. ST3 stated this was because *'we need their help'*. CT3 was disappointed when ST3 did not seek her help, resulting in her stepping back:

...she didn't have questions...she got on fine but doesn't...have anything to offer so I pulled back, my engagement waned...because she just wasn't using me as a resource...so that caused me to kind of step back.

Interestingly, CT2 suggests that professional conversations are only required when student teachers need constructive feedback: *'this year the students I had were excellent, I didn't have to give them feedback...they were well able'*. This gives the perception that feedback and professional conversations are not needed if the student teacher is doing well. It raises the question if student teachers are aware they are doing well, or if student teachers know they are doing well, are they aware that there is still potential to improve? A shift in responsibility is seen again as the responsibility is left to the placement tutor to convey to student teachers how they are doing.

These findings reveal that in the absence of clarity, both the student teacher and cooperating teacher wait for a lead from the other, and if a student teacher is doing well, a cooperating teacher may not see the need to provide feedback to student teachers. In one instance the cooperating teacher equates the reluctance of a student teacher to engage as not being needed by the student teacher, thus took a step back from a supportive role.

Adapting conversations according to individuals

While individuals engage in professional conversations differently, it was interesting that some participants revealed they would speak differently about the same situation to different partners:

> *I'd be very encouraging and I wouldn't use any negatives when speaking directly to the student, as I don't know if it's my place...but I'd basically say what I mean...with the tutor, putting a positive shine on it because we know how pressurised it is...but I'd be a lot more truthful...with the tutor* (CT3).

In response, CT4 admits:

> *I'd be the opposite...I will...gently say it to the student if there's something that is bugging me...but I'd be quite positive when the tutor comes, unless there's a massive problem because I feel like I'm getting the student in trouble if I'm not positive...so then I don't know if I'm giving a true picture of what's happening.*

These extracts illuminate the difficulty in having fully transparent conversations. CT3 describes her apprehension in providing her full opinion as she is unsure of her place to do so and is fearful of causing trouble for either herself or the student teacher:

> *...you can feel defensive professionally, not defensive in an aggressive way, but...I would avoid saying this just to be careful, to protect myself from doing anything wrong so I end up saying less is more, I end up thinking keep my mouth shut, it isn't my place so...everybody loses out but...at least I know I haven't said anything that could cause trouble for anyone...I would have a fear of overstepping my mark.*

CT3 continued:

> *With the student teacher, if I told them something that they felt insulted by or they went back to a tutor...and it was just they didn't agree with me...there's a fear it's not my place if I'm not told it's my place.*

CT3's apprehension is due to the uncertainty of her role and due to her empathy towards student teachers, recognising the importance attached to school placement. CT3 further emphasises her stance to remain silent:

...the bigger impact would be...I could cause distress for somebody on teaching practice and it's a big deal for them, this is their future career, if I said something that could make them nervous or not want to come in the following day or ring up the college wanting to talk, to be counselled through this terrible critique that they got...then that's damaging...so I tend to kind of say nothing there.

Conversations between placement tutors and student teachers

As placement tutors and student teachers are not in the same building during school placement, conversations are not as readily available as those between student teachers and cooperating teachers: student teachers have a pre-school placement meeting with their placement tutor and another meeting during the placement tutor's visit to the school, but outside of this, contact is dependent on either the placement tutor or student teacher initiating this.

PT4 comments on the importance of discussing expectations with student teachers prior to school placement. This allows for a common ground to be found, which can then be built on:

'it is important you tell them what you're looking for...what do they expect from it and then you say what you expect and often you can see a common ground...so you tease out things...'.

PT3 offers support and also advocates that student teachers actively seek support:

I was strong when I met student teachers...if they engaged with me, I'd engage with them...this is where it turns to them becoming the professional...I will give them my time if they need it and they ask for it...if I felt they needed more support I'd push through that but...they need to look for support.

Despite expectations communicated to student teachers, PT2 details the different type of professional conversations with student teachers:

...the ideal is a student who's listening and talking to you or else you have a student who isn't giving any of their opinions and just wants...to be told what to do, you don't want

that but neither do you want a situation where the student isn't hearing what you're saying, in the sense that they know it all and they don't have anything to learn.

There are opportunities for student teachers to contribute to professional conversations after their observed lesson: *'you are given a chance to say how you feel it went...then you are told whatever was missed'* (ST4). ST3 is not fully comfortable talking about her progress with PT3: *'I'd be nervous saying things sometimes to the placement tutor... she's like authority, she tried to help me to learn, so I feel her opinion is probably better'.* The impact of a placement tutor's authority also appears in discussion with ST2. ST2 did not think the required lesson planning was feasible and when asked did she discuss this with PT2, ST2 responded: *'I wouldn't...be comfortable saying it, they're supposed to be correcting us and teaching us, they're lecturers and you wouldn't just say you're wrong'.* This implies that ST2 believes discussing her opinion means she is saying PT2 is incorrect. One principal stated *'many university tutors/lecturers have little comprehension of modern secondary schools'* so perhaps ST2 perceives placement tutors as removed from first-order practice and are therefore wrong, this is insinuated later in 6.4.3. One pedagogy lecturer is aware of this: *'oftentimes, there is a sense that we are disconnected from reality and best practice may be rejected and teachers adhere to the status quo. They may not be willing to embrace new techniques from us'.* There is an element of power dynamics here that best practice and new techniques resides with the HEI. PT1, PT3, and PT4 made their experience as teachers known to their student teachers, perhaps to remove the perception that they are removed from the reality of classroom practice (discussed in section 6.4.1).

Unlike ST2 and ST3, ST4 was comfortable speaking with her placement tutor: ST4 realised that this was because her placement tutor was her pedagogy lecturer: *'actually...my placement*

tutor was also my pedagogy lecturer...so I was nearly going to her in that sense, more so than a tutor'. ST4 proposes increased interactions with placement tutors as it would make conversations *'less daunting'*, and therefore student teachers would *'be more likely to share'* their thoughts. This is crucial as PT2 surmises *'more students are not divulging that they've difficulties... they're not doing themselves any favours by hiding it'.*

6.3.4.2. Conversations beyond student teacher practice

While this research examines communication in relation to supporting student teachers, professional conversations can extend beyond this. Student teachers observe classes during school placement, but only some student teachers conversed with their cooperating teachers about those classes. Both ST1 and ST4 experienced this:

> *I asked her questions afterwards or she'd tell me something that she did or why she did that... there were a good few conversations after lessons* (ST1).

> *I would have some questions about strategies and sometimes they told me what they were doing beforehand, and it would switch, and I asked them some reasonings and they would be happy to discuss it...it was just me asking questions about things I hadn't quite grasped* (ST4).

In contrast, ST3 observed CT3's class on a preliminary school placement visit but there was no conversation afterwards: *'I just went into a lesson and then came out and then moved on to the next one...'*, which mirrors the experience between ST2 and CT2. CT3 was *'surprised'* in this interaction. CT3 felt there was a lost opportunity to discuss practice, with CT3 hoping to learn from ST3; however, this responsibility was placed with the student teacher or the HEI:

> *...there was a good opportunity for a chat...she could have said, they gave us this idea in college...I would have liked to learn there too, there's always new techniques coming from the college...so I'd loved to have heard about those, any insight, but I suppose unless that's written down...it's probably not going to happen.*

The feature of responsibility lying elsewhere is again brought to the fore. Although, CT3 implies boundary issues may prevent ST3 from engaging in professional conversations:

> *...she may think it isn't her place, I'm a qualified teacher, I'm sure there were many flaws in how I ran the class but she might say if I make a suggestion, I've a new teaching aid... this teacher might get the impression that I'm telling her to improve...or she isn't entitled to converse that way, like offer her expertise even though she isn't qualified and that may be how it's perceived.*

A different form of dialogue was initiated by CT1 who *'asked her [student teacher] for feedback'*, in relation to support received, with the student teacher reporting she felt *'very supported'*, thus setting the expectation that it is acceptable for student teachers to comment on cooperating teacher practice. Although, if a student teacher did not feel supported, this may have been more difficult for a student teacher to feed back to a cooperating teacher.

6.3.5. Theme one conclusion

The theme 'the impact of communication on practice' is multifaceted. There are guidelines, both nationally through the Teaching Council, and locally with the HEI. Despite this, some individuals are unaware of the guidelines and while others are, it is not guaranteed that the guidelines are read. Even though there is a majority consensus regarding responsibilities, there are traces of hesitancy in having and instigating professional conversations between placement tutors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers. Some individuals lack confidence in pursuing conversations, with power differentials evident at times. The reluctance to delve deep into conversations is most apparent between cooperating teachers and student teachers, and cooperating teachers and placement tutors. There is less hesitancy between placement tutors and student teachers as these conversations are clearly defined, explained, and actioned during school placement briefings in the HEI and is common practice across HEIs. That said, it does not equate to open conversations, with student teachers not wanting to disagree with their

placement tutor, potentially showing covert power dynamics at play. Theme two explores the complexities of relationships across the landscape of practice.

6.4. Theme two: The complexities of relationships across the landscape of practice

The findings detail the intricacies of relationships created during school placement. This theme centres around four sub-themes (Figure 6.2).
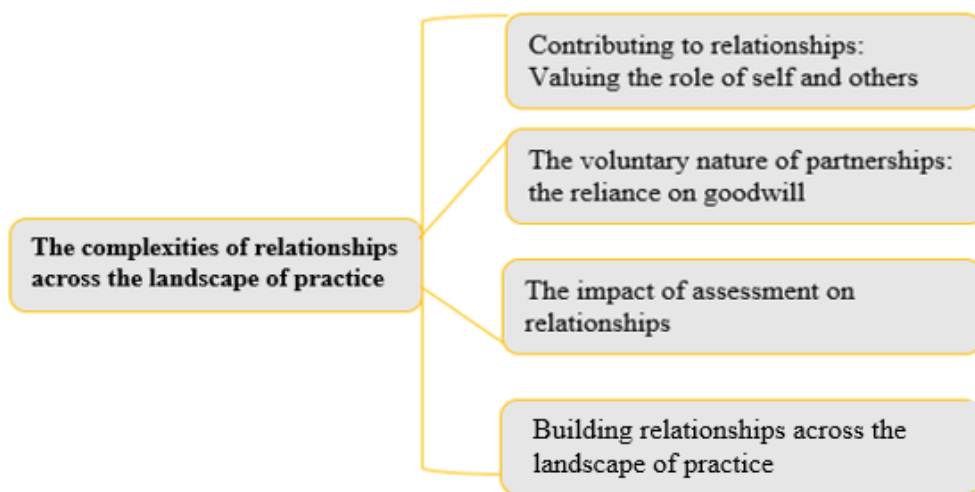
Figure 6.2: Theme two: the complexities of relationships across the landscape of practice and associated sub-themes.

6.4.1. Sub-theme: Contributing to relationships: valuing the role of self and others

Each member of the triad is valued, yet there are variations in how this manifests itself: this sub-theme details the explicit articulation of the cooperating teacher's value within partnerships, placement tutors emphasising their own value to others, and student teachers not recognising their value in partnerships.

All placement tutors *'value'* the *'voice'* of cooperating teachers as they provide an *'insight into the student'* (PT1) and are a source of *'invaluable support'* to student teachers (PT4). PT2 suggests that placement tutors should *'convey...you value their input, and you want to hear what they have to say'*. PT4 relays this to cooperating teachers and student teachers: *'I said it to cooperating teachers...it's so important their role...I said to the students, do you realise what a fantastic cooperating teacher you have...they're going to inform your best practice going forward...'*. Although PT4 values some opinions more than others: *'I know the good cooperating teachers and would take advice from them about the student teacher more so than other cooperating teachers'*.

Three cooperating teachers felt valued by placement tutors. This is explicitly communicated to CT1 through *'emails and phone calls'*. CT2 surmises placement tutors *'value cooperating teachers feedback...and take it into account when they are grading'* student teachers. This is true of PT4's practice: as outlined, this depends on the cooperating teacher. Despite this, PT4 reckons *'when cooperating teachers don't have a role in giving grades, they don't see their role as important'*. This insinuates that carrying out formal student teacher assessment may contribute to perceptions that the placement tutor role is more important, which aligns with CT3 who is unsure if her opinion is valued:

> *Because if they were [opinions valued equally], there would be communication that our feedback needs to come under this category...because the tutor requires [CT3] to say X,Y, and Z and therefore my opinion has merit...that's not there so therefore it doesn't really matter.*

Despite the findings postulating the involvement of cooperating teachers in student teachers' assessment could elevate the cooperating teacher role, it is not as clear cut as this. The impact of assessment on relationships is discussed in sub-theme 6.4.3.

As seen in theme one, limited time impacts conversations between placement tutors and cooperating teachers and when asked what information should be prioritised if time is short, CT3 infers the importance of feeling valued:

> *Has the student teacher been grateful to be placed in the school?...are they sharing anything and have they learned? If you've given them advice, have they used it?...if I've given something to someone and they go, yeah, yeah and then they don't use it, you can notice that.*

The importance of feeling valued is further signified by CT3: CT3 was disappointed that ST3 did not speak about her observed lesson, implying that qualified teachers are not validated: *'...this is going to sound egotistical...you are never told after you leave college....you did well today...no one gives you feedback as a teacher'.* When ST3 was asked if she would be comfortable in having conversations with CT3 after observing CT3's lesson, ST3 responded: *'Yeah, we could do that'.* Therefore, CT3's disappointment could have been rectified if CT3 and ST3 discussed expectations. This goes back to the point in theme one: who is responsible for initiating professional conversations? Having such conversations could allay or reduce the doubt about the value student teachers place on their cooperating teachers, especially as all student teachers were complimentary of their cooperating teachers.

The value of the placement tutor role was mostly articulated from placement tutors themselves. PT3 and PT4 recognise their value and want student teachers to utilise this more: *'I'd love if they started taking more advice because...we have a lot to give'* (PT4). PT3 shared where she has taught and *'the kind of students I've worked with'* to encourage student teachers to avail of support. According to PT3, the student teachers that sought her advice *'did better overall'* but names assessment as a *'barrier'* in student teachers availing of support (discussed in section 6.4.3).

PT1 and PT4 deduce that student teachers *'value'* their classroom experience as it *'elevates'* their role as *'student teachers know that I know what I am talking about'* (PT4), particularly as *'you may have had experience with a similar class group'* (PT1). According to PT4, this is valued by cooperating teachers, thus draws attention to her teaching experience:

...you were teacher as well...so they know you are an expert in your field and I have taught second level...I think that's a huge benefit...if I can build up that rapport with cooperating teachers, they love that you can talk the talk.

The placement tutors feel it is necessary to draw attention to their experience as a first-order practitioner to elevate their value to student teachers and cooperating teachers. Moreover, it shows the placement tutors feels like an outsider to the school community as they are justifying their position. However, the importance of first-order practitioner experience was not mentioned by the cooperating teachers and student teachers.

In contrast to placement tutors, student teachers did not have self-awareness of their value, but cooperating teachers, placement tutors, principals, and pedagogy lecturers do. Some placement tutors and cooperating teachers detailed the learning they received from student teachers. CT2 stated *'the benefit of having student teachers is learning different methodologies'*; this was articulated by CT1, CT4, and three principals as well. Such learning has been relayed to PT2: *'the cooperating teachers often commend our students for bringing them the latest teaching and learning resources'*. CT3 expected to learn from ST3 and was disappointed that ST3 did not speak through her methodologies or share resources. This may be due to ST3 not recognising the value she can bring to schools, a finding that was evident during all student teacher interviews. During the focus group, the student teachers were informed that the participating cooperating teachers spoke about learning from student teachers, and when asked

if they thought they contributed to the learning of their cooperating teachers, ST3 replied:

'...everything I did was nothing new, that they hadn't seen or done already...maybe we could contribute but... I don't think I contributed much'.

In response ST4 stated:

I'm the same, there was things where they just said that's a new idea or a different way of teaching...but they weren't really watching me too much...so I don't think there would be much of a chance for them to learn anything.

Even though ST4 was informed she brought new ideas into the school, the value of this learning for teachers was not fully recognised. This finding alludes to student teachers seeking entry to a community of practice, but not as a contributing member: this is discussed later.

In summation, each member of the triad is valued but this is showcased in different ways. The student teacher as a learner does not recognise their value to the continuum of teacher education but cooperating teachers and placement tutors have identified their value. The placement tutor values their own role, yet it is not explicitly voiced by cooperating teachers and student teachers, but it could be argued that this may be due to the placement tutor carrying out a role that is clear to all partners. There are more conscious efforts to explicitly state the value of cooperating teachers within partnerships. While it could be argued that like placement tutors, cooperating teachers are carrying out their role, there is not the same clarity in relation to the cooperating teacher role, so perhaps when support is forthcoming gratitude is explicitly communicated. Furthermore, it raises the point if the voluntary role of the cooperating teacher creates the necessity to be explicit in stating their value. The awareness of goodwill extended by schools and cooperating teachers is detailed next.

6.4.2. Sub-theme: The voluntary nature of partnerships: the reliance on goodwill

The goodwill extended by schools and cooperating teachers featured in the data. All placement tutors emphasised the gratitude they convey to cooperating teachers and schools for hosting student teachers as they were aware that the HEI relies on their goodwill for school placement to happen. PT4s comments are representative of all placement tutors: *'you have to make a connection with the principal and the cooperating teacher because it's important that we build up that relationship, that they will take students into the future'*. The placement tutor is the face of the HEI and is conscious of the impact of their interactions with schools. PT2 therefore points out the importance of recognising the expectations placed on schools by the HEI: *'I...acknowledge their support and...say I know some of our expectations are quite demanding, and we do value and thank you'*. As PT3 states *'it's a voluntary role, and we have to be mindful of that'* especially as there is *'difficulty in getting placement for every student'*. PT2 *'reinforces and highlights to the cooperating teacher that we are relying on their goodwill in terms of handing over classes'*. Again, gratitude is clearly communicated to cooperating teachers.

ST4 is mindful of the voluntary nature of schools hosting student teachers, stating part of her responsibility was to *'be flexible and do what suited the cooperating teacher'* as *'they didn't have to take you...'*. The remaining student teachers did not refer to this goodwill.

No participant spoke of schools potentially withdrawing their goodwill. One reason that cooperating teachers continue to extend goodwill is that they *'remember when you were a student'* (CT4) and wanting to *'give back'* (CT1 & CT2) to student teachers. The only reference to not accepting student teachers was when I asked CT3 how she would deal with a difference of opinion with a placement tutor: *'if their communication was very abrupt, I'd let my principal*

know...I'd refuse to take teachers...'. The scenario of abrupt communication from a placement tutor seems unlikely given the high level of awareness amongst placement tutors to convey their gratitude to schools.

As seen in the theme one, PT1 advocated for *'formalised links'* with cooperating teachers. PT2 feels the cooperating teacher role should be recognised more and formalised but urges caution on how this can be realised: *'consideration needs to be given as to how that [formalisation] can be done...they have an important role...and should probably be given more recognition'.*

Although the placement tutors are acutely aware of the goodwill of schools, the findings do not suggest any threat of schools withdrawing goodwill. Despite this, some placement tutors believe formalising the cooperating teacher's role shows respect and would elevate their role within school-university partnerships. Furthermore, the gratitude displayed, in part owing to the voluntary nature of school-university partnerships, pulls the relationship between placement tutors and cooperating teachers out of balance: placement tutors are careful about what they say and the emphasis on gratitude potentially reinforces power differentials as it insinuates student teachers belong to the HEI and the school is doing the HEI a favour. This therefore points to systematic issues of the current partnership structure.

6.4.3. Sub-theme: The impact of assessment on relationships

The impact of assessment pertains mostly to the interaction between placement tutors and student teachers; however, the scenario of cooperating teachers being involved in summative assessment was explored. While assessment is an important feature of school placement, it impacts how student teachers navigate relationships.

All placement tutors reported that their role was to support student teachers, and this was recognised by all student teachers. According to PT1 and PT3, student teachers availing of support can enhance their school placement experience, yet assessment prevents some student teachers from seeking support:

> *...some of them bought into it [availing of support offered] and...some were still terrified of me...this woman is correcting me...the ones that got past that did better...not with me specifically but they did better overall because they had the support* (PT3).

Assessment overshadowing the placement tutor's supportive role was unanimous amongst the placement tutors. As a result, *'the whole conversation is anticipation of what are the marks as opposed to that constructive conversation'* (PT1). PT2 concludes that the high stakes nature of school placement creates a *'fear among students...because there's so much hinging on it from the point of view of passing or failing'*. This was verified by student teachers: *'you have to pass to keep going so you're very aware of that the whole time in the interactions with the tutor'* (ST4).

Tailoring practice based on assessment, instead of making pedagogical decisions, is a concern of PT2:

> *...one of the most alarming questions I'm asked by students... is there any particular thing that you look out for, that you want? I get them to elaborate, and they say well you know certain tutors have certain things that they focus on.*

It is apparent that assessment impacts student teacher practice through false compliance: *'I was more writing lesson plans for the tutors and inspectors than it was for the students...I wasn't really using the full lesson plan'* with parts of the lesson plan described as *'not really relevant'* (ST2). As discussed in theme one, ST2 did not discuss this with PT2. ST1 identifies assessment

as one reason for not discussing differences of opinions with PT1 and would withhold her opinion unless she was failing: *'they are marking you...unless I failed, I probably would do nothing'*.

Additionally, ST4 is cognisant of relationships with full-time placement tutors beyond school placement. When ST4 was asked what she would do if she did not agree with the placement tutor's feedback, she revealed she *'would have just left it'* because *'you're going to be in college for the next four or five years and you could have this lecturer for something else and...you are making a big fuss'*. This highlights that forms of power could continue into other aspects of the programme.

Assessment impacting support is not confined to interactions between placement tutors and student teachers. PT2 claims some cooperating teachers try '*to protect the student teacher'* by not being *'as honest or forthcoming as they could be'*. CT4 reveals that she is *'very mindful'* of what she says to placement tutors *'because if you say something negative it can bring them down...you want them to do well'*. However, PT2 had conversations where cooperating teachers were dissatisfied with student teachers, but they did not want this feedback to be used in the student teacher's assessment: *'I've had situations...where teachers haven't been happy...but...they don't want to be on the record as saying that'*. PT2 describes this scenario as difficult: interestingly the Teaching Council (2021a:20) state a cooperating teacher's responsibility is to 'provide oral or written feedback' to student teachers, but there is no requirement to share the assessment with placement tutors. Cooperating teachers becoming involved in assessment was a discussion point: the cooperating teachers did not share the same opinion on whether they should be involved in the summative assessment of student teachers.

CT2 was unsure but stated it would require some *'training'*. CT4 said she would get involved in assessment if she observed classes, but she does not presently do this. CT1 considers the variation of support that student teachers receive from their cooperating teachers, thus recognises it may not be equitable: *'I know some student teachers have very little support...I don't work like that, I would be extremely supportive...for me...it would be for their benefit, but for some, probably not'*. This is recognised by PT1 who identified a *'variety'* in the support given by cooperating teachers, stipulating that if cooperating teachers were involved in assessment *'CPD would be required'* to *'ensure integrity across all school placement experiences'*. CT3 initially thought it would be a good idea to assess student teachers, but concluded that cooperating teachers should not be involved as it could impinge on their supportive role:

> *...what came to mind first was maybe in terms of how they settle in the school...are they consistently performing or dress, communications, staffroom...professional conduct overall...but then I had the thought...would that colour their experience and their learning? Should they just be able to be themselves with us, vulnerable, annoyed when they're annoyed, curious when their curious, upset when they're upset, and we should just be there as an almost like a teaching friend...I think that's probably better.*

ST1, ST3, and ST4 did not advocate for cooperating teachers to be involved in their assessment. ST1 and ST4 stated conversations between cooperating teachers and placement tutors to discuss their practice is sufficient. ST3 is unsure due to cooperating teachers not observing many of her lessons. By contrast, ST2 is in favour of cooperating teachers being involved in summative assessment as they had a more realistic overview of her teaching than the placement tutor:

> *...they're there much longer, they actually see how you're dealing with the students instead of a pre-planned perfect lesson...they have a much better understanding than the inspector does that comes in for one class.*

The findings indicate that assessment can impact the relationship between placement tutors and student teachers, with placement tutors wanting student teachers to work past this to avail of support. The cooperating teachers did not express any strong desire to be involved in summative assessment, but only CT3 was opposed to it as it could curtail student teachers' interactions with cooperating teachers. ST2 wanted her cooperating teacher to be involved in her assessment because cooperating teachers had a more realistic overview of her practice. The remaining student teachers were content with the current format. Regardless of the opinions reported, assessment is a central component in school placement and therefore how to build relationships between parties, to ensure assessment does not overshadow support for student teachers, is important: relationship building is discussed next.

6.4.4. Sub-theme: Building relationships across the landscape of practice

The findings show placement tutors try to build relationships with student teachers through empathy and support. This sub-theme reveals that learning does not occur solely for student teachers; thus, relationships can be reciprocal. Additionally, the findings posit that it takes time for relationships to be forged.

All placement tutors mentioned the importance of putting student teachers at ease, as student teachers can display a sense of fear towards them: *'it's like they've seen the grim reaper when you walk through the door'* (PT1). PT3 recounts similar feelings as a student teacher: *'I remember being terrified of my own placement tutor...they were holding my grade in their hands...whereas I really wanted them to feel like I was human'.* According to PT1 building relations through empathy and support can highlight that placement tutors are more than assessors:

> *...empathy helps break down barriers and they see you in that humanistic side....you're not coming into the school to write on the notepads [assessment sheets]...it's...saying you're fine, you're prepared, I have been there.*

PT1 uses her experience as a student teacher to support and empathise with student teachers. Comparatively, PT3 draws on her past experiences during pre-school placement meetings, but as a teacher, to indicate she is there as a support: *'I told them about where I taught...they need to see you as a teacher and know that you've been there and done it'.*

The importance of the pre-school placement meeting between placement tutors and student teachers in order to build relations is emphasised by PT2 and PT3: *'if you've put in the groundwork with the student teacher before you go to the school...you're there to support them, it can alleviate some of that inspectorate vibe'* (PT3). PT2 is conscious of language used to convey her support: *'...in terms of my communication...I say I look forward to working alongside you...so I'm supporting you...it's important to get that message to students'.*

PT2 advocates face-to-face meetings with student teachers, rather than online meetings, to help build personable relationships. ST3 finds *'online'* contact with placement tutors results in more formal conversations than speaking *'face-to-face...with cooperating teachers'.* These points suggest that meeting face-to-face helps develop relationships, and therefore could imply that the limited contact between placement tutors and student teachers by virtue of not being in the same building can hinder their relationship. ST1 said she did not need more interaction with PT1, whereas ST4 stated she would like *'a bit more'* contact with her placement tutor, a sentiment shared by ST2 and ST3.

Team teaching has become a feature during school placement for some student teachers, with PT1 thinking this could be built on to support relationships: *'if there was some dual assessment with the team teacher and the student teacher...it would show that student teacher's ability to establish a professional relationship'*. Additionally, it would inform conversations between placement tutors and cooperating teachers so there is *'less of that hierarchy'* of the placement tutor *'coming into the school to assess from the top down, that it's more collaborative'* (PT1). PT3 thinks it could counteract cooperating teachers needing to *'go back and reteach some topics'*. PT3 expands on PT1's suggestion, stating that it *'could lead to students taking classes on their own to be assessed by the tutor'*.

This sub-theme also conveys the importance of being open to learning from and sharing with others. Through the placement tutors, the HEI is open to learning how to improve school placement. PT2 and PT4 seek *'feedback...on the school placement process as delivered by the college'* to show *'we're not in this ivory tower, that we're working together'* (PT2), hence demonstrating the need to break down hierarchies between HEIs and schools.

PT3 attests the HEI can learn about the reality of policy implementation in schools and in turn can inform HEI practice:

> *...people who put policies in place when they're not in that working environment are putting together the ideal...the reality...is very different and that will be important to learn from principals and teachers...like how does it actually work... and what's going on for them in the school and that should inform policy around how school placement functions.*

PT2 further outlines the importance of understanding the lived realities of schools to support HEI practice:

...you have to be up to date, you have to know...the actual reality of what happens on the ground, sometimes when you're not necessarily engaged directly in it, your perceptions can be more ideal.

Likewise, one pedagogy lecturer refers to seeing *'the perspective of what is currently happening on the ground',* but in return the HEI *'may have insights into international trends and research outputs informing practice'*, thus the '*sharing of a wealth of experience, knowledge, and learning from and with each other...can only add to the wealth of the student teacher experience'.* This pedagogy lecturer sees the partnership as reciprocal, but one principal sees it as one dimensional i.e., *'opportunities'* for schools *'to visit the universities to see first-hand the training student teachers receive'.* This highlights that the school appears outside the HEI community and shows the principal thinks about learning from the HEI, rather than what the HEI can learn from the school.

Additionally, PT2 details that her placement tutor role informs her own teaching, with a focus on the relevance and usefulness of her lectures[28] for student teachers: *'...seeing if what I'm doing is translated in practice... are our students being provided with enough, is what I'm doing relevant, so it informs my own teaching'.*

As referenced earlier, cooperating teachers enjoyed *'learning new methodologies'* (CT2)*.* While there were variations in whether student teachers shared resources and methodologies with cooperating teachers, it was identified earlier that student teachers lacked an awareness of their pedagogical contribution to the potential practice of cooperating teachers. In contrast,

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[28] This refers to non-pedagogy related lectures.

there was some awareness that student teachers getting involved in school life was a good way to build relationships. As voiced by ST4:

...getting involved...and helping outside of your own classroom would be a huge part in improving that relationship and the school knowing all students in the college have been brilliant, they've been helpful.

ST4 was the only student teacher that got involved in school life beyond teaching classes, expressing *'it was great to get involved in the school community'.* ST2 acknowledged it would be nice to get involved but was unaware of what she could be involved in. Both ST2 and ST3 feared that it could be time-consuming: *'if I did put something else on top [of teaching], it would have stressed me out...it would have taken time away from lesson planning'* (ST3). CT1 advocates the involvement of student teachers in the school community: *'try and not just come in and teach, have a whole school community experience'.* All placement tutors concur and advised student teachers to get involved in the school community. According to PT4 this would make the student teacher more memorable: *'they mightn't remember the person that was inside in the classroom working away diligently...it's what you do outside sometimes that's more memorable',* showcasing that cooperating teacher and placement tutors views the teacher role from a whole school viewpoint, whereas student teachers confine the role to inside the classroom.

This sub-theme indicates it takes time to build relationships. CT4 articulates this in relation to student teachers, with the impact of assessment featuring again:

...they might be shy at the start...and if they are asking a lot of questions, it seems they don't know what they're doing, and the teacher is not going to write a good comment about them...but then near the end when they know you... they might ask a few more questions.

As this study involves student teachers on their first school placement, who have no experience of working with either cooperating teachers or placement tutors, it is not surprising that it takes time to become comfortable in their interactions. Additionally, it takes time for relationships to be forged between cooperating teachers and placement tutors. PT2 has built relationships over time, for example, when past student teachers become cooperating teachers and through meeting cooperating teachers on numerous occasions: *'I'm at this a long time and...knowing a lot of teachers either from having taught them or having met them...in the school so I think it's building up a relationship with cooperating teachers'*. This aligns with the experience of CT3 and PT3, who said they were comfortable speaking with each other due to knowing each other previously.

Not only is time a factor in building relationships, time-alleviation was also advocated. According to PT4, cooperating teachers should be *'given time-alleviations'* to carry out the role, and this would highlight the value of their role. CT4 stresses *'more time'* would allow her *'to sit down and check and plan and reflect with the student teacher'* as she feels *'guilty'* when she cannot do this. CT3 spoke of staff shortages, and therefore sought ways to *'shorten the workload'* when hosting ST3. A lack of time also manifests itself in the short interactions between cooperating teachers and placement tutors, thus reducing the chances of practices being shared across the landscape of practice.

This sub-theme indicates that relationships built on empathy and support, with parties open to learning from each other, that displace the concept of hierarchy, can contribute to relationship building. Additionally, student teachers getting involved in school life can contribute towards

building partnerships. Time is also a crucial factor in building relationships, through time alleviation and the passage of time to build relationships.

6.4.5. Theme two conclusion

As the theme name suggests relationships are complex, and this is evident with the associated sub-themes. The importance and value of each member of the triad is recognised, albeit in different ways. Relationships are forged through the goodwill of schools but there is no indication that cooperating teachers would withdraw their goodwill. The findings report time as a crucial feature in building relationships. Finally, the fragility of relationships and the need to build relationships to counteract negative power dynamics associated with assessment is clear. Forming and supporting partnerships is the final theme.

6.5. Theme three: Forming and supporting partnerships across the landscape of practice

The theme 'forming and supporting partnerships across the landscape of practice' has two associated sub-themes (Figure 6.3).
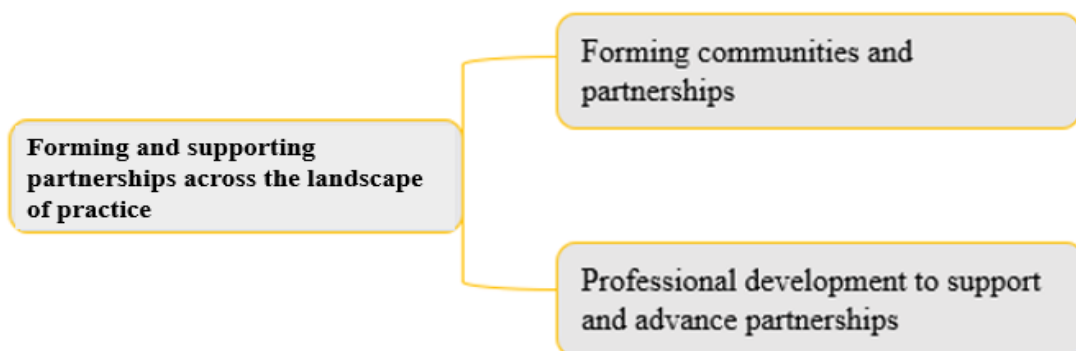
Figure 6.3: Theme three: Forming and supporting partnerships across the landscape of practice and associated sub-themes.

6.5.1. Sub-theme: Forming communities and partnerships

Table 6.9 breaks down Wenger's (1998) definition of communities of practice as pertained to those in this study, showing the different communities of practice that form during school-university partnerships, while other communities of practice are not activated.

Participants/ Communities involved	Definition segment of a community of practice: 'Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic...' (Wenger, 1998:4).	Definition segment of a community of practice: '...who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger, 1998:4).
Communities of practice of student teachers.	Share in the desire to become a teacher: default community of practice when they enter an ITE programme.	During school placement, student teachers supported each other e.g., asking other student teachers *'can you help me?'*, identifying that they are *'in the same boat'* (ST2).
Communities of practice of cooperating teachers.	Both voluntary and involuntary cooperating teachers in this study. Cooperating teachers share the commonality of being a classroom teacher assigned to a student teacher: CT1 and CT2 were approached by principal to take on the role, CT4 *'volunteered'* initially, for CT1, CT2, and CT4 the role was *'optional'* (CT2), and they were happy to take on the role. CT3 did not have an option: there was an *'insistence'* on having a student teacher. If there is only one cooperating teacher working with the student teacher, then essentially there is no community of practice. While the student teacher may work with other teachers, they may not be in the role of a cooperating teacher.	If there is only one cooperating teacher for the student teacher from this HEI, then there may be no community of practice to be a part of, but the cooperating teacher may be part of a wider group of cooperating teachers who host student teachers from a range of HEIs. CT1 and CT4 were not working with another cooperating teacher. CT2 spoke of *'informal discussions'* with colleagues influencing her role as a cooperating teacher. CT3 informally spoke with another cooperating teacher to decide on the level of support for the student teacher at the outset of school placement, therefore it would not be considered ongoing.

Communities of practice of placement tutors.	There are two placement tutors assigned per student teacher, therefore the placement tutor works alongside another placement tutor. Also, all placement tutors within the HEI have the shared focus of supporting student teachers learning to teach.	The newly appointed placement tutors have an induction where they meet. There are also briefings for all placement tutors. PT1 spoke of phoning other placement tutors during school placement.
Communities of practice of student teachers and cooperating teachers.	A shared focus is the pupils in the classroom. When the cooperating teacher supports the student teacher, there is also a shared focus on the student teacher learning to teach.	School placement is a short period, so the ongoing basis is restricted to a preliminary visit and a four-week block placement. CT1 displayed ongoing support for the student teacher. For CT2, it was dependent on the student teacher: in the context of this study, CT2 did not feel it necessary for ongoing support as the student teachers were *'excellent'*. CT3 took a step back once ST3 was not using her *'as a resource'*. CT4 provides support but feels *'guilty'* she cannot provide the same level of support as she used to. ST1's placement school had a school placement department: support from cooperating teachers and other teachers so it was an ongoing basis. ST2 and ST4 had ongoing support. ST3 described interactions as *'small talk'*, therefore it would not be considered as ongoing support. Sometimes cooperating teachers approached student teachers, other times student teachers approached the cooperating teacher for support.
Communities of practice of student teachers and placement tutors.	A shared focus on student teachers learning to teach.	Pre-school placement meeting between all student teachers and placement tutors. All placement tutors spoke of support for student teachers. PT3 places

		responsibility on the student teacher to ask for further support where needed.
		ST1 had ongoing support: '*gave good feedback throughout placement*' and '*checked up on me*'.
		ST2 and ST3 were not comfortable to approach their placement tutor for ongoing support as the placement tutor is seen through the lens of '*authority*' (ST3).
		ST4 was comfortable to approach her placement tutor, but this was due to her placement tutor also being her pedagogy lecturer, thus a previous community of practice helped this community of practice to be developed but would like increased interactions with placement tutors.
Communities of practice of cooperating teachers and placement tutors.	A shared focus on student teacher and pupil learning. The balance of focus potentially differs: placement tutor focuses on the student teacher, the cooperating teacher focuses on pupils.	All placement tutors seek feedback from cooperating teachers, and all cooperating teachers stated their feedback was sought.

Interactions were not necessarily ongoing: email beforehand and conversations were approximately 5 or10 minutes long during the visit. Could be considered ongoing if the same placement tutors and cooperating teachers meet over the years, as described by PT2, but that would involve different student teachers.

When there was a prior relationship e.g. PT3 and CT3, there were more detailed conversations, otherwise CT3 would have kept conversations '*vague*'. Similarly, PT3 was unsure of the expectations of cooperating teachers so would usually keep conversations '*generic*'. Evidence of cooperating teachers withholding information from placement tutors: e.g. CT4 feels she would be '*getting the student in trouble*' if she |

		was not *'positive'* with the placement tutor. Oppposingly, the cooperating teacher could *'communicate things that the tutor won't be told'* by the student teacher (CT3).
Communities of practice of the triad.	A shared focus on student teacher learning.	Discussions as a triad did not occur for participants of this study. PT2 suggests a *'three-way dialogue'* could be *'useful'*. ST2 and ST4 suggested that a three-way dialogue would be useful. Cooperating teachers did not reference a three-way dialogue.

Table 6.9: Wenger's (1998) description of communities of practice as compared to the experiences of participants in this study.

Source: Wenger (1998).

While Table 6.9 demonstrates that partnerships and communities of practice are formed and experienced differently, each participant was asked if they thought school-university partnerships are effective (Table 6.10). The definitions of partnership and collaboration from the Teaching Council guidelines (2021a:3) were shared with the participants when asked this question: 'Partnership refers to the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners involved in school placement to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education', while collaboration '…occurs when those involved in school placement work together as partners to achieve the shared goal of developing the knowledge, skills and competencies which student teachers need while ensuring the best outcomes for pupils during the process. This is underpinned by the sharing of knowledge and learning, the building of consensus and the improvement of skills critical to the success of school placement'.

Question posed: Are school-university partnerships effective?	Responses
Yes, they are effective	CT1, CT2 PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4 ST1, ST3, ST4 1 pedagogy lecturer 2 principals
No, they are not effective	CT3, CT4 ST2 1 principal
Sometimes they are effective	3 pedagogy lecturers 5 principals

Table 6.10: Participant responses regarding the effectiveness of school-university partnerships

There is not a full consensus on whether partnerships are effective, but the majority feel they are. CT1 is very positive about the partnership forged between her school and the HEI. CT2 thinks there is a good partnership, but thinks it is strongest between the *'school, the student teacher and myself, maybe not so much with the placement tutor'*. CT3 and CT4 opinions are sought by placement tutors, but it is *'not really much of a partnership'* (CT4). All placement tutors believe partnerships are effective. PT2 claims that *'partnership denotes a buy in of all parties involved...for a shared purpose'* and *'it has worked'*. PT3 thinks partnerships are *'a functioning relationship'* but believes schools do not have *'any thoughts about the college side of it'*. PT4 points to the commonality between the triad: *'everyone is a teacher'* and letting the school know she was *'a practicing teacher'* has supported partnerships. PT1 thinks partnerships are working but *'there is scope for more effective links'*. Three student teachers feel there is a partnership between the HEI and schools. ST2 felt there was not a partnership as she acted as a go between the school and the HEI, as '*communication was all through me'*. ST2 thinks partnerships can be improved by the HEI and schools communicating directly with each other, opining student teachers *'don't have to be directly involved'*. This implies that ST2 does not see herself as an active member of the partnership. ST1 thought partnerships were

'effective', but as an improvement she would like to *'sit in on the final tutor visit, with the tutor and the coop'*. PT2 mentions that a *'three-way dialogue'* between student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers could be *'useful'* but that could lead to *'added workload'* for cooperating teachers so details would have to be teased out. The various opinions of student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers show that while there is not a full consensus of the effectiveness of school-university partnerships, they are functioning, with most participants believing they are effective; however, there is potential to progress and enhance partnerships further.

One pedagogy lecturer expressed school-university partnerships are effective, with the remaining pedagogy lecturers relaying that only some partnerships are effective. One pedagogy lecturer states that *'thinking one size fits all'* can lead to the variation in success of partnerships and advocates for a *'menu or list of various types of partnerships, with varying levels of engagement options'*. Two pedagogy lecturers attest *'there is a big variation between how much involvement cooperating teachers want to be involved in their student teacher's placement'*. One pedagogy lecturer expanded the responsibility beyond just the cooperating teacher: *'partnerships can be effective, but this is dependent on the type of partnership and the level of actual engagement between the various participants',* with another stating *'we can learn from and support each other'*.

One pedagogy lecturer proposes:

> *A memorandum of understanding, drafted together by both parties, these would outline the roles, responsibilities, expectations, and parameters of the partnership and ensure all are aware of what they are signing up to, thus avoiding disappointment, disagreement and a lack of action in some instances.*

Similarly, one principal stated partnerships were effective, while five attested school-university partnerships are sometimes effective, with one principal stating there are *'different standards by different universities'*. Only one principal stated partnerships are not effective but did not provide a reason for this.

Difficulties in forging effective partnerships is recognised by many participants. One pedagogy lecturer noted *'student teachers are placed in a variety of schools nationwide making it complex to develop individual partnerships'*. PT1 notes that *'differences in school structures and...mindset in relation to school placement'* can vary, making it difficult to *'get the same experience in all schools'*. ST4 recognises the *'difficulty'* of the HEI arranging partnerships with many schools, stating *'they can only really be professional and generic'*.

Despite challenges, opportunities beyond student teachers learning to teach featured in the dataset. In many instances, the benefit of recruitment and employment opportunities is referenced. CT2 identifies that student teachers *'might be able to look for work in that school'*, and CT4 reports *'we're also doing it for recruitment purposes as we're having difficulty with retaining teachers...'*. This correlates with opinions of four principals, as represented in this quote: *'it is helpful for identifying candidates for teacher recruitment'*. PT1 suggests that *'there is opportunities for school management to suggest to us what they look for in employees, what makes a good teacher'* so the HEI can help support this.

Many participants outline the potential to progress partnerships. Three principals agreed, with one stating it was worth exploring. CT3 asserts partnerships should work on the premise that *'each party has something to gain',* and *'the school has something good to show at the end'*.

This correlates with one principal who wants HEIs to *'give something back'*. Another principal states a challenge of school-university partnerships is *'ensuring the experience is beneficial for all three parties – students, student teachers, and school leadership'*. Perhaps unintentionally this principal leaves out the placement tutor and HEI from the partnership, thus the student teacher alone is the face of the HEI.

Partnership beyond school placement was advocated by some cooperating teachers. CT3 expressed a desire to get more involved in school-university partnerships: *'I'd love to collaborate...with them'*. CT3 suggests that the HEI could work with a range of teachers and have *'a constant dialogue, even video format coming from a live class'* or *'recording unedited videos on a school occasion or a difficult topic or class group'* where teachers could demonstrate teaching and seek advice and input from the HEI. CT3 proposes it could be a *'short module'* for the HEI, while providing reciprocal learning and professional development for the school, noting that *'I could learn a lot by doing something like that'*. Similarly, one pedagogy lecturer proposes *'schools, teachers, cooperating teachers, can feed into course design'*.

CT4 is in favour of partnerships beyond school placement, with the aim to *'encourage more students to become teachers'*. Furthermore, CT1 believes student teachers *'can raise the profile'* of the subjects within the HEI and allows pupils who have an interest in attending the HEI to speak with *'student teachers about teaching so that's invaluable career guidance'*. Moreover, partnerships can support pupils with career choices: visits from HEIs into schools can help pupils know what the HEI *'has to offer'* (CT2) and schools visiting HEIs *'demystifies*

the university' for some pupils (CT1). CT2 states that the HEI *'probably already do this'*, which is indeed true, again pointing to the importance of communication.

The pedagogy lecturers provide a range of opinions on how school-university partnerships could be enhanced:

> *Government policy in relation to pilot projects. Government incentives. Memorandum of understanding. Clearer communication on what is taught in the different ITE programmes.*

> *Outreach to schools by the university sector i.e., information day inputs. Inviting key personnel i.e., principals, teachers with responsibility for school placement students, cooperating teachers, to the college for inputs (DoE providing substitute cover costings and expenses to teachers).*

> *Focusing on the development of 'local' partnerships. National approach to the development of partnerships.*

> *There is a need for upskilling (CPD role of the university).*

There are a variety of opinions on the effectiveness of school-university partnerships, with Table 6.9 highlighting that partnerships/communities of practice can be experienced differently, therefore professional development to advance partnership is important, and forms the next sub-theme. However, one pedagogy lecturer notes the *'lack of resources for the development of partnerships'* can prevent suggestions being realised.

6.5.2. Sub-theme: Professional development to support and advance partnerships

PT1 and PT3 note *'space'* for the HEI to provide CPD to schools to complement the school placement guidelines (PT1), with PT2 placing a responsibility with the Teaching Council to provide CPD as well. PT4 believes if CPD is mandatory for cooperating teachers, it would not

be received well as teachers are *'up to their eyes with CPD'*. This does not correlate with the cooperating teachers, who all articulate a need for CPD. CPD for cooperating teachers occurs in *'some universities'* who *'offer training courses for cooperating teachers and deputy principals'*, with one principal stating their school has availed of this. PT3 advocates CPD for the cooperating teacher role because in the absence of CPD, *'people just do it their own way'*. This aligns with the experience of CT4: *'I have not trained in tutoring a student teacher so it's just coming from me'*. CT4 states CPD could be made *'compulsory'* but should only occur during school time. CT4 recommends a similar approach to Droichead or a school specific approach, supported by the HEI. CT1 *'brought some of the skills I have with Droichead'* into her interactions and feedback to student teachers, indicating professional development is advantageous and transferable. Further transferable skills were noted by PT4 who found that teachers who *'trained in England'* that *'mentored'* teachers as part of their job were the most effective cooperating teachers she witnessed. CT3, CT4, and PT1 proposed a *'webinar'* that outlines the roles of each party, with both the HEI and the school outlining their expectations to each other. CT3 suggests *'generic CPD on being a cooperating teacher'* and then associated *'subject specific CPD'*. Unsurprisingly, most student teachers did not refer to the importance of CPD supporting cooperating teachers; however, ST3 did feel the HEI *'could inform the cooperating teachers of their roles...because I'm not sure they were clear on their roles'*. Again, the responsibility is placed with the HEI, rather than ST3 believing it is the responsibility of CT3 to be aware of her role, thus inadvertently alluding to a hierarchy.

PT2 suggests the Teaching Council should provide CPD regarding school placement changes. PT2 identified that *Céim* places *'an emphasis on student teachers engaging in school-based research'* and *'there's a named role for the treoraithe in relation to that'*, therefore stresses the

need for *'briefings'* and *'CPD'* from the HEI. One pedagogy lecturer thinks *'school-university research collaborations will help break down perceived barriers'* between schools and HEIs.

6.5.3. Theme three conclusion

The theme on forming and supporting partnerships shows a variation in opinion on the current effectiveness of school-university partnerships, possibly owing to the different communities of practice they encounter (Table 6.9). How individuals understand school-university partnerships differs amongst some participants. For example, one student teacher does not recognise student teachers as a partner, instead believing that communication does not need to involve student teachers, whereas placement tutors and cooperating teachers view student teachers as a contributor to school-university partnerships. Additionally, a pedagogy lecturer advocates for a *'menu or...various types of partnerships'*, and a cooperating teacher proposes working on a short module with the HEI, showcasing that school-university partnerships can expand beyond facilitating school placement for student teachers. This desire to advance partnerships during and beyond school placement indicates support for school-university partnerships, but also illustrates that participants understand partnerships in different ways.

The three themes collectively display the complexity of school-university partnerships across the landscape of practice that strive to support student teachers learning to teach. The discussion chapter now follows, providing an analytical account of the findings.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings, the literature, and the theoretical framework and discusses the interplay between them. The chapter begins with discussing the array of communities of practice experienced, along with boundary crossing across the landscape of practice. The claiming and the displacement of prescribed responsibilities is then analysed, alongside forms of power that are impacting partnerships. Finally, this culminates in a discussion on school-university partnerships as experienced by participants in this study.

7.2. Communities of practice across the landscape: gaining access and varying levels of support and participation

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:13) attest social interactions within and across communities of practice 'contribute to the continued vitality, application and evolution of practice', yet the findings, particularly sub-theme 6.3.4, demonstrate that interactions vary considerably depending on those involved. Consistent with Wenger's work (1998), the participants are potential members of a range of communities of practice at once, with differing levels of participation, and not all communities of practice reached the active stage of development (Table 6.9 & Figure 7.1b&c). This section discusses these levels of participation and interactions in communities of practice. The access points to communities of practice and associated supports across the landscape of practice are detailed (Figure 7.1). This analysis adopts a similar trajectory to the theoretical framework by firstly outlining participants' legitimate peripheral participation and then communities of practice within and across the landscape of practice.
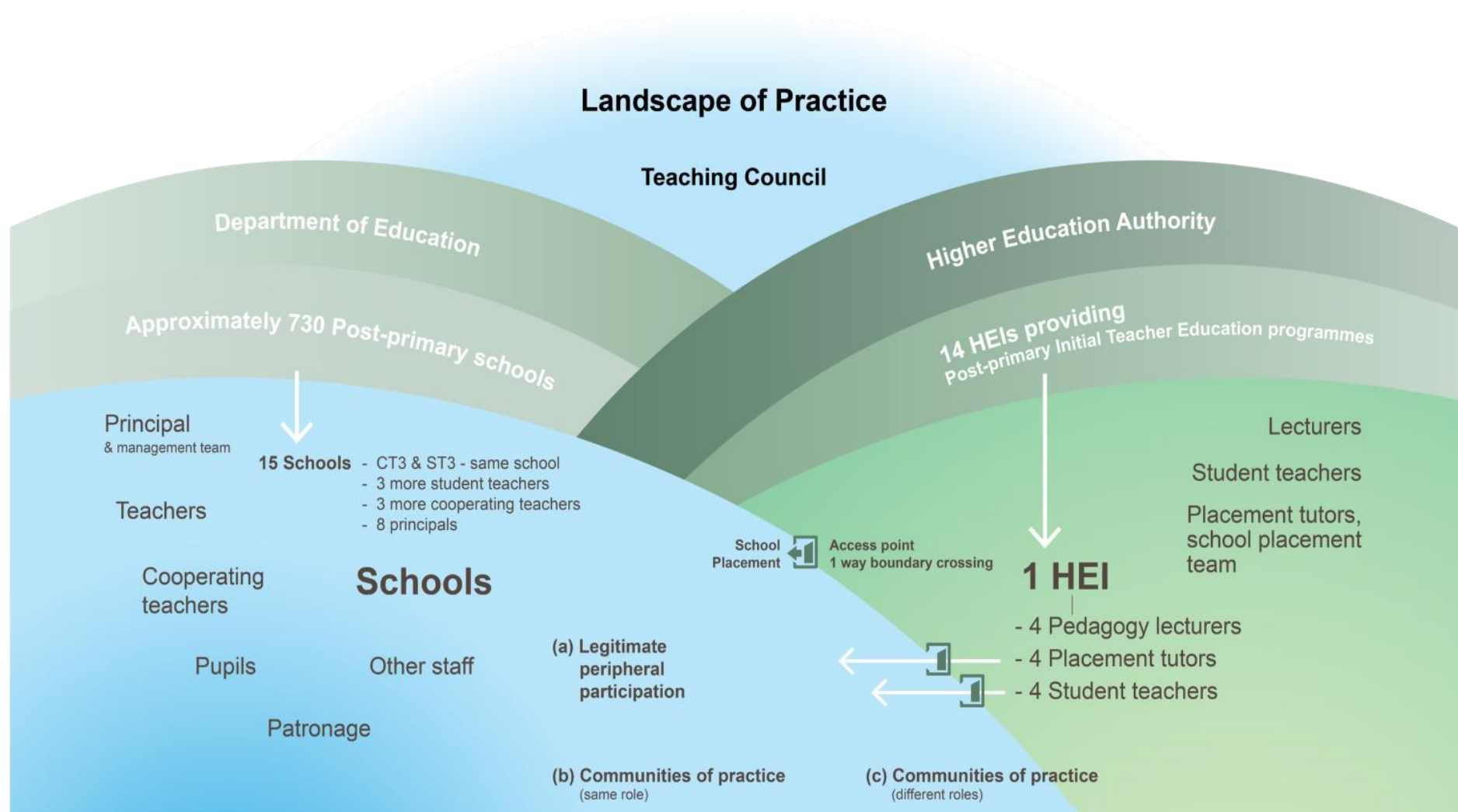
Figure 7.1: Overview of the landscape of practice, related to this study. The parts labelled a, b, and c are expanded on/zoomed in on in the following sections.[29]

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[29] The illustrations in this chapter were created with the help of Novartis Business Services.

With reference to legitimate peripheral participation, chapter two identified that first-time cooperating teachers and placement tutors, as well as student teachers, could be considered newcomers. In Lave and Wenger's (1991:36) description of legitimate peripheral participation, for learning to be legitimate, newcomers should have 'access to sources' to support them as they firstly learn at the periphery of a community of practice, with limited responsibilities. In time, newcomers are expected to move in an upward trajectory that sees their level of participation increased, which is agreed by members. The findings identified that legitimacy, i.e. access to support, is generally forthcoming for student teachers and new placement tutors but is not as readily available for new cooperating teachers (Figure 7.1a). Consequently, cooperating teachers are not afforded legitimate peripheral participation, and instead are expected to have full participation in a community of practice from the outset.
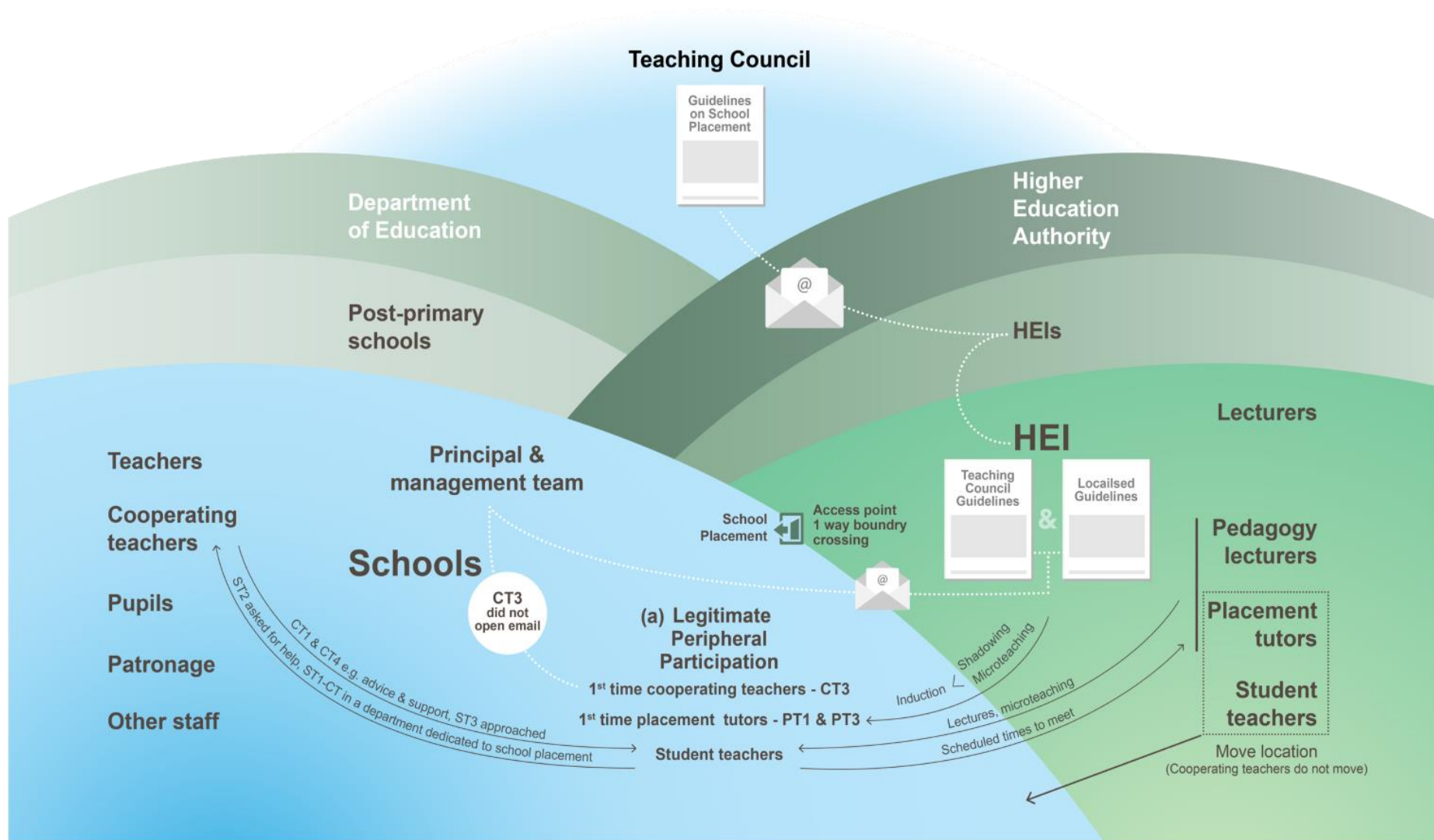
Figure 7.1a: Legitimate peripheral participation, related to this study

Student teachers were afforded different levels of legitimate peripheral participation during school placement. Their host schools facilitated student teacher access to practice their teaching, and while school placement is dependent on the goodwill of schools, no cooperating teacher or principal mentioned withdrawing this access. The support provided to student teachers then differed depending on whether they sought support or how much their cooperating teacher and/or placement tutor interacted with them. Sub-theme 6.3.4.1. provided examples of student teachers actively seeking advice from their cooperating teacher, and in other instances, the cooperating teacher approached the student teacher. In these examples, participants moved from the potential stage of development to the coalescing stage of a community of practice. In other cases, support was neither sought nor offered, such as CT3 taking a step back from supporting ST3 when she felt she was not being used as a *'resource'*. Consequently, this marginalises the participation of both ST3 and CT3 as their roles are not legitimised due to a lack of understanding of each other's role. Parallel findings occurred between student teachers and placement tutors: support was forthcoming from all placement tutors, but PT3 was strong in her positioning that *'if they engaged with me, I'd engage with them'*. Interestingly, PT3 and CT3 adopted similar stances, which consequently placed a great deal of responsibility on ST3, on her first school placement, to be active in her legitimate peripheral participation.

With respect to placement tutors' legitimate peripheral participation, new placement tutors spoke of an induction from the HEI, contrasting with many international approaches that are critical of placement tutors not having professional development (Slick, 1998; Murphy, 2010; Bates et al., 2011; Burns & Badiali, 2015; Zeichner & Bier, 2015; Barahona, 2019; Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020), but it correlates with O'Donoghue and Harford (2010) who found that professional development for placement tutors is provided in Ireland. Additionally,

placement tutors continue to have annual professional development from the HEI. That said, placement tutor supports are provided locally, rather than being nationalised. In contrast, cooperating teachers do not have the same access to induction or learning when they take on their role, reflecting much of the literature (Clarke et al., 2014; Ó Gallchóir et al., 2019; Franks, 2021; Farrell, 2021). The only resources for cooperating teachers are the HEI and Teaching Council guidelines, yet not all cooperating teachers were aware of them, just like Mitchell et al. (2023) and Hall et al. (2013) reported. As a result, the cooperating teacher role is not legitimised, either nationally or locally, leaving cooperating teachers to decipher their own understanding of their role. As seen in sub-theme 6.5.2, cooperating teachers have a desire for professional development and the Teaching Council (2016:8) state CPD is a 'right' for all teachers, with the Cosán framework (Teaching Council, 2016:16) naming 'Mentoring/Coaching' as a learning process that can include cooperating teachers. As mentioned, there is a working group exploring this, but for now, in the absence of professional development to support cooperating teachers in their legitimate peripheral participation, some cooperating teachers revert to their experience of legitimate peripheral participation as a student teacher who received support from their cooperating teachers and/or self-initiated informal chats with colleagues or other cooperating teachers, rather than engaging with current expectations and standards. This can impact whether a cooperating teacher advances beyond the potential stage of a community of practice development to the coalescing and active stages: as the findings point out, this is achieved by some cooperating teachers, but not all.

This analysis of legitimate peripheral participation shows that support for newcomers is localised and dependent on institutional agency, rather than being nationalised (e.g., through the Teaching Council or the DoE), or through collaboration between institutions. Perhaps support for the legitimate peripheral participation of those in the HEI is more obvious as student

214

teachers are newcomers to the profession and placement tutors are an identified support for student teachers, whereas cooperating teachers may not be considered newcomers because they are qualified teachers. As a consequence, support across the landscape of practice is missing as it focuses on student teachers and new placement tutors as the only newcomers.

As detailed, legitimate peripheral participation has its limitations as it only focuses on the newcomer that seeks full membership of a community of practice. Harnessing Wenger's (2018) description of a community as a component of a social theory of learning, community involves belonging to a group, involving members accepting other individuals, as a competent member, into their community. When analysing communities of practice, how one participates can impact the individual, communities, and organisations, along with contributing to how others experience a sense of belonging and acceptance (ibid). Exploring the stages and levels of participation in communities of practice from the point of view of the individual, the community i.e., the array of communities of practice across the landscape of practice, and organisations i.e., schools and the HEI, are now discussed.
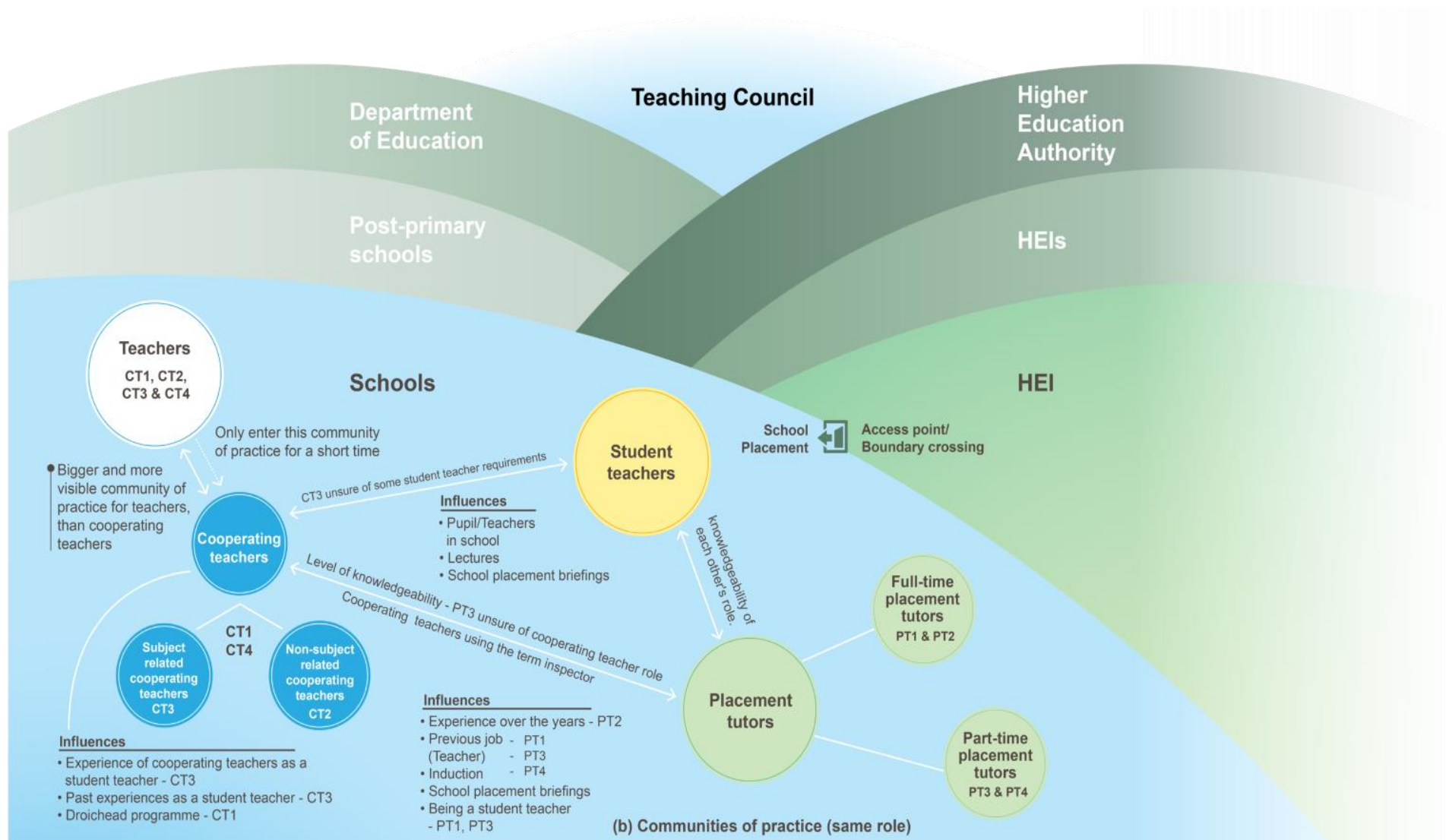
Figure 7.1b: Communities of practice that undertake the same role, related to this study.

7.2.1. The individual viewpoint

Wenger (2018) describes individuals as engaging and contributing to the practice of a community. Figure 2.4 and Table 6.9 illustrates that there are a range of different communities of practice, so individual engagement and contribution can vary depending on the community of practice. As explained in the findings, the viewpoint of individual contribution, and therefore participation, of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors differs in this regard: in general, the student teachers did not see how they could contribute to the school or that cooperating teachers can learn from student teachers. In such cases, the potential phase of the development of a community of practice is overlooked, as student teachers do not identify commonalities with other partners, which impacts the coalescing stage of development, as they do not recognise their own abilities, which can affect their active engagement with cooperating teachers and placement tutors. As a consequence, participation can become marginalised when student teachers see themselves firmly at the periphery of practice, rather than a contributing member of a partnership. Cooperating teachers and placement tutors detailed ways they supported student teachers, with some placement tutors expressing a desire for student teachers to avail of more support, with CT3 expressing a similar sentiment. This highlights that the coalescing stage of development has been neglected in the development of communities of practice, which is a source of disappointment for some participants. In essence, mutual engagement, as well as trust, a principle of successful partnership (Kruger et al., 2009), whereby all members recognise there are learning opportunities for all, is dependent on how one views their own individual value. This is discussed later in relation to learning assets.

7.2.2. The community and organisational viewpoint

Table 6.9 breaks down Wenger's (1998) definition of communities of practice as pertained to the most relevant communities of practice of this study, and shows the different levels of

membership, or not, that participants experience. From communities of practice groupings that have the same role, i.e., student teacher communities of practice, placement tutor communities of practice, and cooperating teacher communities of practice, mutual engagement does not happen for all cooperating teachers, but mutual engagement is afforded to student teachers and placement tutors (Figure 7.1b). Mutual engagement for student teachers and placement tutors is facilitated by the HEI through scheduled times to meet e.g., school placement briefings. As there is no professional development for cooperating teachers, cooperating teachers' mutual engagement is dependent on cooperating teachers informally speaking with each other. The lack of professional development for cooperating teachers corresponds with Young and McPhail (2015) whereby cooperating teachers are not adequately supported in their role. CT1 and CT4 are the only cooperating teacher for student teachers, so they are not part of a cooperating teacher community of practice. CT4 articulates that having too many cooperating teachers becomes *'confusing'* for student teachers as they *'don't know who to go to...so you need ...one person'*, yet that leaves the cooperating teacher without a cooperating teacher community of practice. CT3 had informal conversations with another cooperating teacher of the same subject to ensure they provided the same level of support to the student teacher. While this could be considered an important form of collaboration, an informal chat does not equate to a community of practice because joint enterprise, which involves continuous interactions, was absent, and a shared repertoire was also missing as CT3 was not aware of the guidelines to support them in their role. Similarly, CT2 spoke with a cooperating teacher of a different subject, who hosted a student teacher from another HEI. Again, whether this was a community of practice is questionable, although CT2 was aware of the guidelines, but not in detail. Nonetheless, this example shows the potential for cooperating teacher communities of practice to span subjects, hence cooperating teachers can be part of wider communities of practice in a school. Indeed, for schools that have a school placement policy, the policy may not detail the

cooperating teacher role according to subject. Perhaps, when teachers see themselves primarily as teachers of subjects and pupils, rather than teacher educators (discussed later), some cooperating teachers may be focusing on helping student teachers to teach the subject, rather than tapping into other pedagogical sources in the school i.e., teachers of other subjects that are also cooperating teachers. Some cooperating teachers are thus impacted by the fact that they do not know a community of practice could exist for cooperating teachers if the cooperating teacher role is conceptualised as a subject focused role, that supports student teachers of certain subjects. Local activation of such communities of practice is therefore required at the initial potential phase of developing such communities of practice. In the absence of a cooperating teacher community of practice, some cooperating teachers rely on past communities of practice to inform practice e.g., their experience of cooperating teachers from the position of a student teacher or from other current communities of practice, such as Droichead (CT1). As outlined in sub-theme 6.3.2, CT2 and CT3, who had a cooperating teacher community of practice, still drew on *'what was done for me'* as a student teacher (CT3), further highlighting the impact of past communities of practice on the active stage of community of practice development, a finding that is reflective of Ganser (2002), Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011), and Mitchell et al. (2023). A shared repertoire is thus evident when previous experience in other communities of practice had a bearing on participation and engagement with current communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Elements of cooperating teachers relying on their own intuition, mirroring the literature of Goodfellow (2000), Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011), and Clarke et al. (2014), is also present.

'Boundary crossing' is 'necessary' (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021:370) during school placement and all participants moved beyond communities of practice with members that share the same role (Figure 7.1c).
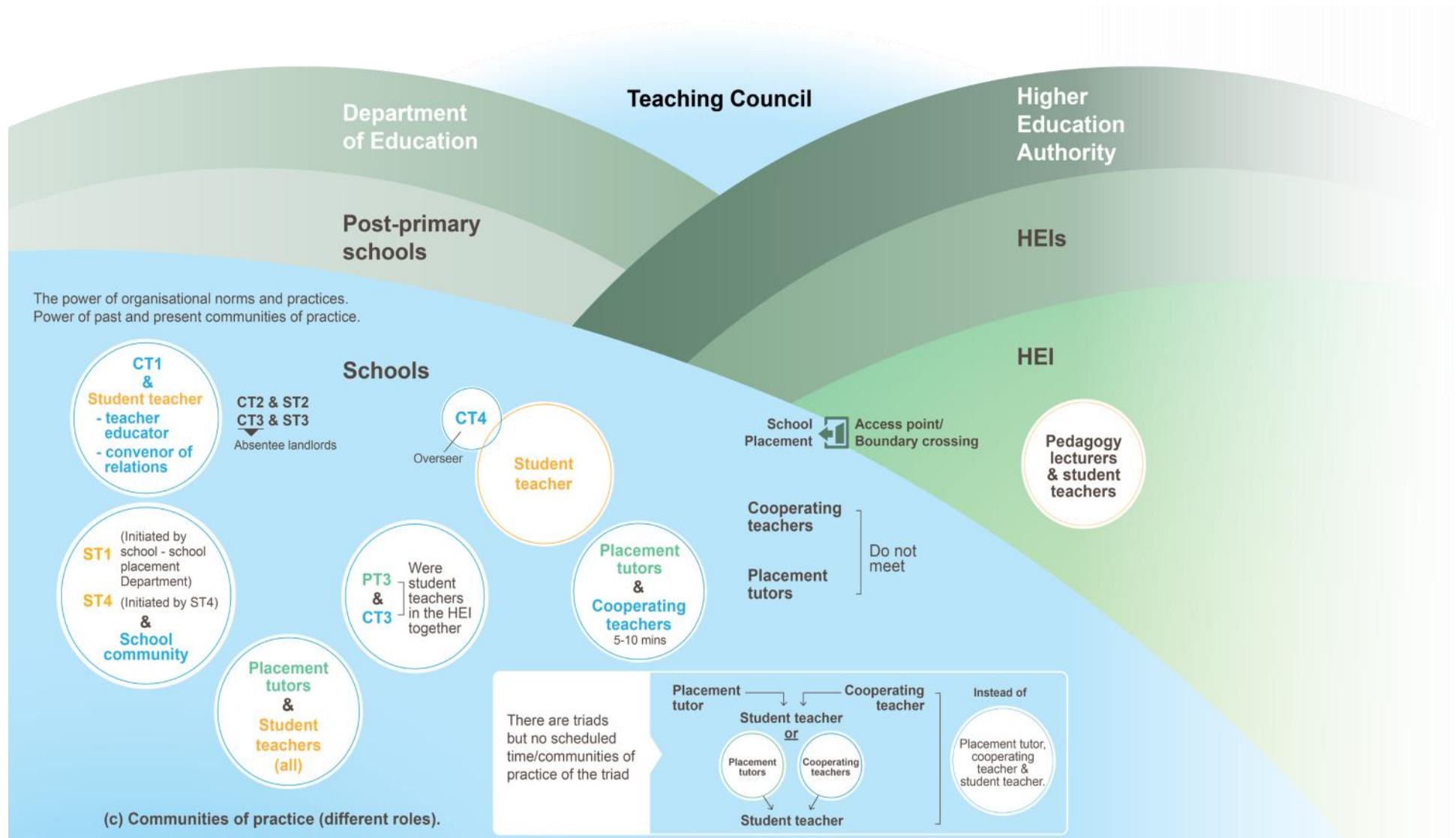
Figure 7.1c: Communities of practice that undertake different roles, related to this study.

As Wenger (1998:75) points out, mutual engagement welcomes diversity: 'what makes engagement in practice possible and productive is as much a matter of diversity as it is a matter of homogeneity'. However, as theme two and Table 6.9 indicates, the relationships formed, and interactions differ across participants. This is now discussed beginning with knowledgeability of others in the landscape of practice (included in Figure 7.1b), and then dyadic and triadic interactions (Figure 7.1c).

Knowledgeability involves understanding the practices across the profession: knowledgeability of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors is required by each member (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), yet the findings show varying levels of knowledgeability across participants. Without knowledgeability, it is difficult for the potential stage, the coalescing stage, and the active stage in the development of communities of practice to be realised, as commonalities between members, their differing abilities, and how to engage with each other are not clear. PT3 is the only placement tutor that has been a cooperating teacher previously, so it could be argued PT3 has more knowledgeability and experience of the role than PT1, PT2, and PT4, yet PT3 stated she *'did not know what expectations'* to have of cooperating teachers, indicating that her role as a cooperating teacher was unclear and this has carried through to the present day. While PT3 received the guidelines that outline the cooperating teacher's role, she did not engage with them so she would not have read the expectations of cooperating teachers. It also implies PT3 was not active in finding out what the cooperating teacher role entailed, and it was potentially not clear or explicit in her induction. While Hanly and Heinz (2022) recommend that cooperating teachers are provided with clear guidance, this recommendation could be extended to placement tutors and student teachers based on this finding as it infers that the focus is on the individual role, rather than understanding roles across the landscape of practice. Another explanation for PT3's lack of

clarity was PT3 was *'a single teacher department'* when she was a cooperating teacher, hence she was not part of a community of practice and did not have full knowledgeability of the cooperating teacher role then. This finding contrasts to Murphy (2010) who outlined experience as a cooperating teacher can influence how a placement tutor carries out their role. While Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) speak of knowledgeability in relation to practitioners understanding the different practices across the profession, findings from cooperating teachers show that some cooperating teachers do not have full knowledgeability of their own role: only CT1 had full knowledgeability of the role, while CT2 *'doesn't have the time'* to read documentation, CT3 was not aware of any guidelines, and CT4 did not receive them. Despite this, all cooperating teachers supported student teachers, but it was self-identified support.

No cooperating teacher has acted as a placement tutor, consequently their knowledgeability of the placement tutor role is dependent on engaging with documentation and/or interactions with placement tutors. PT1 indicates neither student teachers nor cooperating teachers have full knowledgeability of her role, as she is *'unsure if there's cohesion'* between how she views her role and how student teachers and cooperating teachers view the role. The placement tutors were often referred to as the *'inspector'* which indicates an absence of full knowledgeability of the placement tutor role, although student teachers and cooperating teachers do mention the supportive role of placement tutors. However, as discussed in 6.3.2, being called an inspector impacts the supportive nature of their role, which expresses a negative consequence of not having full knowledgeability of the placement tutor's practice. This draws parallels with Hall et al. (2018:146) who identified a disconnect between policy and the site of practice when teachers use the term 'inspector'. This finding connects to the community of practice dimension of shared repertoire as it demonstrates that past communities of practice impact current

communities of practice, as the cooperating teacher relies on experience as a student teacher that had a placement tutor as a form of knowledgeability, despite some changes to the placement tutor role. The short interactions between cooperating teachers and placement tutors do not contribute to gaining knowledgeability of the placement tutor role. CT3 stated that conversations with placement tutors *'didn't feel like a formal requirement'*, showing a lack of knowledgeability on whether it is a requirement or not. Additionally, there is evidence of ST3 not having full knowledgeability of PT3's role, as she responded *'not that I know of'* when asked if PT3 and CT3 spoke about her progress, even though they had.

Many placement tutors and cooperating teachers referred to being a student teacher but relying on the past is insufficient to ensure knowledgeability of the student teacher role, as evidenced when CT3 states *'maybe they're [student teachers] not required to...I remember after ours...'*. Because many cooperating teachers reflected on their own experience as student teachers, particularly as three attended the same HEI, some cooperating teachers may have been offering support to their former self's, i.e., the support they received or would have liked to receive as a student teacher, rather than gaining knowledgeability on the student teacher's specific needs. That said, CT3 wanted to extend the same supports she received as a student teacher but was not in the position to do so due to staff shortages. The same rationale can be applied to PT3 whose knowledgeability was based on her induction as she did not read the HEI guidelines about her role and provided support that she would have liked as a student teacher, mainly because she wanted to be different to the placement tutors she had.

Communities of practice between dyads i.e., student teachers and placement tutors, student teachers and cooperating teachers, cooperating teachers and placement tutors, show that some

dyads reach the active stage of development, whereas others do not progress beyond the initial stage: the level of ongoing interaction differs depending on the individuals involved, and prior relationships can support more interaction. CT1 could be considered a teacher educator (Clarke et al., 2014) as she helped the student teacher with lesson plans, they team taught, and she provided the student teacher with feedback, mirroring some of Hall et al.'s (2018) suggestions. CT1 also adopted the position of convenor of relations as she noted the importance of student teachers getting involved in the whole school community (Clarke et al., 2014). CT2 could be described as an absentee landlord (ibid) as she essentially changed places with the student teacher and did not provide feedback to the student teachers. Reflecting Farrell's study (2020), CT3 does not fit neatly into one category of cooperating teacher participation, but instead changed positions along the continuum based on ST3's interactions. CT3 could be considered as an absentee landlord as the placement progressed when she felt ST3 was not using her as *'a resource'*, correlating with the findings of cooperating teachers in Mitchell et al.'s study (2023) who pulled back when student teachers did not heed their advice. CT3 attested she is a *'teacher, not a teacher educator',* mirroring Feiman-Nemser's (1998) finding that many teachers do not view themselves as teacher educators. This concurs with literature stating being competent in one community of practice (i.e., a community of practice of teachers) does not translate as being competent in a different community of practice (i.e., communities of practice of cooperating teachers/teacher educators) across the landscape of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Kensington-Miller et al., 2021). CT3 dis-identified from a community of practice with student teachers as she identifies solely as a teacher (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), thus aligns with Clarke et al.'s (2014) categorisation of 'teachers of children'. This is understandable as there is a change in CT3's usual routine (Wang et al., 2022). This highlights that cooperating teachers are expected to change roles from a first-order practitioner to a second-order practitioner, but there is a lack of CPD to support this transition,

unless initiated by the school, and some cooperating teachers may not activate a community of practice of cooperating teachers in their school, although CT3 did informally chat with a colleague to support her in her role. CT4 took the place of 'overseer' (Clarke et al., 2014), as she was providing the student teacher with support, but not to the extent that she would have liked. Wenger (1998) maintains that for communities of practice to function efficiently, there is a need for both participation and reification, but CT3 and CT4 were not familiar with documentation. These examples verify the literature that says student teachers receive different levels of support from cooperating teachers (Clarke et al., 2014; Young et al., 2015; O'Grady et al., 2018; Heinz & Fleming, 2019*).*

From the point of view of the student teacher with cooperating teachers, the majority of student teachers do not think they have much to contribute to schools. ST4 was the only student teacher that got involved in extra-curricular activities, which contrasts to Hanly and Heinz (2022) that found most student teachers were involved in extra-curricular activities. While participating in extra-curricular activities helped ST4 integrate into the school's community (Sutherland et al., 2005), she did not recognise her contribution to the school. These findings indicate joint enterprise, that involves 'give-and-take' is lacking (Wenger, 1998:53). This is a one-way transactional community of practice where only the student teacher gains from the community of practice, so perhaps it may not be considered a community of practice (Wenger-Trayner, 2022) and instead is legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The desire for joint enterprise is seen from CT3 who wanted to learn from ST3, meaning that student teachers are learning assets across the landscape of practice, a view supported by other cooperating teachers, placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, and principals. As outlined, Kruger et al. (2009) name trust as a principle for structuring school-university partnerships, meaning individuals need to recognise their value in order to be committed and contribute to the community of

practice, ensuring benefits for all. When student teachers do not recognise their value, they may not contribute fully to the community, meaning it is not a community of practice, therefore disrupting the partnership. Again, this highlights the importance of recognising the abilities of members at the coalescing stage of development in order progress to the active stage. As Woodgate-Jones (2012) states, it is not just the newcomer that learns from established community members, though CT3's experience corresponds with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:25) that 'new insights are not guaranteed' from boundary crossing. Managing expectations, an element of joint enterprise, is an aspect that is missing between CT3 and ST3.

Corresponding with Hopper (2001), the placement tutor is a guest in the school and there is not 'ongoing interactions' as described in the community of practice definition, which could explain why CT3 aligns with Bernay et al.'s finding (2020) when she says she is unsure how to 'work collaboratively' with placement tutors. There is a desire for more interactions, with PT1 advocating for regular links with cooperating teachers. Two cooperating teachers wanted more structured conversations with placement tutors, which would assist with expectations in support of joint enterprise within the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). One challenge identified by many placement tutors and cooperating teachers was a lack of time to interact, as noted by Lillejord and Børte (2016), Jones et al., (2016), and Farrell (2021). A lack of time is mostly due to cooperating teachers not being available due to teaching classes, highlighting the primary responsibility of cooperating teachers as a teacher of pupils. This corresponds with Hall et al. (2018) who reported it was not always feasible for placement tutors and cooperating teachers to meet due to cooperating teachers' work commitments and Hopper (2001) identifying that cooperating teachers taking their classes are prioritised over meeting a placement tutor. In such examples, cooperating teachers and placement tutors are not a

community of practice, aligning with O'Grady et al. (2018:378) who reports a 'notable absence' of cooperating teacher and placement tutor interaction. Conversely, there were interactions in some cases, yet like Hall et al. (2018) found, conversations between cooperating teachers and placement tutors can be hit and miss and depend on the individuals involved. During interactions, the findings of 6.3.4. detail some cooperating teachers withholding their full opinion from placement tutors, and so it raises the question if this is considered a community of practice. The same theory could be extended to communities of practice between student teachers and cooperating teachers, where CT3 withholds her full opinion from ST3. This is partially due to self-identified power dynamics and is discussed later. Such withholding of information aligns with covert forms of power, whereby individuals are aiming to avoid conflict (Contu & Willmott, 2003).

Increased interactions with placement tutors are advocated by some student teachers too. While there are pre-school placement meetings between placement tutors and student teachers, and student teachers are encouraged to ask for support when required, the findings show student teachers wanted more interactions with placement tutors. Again, if there was additional interaction, it would better reflect the definition of a community of practice that refers to 'ongoing interactions' between members. It is also noteworthy that being a part-time placement tutor potentially means less interactions with student teachers than full-time placement tutors, as they may not have met the student teacher before (PT4). The impact of other communities of practice is evident here as ST4 was more comfortable to approach her placement tutor because she was also her pedagogy lecturer. The interactions between student teachers and placement tutors are curtailed due to power dynamics and are discussed later. Again, the impact of a shared repertoire based on previous experience in another community of practice is evident for PT3, who wanted to be a very different placement tutor than those she worked with as a

student teacher. Joint enterprise, which is reflective of the coalescing stage of development, is evident in the examples provided by PT2, PT3, and PT4 who discuss their expectations with student teachers. Again, power dynamics can impact if or how student teachers relay their expectations and opinions back to the placement tutor, which determines whether power facilitates or impedes student teacher learning: this is discussed later.

From the perspective of working as a triad, Table 6.9 and the previous sections show dyadic interactions are stronger and more prevalent as there is no structured time for triadic dialogues. When dyads work together, rather than as triads, the individual not involved could be considered peripheral, or at times marginalised, to the community of practice. For example, when a placement tutor visits the student teacher and has minimal interaction with the cooperating teacher, the cooperating teacher is peripheral to the placement tutor and student teacher community of practice, conversely, when the placement tutor is not present, the placement tutor is peripheral to the cooperating teacher and student teacher community of practice. In such instances, it shows that some cooperating teachers and placement tutors are centralising their support on the individual student teacher, rather than recognising a wider community of practice in support of student teachers (Figure 7.1c). In the instances where a placement tutor and cooperating teacher do not interact, perhaps because a cooperating teacher is not available, both individuals are marginalised because the perspective of the other is missing.

As mentioned, O'Grady et al. (2018:378) reports a 'notable absence' in interactions between cooperating teachers and placement tutors, leading to a 'missing link in the triadic relationship', but the fact that there is no three-way dialogue is another missing link, because there is no

space provided for the triad to come together as a community of practice as evidenced in some studies (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Mtika et al., 2013; Mauri et al., 2019).

When individuals are not interacting much, the landscape is considered flat (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). 'Being flat suggests that each community has its own practice and these practices co-exist' (Kensington-Miller et al., 2021:368). All participants played a significant part in the process of student teachers learning to teach, but the findings thus far showcase the variation of practice, engagement, and interactions within and across communities of practice in the landscape of practice means practices mostly co-exist, rather than being a full active partnership. In such cases, the local nature of practice results in communities of practice deciding what works best for them. For example, CT3 opted to *'shorten workload'* when ST3 was on school placement due to staff shortages. This aligns with Mitchell et al. (2010) and Reynolds et al. (2013) whereby different priorities that occur in schools can strain partnerships.

Trajectory through the landscape of practice shapes the experience of individuals (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), and as seen in some of the previous sections, legacy communities of practice are evident and can impact interactions (Figure 7.1b). According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:22) past experiences can result in some individuals to 'reflect, ignore, or challenge the community's current regime of competence'. In landscapes of practice, competence is socially negotiated by communities of practice, with this being a notable feature towards the HEI. As one pedagogy lecturer puts it *'oftentimes there is a sense that we are disconnected from reality',* an opinion verified by one principal. At times, the second-order status of placement tutors calls their competence into question, again

overlooking the coalescing stage of developing a community of practice. Johnston (2016:543) notes some teachers are cynical about placement tutors as they are in an 'ivory-tower remoteness from the practices of experienced teachers'; this is not shown by cooperating teachers but is in part insinuated by ST2. Negotiating placement tutor competence is mostly inferred by placement tutors themselves: some placement tutors emphasised their experience as first-order practitioners so cooperating teachers *'know you are an expert'* and that student teachers *'know that I know what I am talking about'* (PT4). Slick (1998) references the lack of validation for practical teacher knowledge and Dolan (2019:189) identifies 'little or no direct transfer of pedagogic knowledge and experience' from first-order to second-order practice: both examples resemble the desire of the participating placement tutors to be valued in their practice, particularly identified through PT4's statement of *'we have a lot to give'.* Again, the absence of a coalescing stage of development can impact the active stage of potential communities of practice.

The analysis of the different communities of practice illustrates that many variables impact community of practice engagement and indeed whether individuals are even part of a community of practice. Firstly, this section shows there is no equality of access to the communities of practice to begin with, most notably for cooperating teachers. At times a community of practice for cooperating teachers is not recognised, perhaps this is due to organisational norms and practices reinforcing power inequalities, thus legitimate peripheral participation for new cooperating teachers is overlooked. This inequality is further extended when cooperating teacher communities of practice are not activated in a school. The findings also reveal the power of other communities of practice, both past and present, for some individuals, showing communities of practice should not be explored in isolation. Most prevalent were legacy communities of practice whereby individuals reflected on support, or

lack of support, they received in the past to inform their practice. Prior relationships also contributed to the effectiveness of communities of practice within this study. Additionally, a key finding is that triadic communities of practice are practically non-existent, with much stronger connections evident between dyadic communities of practice, partially due to time restraints impacting interactions. Furthermore, all individuals need to have full knowledgeability of the role of others and appreciate their own and others' competence across the landscape of practice to help build partnerships, where all are learning assets for each other (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

7.3. Claiming and displacing responsibilities

While the previous section discussed varying levels of participation, access, and support across communities of practice, this study also identified whether cooperating teachers, placement tutors, and student teachers claim or displace their prescribed responsibilities: the Teaching Council (2021a) *Guidelines on School Placement* was used as a resource to ascertain this. In relation to being aware of guidelines, from the perspective of cooperating teachers, responsibility was accepted in one case and rejected in another. CT3 accepts *'fault'* for not knowing about the guidelines, stating she probably received them from school management. Even though CT3 claimed responsibility for not knowing the Teaching Council or HEI guidelines, she asserted that *'nobody really knows do you actually read'* guidelines when emailed them from school management. CT3 states she is unsure of her place *'if I'm not told',* thus shrugging off personal responsibility. Despite CT4 knowing *'the head of department'* receives HEI guidelines, she does not ask to see the guidelines. Due to shifting the responsibility to her school, who she believes should have a school policy, CT4 is *'poking around in the dark'*. Consistent with the findings of Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011), CT3 and CT4 took no steps to find out more about how to carry out their role, consequently there

was a lack of ownership over the cooperating teacher role. In contrast, CT1 complements the findings of Young and McPhail (2015) who reported guidelines help outline the roles and expectations of cooperating teachers. The findings show even when there is an awareness of guidelines, as is the case with all placement tutors, other responsibilities can take precedence over becoming familiar with their responsibilities, e.g., PT3 could not read guidelines *'on top of my own job'*, highlighting the secondary nature of a part-time placement tutor role and CT2 *'doesn't have the time'* to read the guidelines.

These points bring the aspect of knowledgeability back to the fore, but in relation to knowledgeability of one's own role, as the points above illustrate differences in role knowledge. This raises the question of who is responsible for role knowledge. The HEI appears responsible for the placement tutor's and student teacher's role knowledge as they provide school placement briefings and professional development for both parties. Placement tutors seem clearer on their roles than cooperating teachers, and there is less variability in placement tutor responses compared to the cooperating teachers, perhaps this is also because placement tutors undertake their role as part of their job description: full-time placement tutors are lecturers who must undertake the placement tutor role, while part-time placement tutors interview for the position. Indeed, more variability in how cooperating teachers undertake their role is recognised in the literature with the categorisation of their participation e.g., absentee landlord etc, where there does not appear to be an equivalent categorisation in literature regarding placement tutors. The Teaching Council, as noted in the policy chapter, also places the responsibility for informing schools of the guidelines with the HEI as the Teaching Council (2023a) do not 'have a direct relationship' with schools. The findings show principals receive documentation from the HEI, but it may not reach cooperating teachers, which was stated by some cooperating teachers and principals (Table 6.5). However, as stated previously, the

guidelines are accessible on the Teaching Council's website, although cooperating teachers may not be aware of this, indicating a lack of clarity with the current system. Some cooperating teachers place the responsibility with the school to inform them of the guidelines. Although, sharing guidelines is not enough in providing role knowledge as some cooperating teachers and student teachers found some statements ambiguous. The findings therefore indicate there is not a collective ownership of being responsible for role knowledge, with the responsibility mainly residing with the HEI, who have taken the responsibility for student teachers and placement tutors but have passed the responsibility to principals for cooperating teachers, which only sometimes materialises.

Most participants were satisfied with their assigned responsibilities as no named responsibility was rejected by all. Nonetheless, there were instances where individuals did not fully agree with their responsibility, stating the responsibility resided with a different partner. In a few cases CT3 and CT4 placed a named cooperating teacher responsibility with the HEI or placement tutor. By contrast, the placement tutors did not redirect any of their responsibilities to cooperating teachers, with PT4 suggesting one placement tutor responsibility (to discuss good practice in class planning and resources with cooperating teachers) was not part of a cooperating teacher's role. PT3 and PT4 also placed some placement tutor responsibilities with the HEI. PT3 differed from placement tutors in Hall et al.'s (2018) study where placement tutors identified promoting and nurturing student teachers' reflective practice as key to their role. These points raise the question if a responsibility is transferred to another, without the other being aware of this, does this impact the support for student teachers? Concurring with Wenger (1998:84) 'mismatched interpretations or misunderstandings need to be addressed': this is discussed in chapter eight.

Beyond awareness and use of reification i.e., documentation, the themes show further displacement of responsibilities. All cooperating teachers placed the responsibility on student teachers to initiate professional conversations. While all student teachers agreed, this implies that the responsibility only resides with one individual, rather than with both cooperating teachers and student teachers. Likewise, a unilateral flow of responsibility was evident in sub-theme 6.3.4.1. when CT3 and CT4 identified, as Hall et al. (2018) did, that there were no standardised criteria for cooperating teacher feedback, thus cooperating teachers suggested specific guidance from the HEI on how to structure professional conversations. While it is not being proposed that cooperating teachers should not request such specifics, consideration of what cooperating teachers feel is important from the school's perspective could feature so there is a shared responsibility. Similarly, PT2 found that student teachers *'want to be told what to do',* corresponding with findings of Hall et al. (2018) where student teachers feel they need to focus on certain placement tutor's expectations to succeed on school placement. As a result, student teachers tailor their practice for the placement tutor, rather than taking responsibility for their own pedagogical decisions: aligning with Cuenca (2010a), PT2 infers she wants a pedagogical relationship to form between placement tutors and student teachers by refraining from telling student teachers what to do. This depicts an imbalance of responsibilities and interactions in communities of practice, which is evident in section 7.2. The latter two examples, while they show a desire to be well prepared, power dynamics are evident. The findings unearth many forms of power and are presented next.

7.4. Power differentials disrupting the balance of partnerships

Power can manifest itself in a myriad of ways, such as institutional power from the HEI and schools, as well as individual power differentials. Figure 7.2 illustrates that some forms of power are explicit and overt, while others are implicit and covert, with power over the process

evident, as well as individuals seemingly under the power of others. Consequently, forms of power can impede learning if individuals feel powerless, while positive forms of power that support learning and lead to recipients feeling powerful is less obvious. Aligning with Foucault's advice (1982), the examples that follow focus on how individuals experience power, with this study verifying the stance of Kensington-Miller et al. (2021) that power relations are present in all landscapes of practice. Individuals striving to break down negative forms of power are a notable feature of the findings.

Covert power
Overt power
Powerful
Powerless
Power in discourse
Power behind discourse

- Teaching Council power over the HEI (accreditation process)
- Schools over the HEI - can withdraw goodwill
  PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4 & ST4 - all aware
- Placement tutor ownership of student teachers
- Cooperating teacher over student teacher - CT3 able to communicate things PT3 wasn't told

Covert power
Overt power
Powerful
Powerless
Power in discourse
Power behind discourse

Institutional

HEI - one pedagogy lecturer referencing best practice is in the HEI

Lecturers being placement tutors
- can have student teachers for other modules
  (schools not facilitating school placement - not evident in this study)

Over

Power

Under

Individual

Self-protection
↓
withholding information (CT3)
↓
against past experiences
e.g. PT3 as a student teacher, rather than a student teacher's present experience

Covert power
Overt power
Powerful
Powerless
Power in discourse
Power behind discourse

- Student teachers - assessment by placement tutors
  ↓
  writing lesson plans for placement tutor (ST2)
  ↓
  tailoring practice for placement tutor (PT2)
- Placement tutor under power of cooperating teacher
  ↓
  withholding information (CT4)(PT2 & PT3)
  ↓
  Ownership of student teacher

Covert power
Overt power
Powerful
Powerless
Power in discourse
Power behind discourse

Attempts to break down power dynamics

- Show human side (PT1 & PT3)
  - break down institutional barrier
- Time - Discussing expectations (PT2,PT4)
- Name change - Cooperating teacher → Treoraí
  - CT1 asking for student teacher feedback

Figure 7.2: Power dynamics experienced in this study.

Pertaining to the distribution and language of the Teaching Council guidelines (the process), there are elements of power dynamics. As mentioned, the HEI must follow direction from the Teaching Council to structure partnerships, whereas schools participate on a voluntary basis

(Young & McPhail, 2015; Hall et al., 2018; Gorman & Furlong, 2023). As Gorman and Furlong (2023) illuminate, the language used in *Céim* and the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council, 2020, 2021a) differs between HEIs and schools. Looking specifically at the Teaching Council's responsibilities relating to cooperating teachers and placement tutors, the term 'ensure' is used for placement tutors, but not for cooperating teachers. This exhibits the power that the Teaching Council has over the HEI as accreditation relies on adhering to Teaching Council guidelines. Additionally, it indicates the powerful position schools have over HEIs as they can opt to withdraw their goodwill. The findings show there is no threat of schools withdrawing their goodwill, corresponding with Farrell (2021) who reported that cooperating teachers and schools are content to facilitate school placement. Despite this, there is a high level of awareness of this power differential from placement tutors: points made in relation to being *'mindful'* of the *'voluntary role'* of schools (PT3) correlate with Hall et al.'s findings (2018:126) that placement tutors are 'ultra diplomatic in their engagement with schools', concurring with Ievers et al. (2013) that a responsibility falls to the placement tutor to sustain a positive relationship between the HEI and schools, resulting in a covert form of power. This study expands the awareness to one student teacher, who noted the importance of complying with cooperating teachers as they *'didn't have to take you'*.

Language used by some participants implies power dynamics behind and in discourse (Fairclough, 2011). For example, the cooperating teachers being *'the eyes and ears'* (PT1) and being able to *'monitor'* student teachers because it is *'not possible for us'* to do that (pedagogy lecturer) implies a sense of ownership over student teachers by the HEI, therefore the student teacher is under the power of the HEI. ST3 accentuates this ownership and responsibility by stating the HEI *'could inform the cooperating teachers of their role',* reflecting Dunning et al.'s study (2011) whereby a student teacher observed that the cooperating teacher was unsure

of their role. Power dynamics is further evident from one pedagogy lecturer's statement: *'best practice may be rejected and teachers adhere to the status quo. They may not be willing to embrace new techniques from us'*. This can be interpreted in two ways: the pedagogy lecturer unintentionally insinuates *'best practice'* resides with the HEI, not the school, or the school having the power to disregard practice of the HEI. Disregarding the other can differ depending on who is involved in dyads or triads, as seen with PT4 who places merit on some cooperating teachers' opinions, but not all. The findings also show that cooperating teachers have a different vantage point to placement tutors but can withhold information from placement tutors. Cooperating teachers display a sense of ownership of student teachers as they can *'feel like I'm getting the student in trouble if I'm not that positive'* (CT4), reflecting the findings of Young and McPhail (2015) who reported many cooperating teachers experience difficulty in critiquing student teachers for fear of causing a negative impact. This infers the placement tutor has power over the student teacher, thus the student teacher, who is considered powerless, needs to be protected from the placement tutor who is deemed powerful; however, it is not clear that student teachers have requested this protection, therefore ownership of the student teacher in the school is evidenced in these examples. While attempting to shield student teachers from critique, there is also a form of self-protection from CT3 who is fearful of *'doing anything wrong'* or *'overstepping my mark'* and the student teacher reporting *'back to the tutor'*. This example then places the ownership of the process with the HEI and the cooperating teacher is avoiding any potential conflict. Such fear is reduced when there is a prior relationship between individuals. Additionally, correlating with Mockler (2013), time is required to reduce power differentials, for example, student teachers *'feel a bit on edge'* at the start of school placement but this abates *'near the end when they know you'* (CT4).

The power cooperating teachers have over student teachers was also implied through power in discourse, with statements such as *'I was able to communicate things that the tutor won't be told',* as well as reducing student teacher support when not being used *'as a resource'* (CT3). Furthermore, when cooperating teachers adopt the position of absentee landlord, even in the instance of CT2 doing so because the student teacher was *'excellent'*, the cooperating teacher has the agency to not support the student teacher, which is a form of power over the process. While power dynamics in these examples were probably unintentional and implicit, there was awareness of power dynamics at times, with CT3 suggesting student teachers may not feel *'entitled'* to comment on cooperating teachers' practice and if a cooperating teacher critiqued student teacher practice it *'could cause distress'.* ST2 and ST4 were also mindful of their language when framing questions to their cooperating teacher e.g., *'would you consider helping me?'* (ST2), further highlighting power dynamics between student teachers and their cooperating teachers.

The *'high stakes'* nature of assessment further contributes to power differentials, that create a *'fear among students'* (PT2), with the need to *'pass'* resulting in student teachers being *'very aware of...interactions with placement tutors'* (ST4). This resembles Walsh and Dolan's findings (2019) that reported placement tutors were aware that student teachers focused on their summative role. ST2 was *'more so writing lesson plans for the tutor',* cementing the suggestion by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:3) that power dynamics can lead to practitioners creating 'an appearance of compliance'. Student teachers considered placement tutors as a source of *'authority'* (ST3) and *'you wouldn't just say oh you're wrong'* (ST2), which infers the placement tutor is more powerful. Power dynamics can then extend to other areas of the programme, with ST4 stating *'you could have this lecturer for something else'* therefore would opt to silence her opinion if it differed to the placement tutor. This reflects the

238

findings of O'Grady et al. (2018) whereby student teachers believed it was best to silence their opinion. As Kubiak et al. (2015) identified, feelings of inferiority lead to student teachers distancing themselves from communities of practice. Comparable to Hanly and Heinz' research (2022), PT2 reports many student teachers are *'not divulging that they've difficulties'* and like Long et al.'s study (2021), student teachers feel they cannot display vulnerability and must act like a qualified teacher. Consequently, and in contrast to Walsh and Dolan (2019), the placement tutors did not have to assert their professional stance to communicate appropriate feedback to student teachers when there were differences of opinion between them and student teachers, although this was because student teachers suppressed their opinions. The landscape is therefore political as voices are silenced due to power dynamics (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), with student teachers opting to reproduce organisational norms and practice, without embracing exploration that could help inform the practice of others (March, 1991).

The examples above do not meet the aspiration of Foucault (2000) to view and use forms of power in a positive light. Instead of viewing other individuals as having knowledge that could be tapped into in a positive way, individuals are hiding the fact they do not have the same knowledge as others, which has undesirable consequences such as silencing opinions. That said, the findings show there is a desire to reduce negative power dynamics. From a policy point of view, the Teaching Council has changed the language of cooperating teacher, as it meant the teacher was 'cooperating' with the HEI (Clarke et al., 2014), while treoraí better reflects the supportive role of cooperating teachers. Nonetheless, as stated in the literature review, a US study (Hall et al., 2008) found when the cooperating teacher name changed, the practice remained the same. The findings also show no impact of practice regarding the name change, especially as two cooperating teachers were unaware of this change, therefore better

communication is required when there is a change of language, particularly as it could contribute to reducing power differentials.

Placement tutors tried to find a *'common ground'* to discuss expectations with student teachers (PT4), so that placement tutors were *'working alongside'* student teachers (PT2). Concurring with Cuenca (2010a), PT1 did not want her assessment role to be a technical/box-tick activity, in which placement tutors *'mechanically'* assess student teachers, with PT1 and PT3 both emphasising the importance of student teachers to see their *'human'* side. Similar to Hall et al. (2018), student teachers asking PT2 what she looks for during school placement shows that student teachers feel the need to focus on certain placement tutor's expectations to succeed, but like Dolan and Hogan's study (2017:105), PT2 refrained from using her authority to tell student teachers what to do, implying the student teacher's own opinion is 'no less valid'. PT2 and PT4 extend the notion of *'working together'* with schools by seeking their feedback on HEI practice so that the HEI is not seen as *'in this ivory tower'* (PT2). CT1 attempts to break down power dynamics with the student teacher by asking for feedback from the student teacher on her role, thereby inviting critique and open dialogue. These examples show that there are attempts to reduce or break down power dynamics mostly for student teachers, but for cooperating teachers as well, but there is no evidence of this being extended to placement tutors or the HEI, perhaps this is because traditionally the HEI is deemed to have a hierarchy over the process.

7.5. Partnerships experienced

The school-university partnerships within this study do not fully sit at either end of the 'ideal typical' models of partnership (Furlong et al., 2000), but there are traces of the complementary model in some interactions between placement tutors and cooperating teachers. While there is

no evidence of a collaborative model, some placement tutors and cooperating teachers expressed a desire for this model of partnership (Figure 7.3).
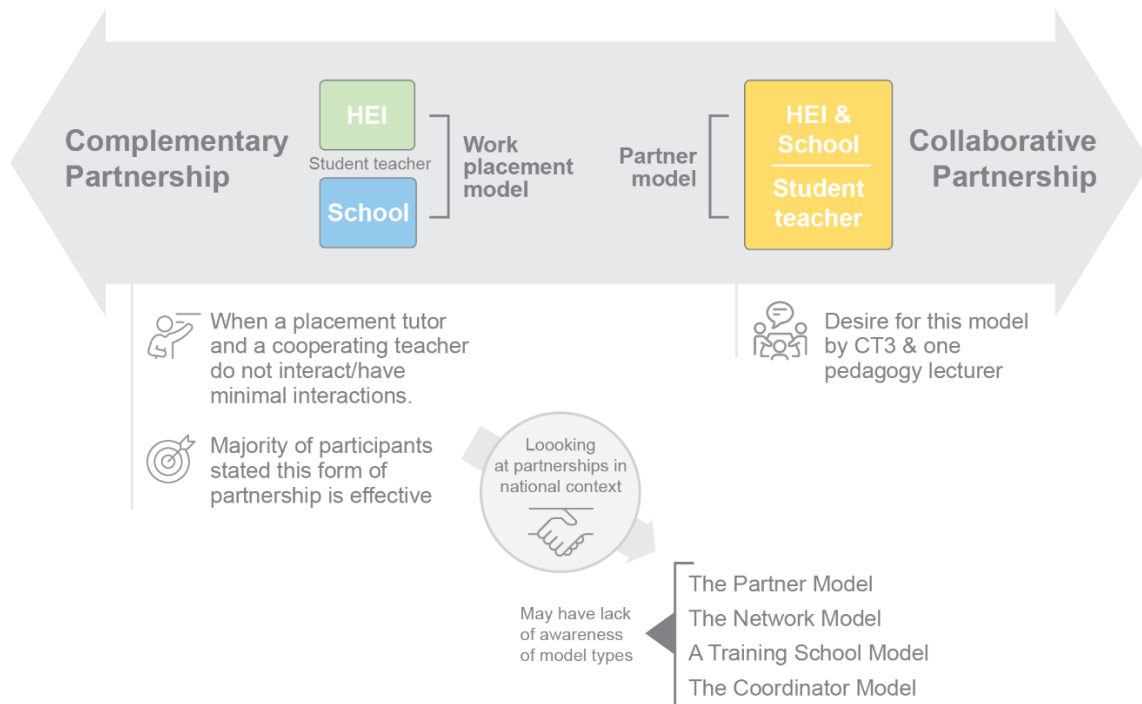
Figure 7.3: Partnerships along the two 'ideal typical' models of partnership.

Furlong et al. (2000) describes the complementary model as HEIs and schools having complementary responsibilities to support student teachers, but both institutions do not dialogue with each other, and there is no placement tutor. The complementary responsibilities are outlined in national and localised reification documentation i.e., the Teaching Council guidelines (national), the HEI guidelines (localised), and in three cases a school specific school placement policy (localised), but the Teaching Council guidelines and HEI guidelines advocate dialogue between the school and HEI, mainly through cooperating teachers and placement tutors supporting student teacher learning. By contrast, the Teaching Council does not mention schools sharing guidelines with HEIs and there is no evidence of schools outlining their expectations to placement tutors during school placement. Additionally, a lack of dialogue

described by some cooperating teachers and placement tutors draws similarities to a complementary model. As detailed, professional conversations can vary between placement tutors and cooperating teachers. While all cooperating teachers and placement tutors stated they speak with each other, the minimal level of interaction described by the majority of cooperating teachers and some placement tutors would indicate that surface level conversations occur. In such instances, if 'schools are seen mainly as work placement locations' (Maandag et al., 2007:167), 'separate' from the HEI, the partnerships are structural based partnerships, instead of relationship based (Brisard et al., 2005) as the responsibilities for student teachers are divided between the HEI and the school. This type of partnership aligns with a HEI-led model as the HEI assumes leadership and obtains agreement from the school to take on certain responsibilities outlined by the HEI (Furlong et al., 2000), consequently communities of practice are not formed, supporting the view of Mitchell et al. (2010:493) that many partnerships 'tend to exist on the margins of both school and university life'.

As indicated in the findings, one impact of structural partnerships over relationship based partnerships is withholding information regarding student teacher progress, even though PT1, PT4, CT3, and one pedagogy lecturer spoke of the need for discussions with cooperating teachers due to the different vantage point they have into student teacher practice. This finding supports the view of Bullough et al. (2004) and Bernay et al. (2020) that partnerships rely on relationships.

In the instances where participants do not engage with any form of reification, as discussed in the sub-theme 'communication of roles' earlier, whether that is due to a lack of time (PT3, PT4), or a lack of awareness of guidelines (CT3), it may fall outside the criteria of a

complementary partnership as individuals are not sure of their responsibilities: perhaps this could explain why student teachers receive variation of support from their cooperating teachers and placement tutors. This variation of support for student teachers bears similarities to a range of studies (Dunning et al., 2011; Long et al., 2012; Johnston, 2016; Hall et al., 2018). While sub-theme 'professional development to support and advance partnerships' outline that CPD for cooperating teachers could support their awareness of Teaching Council and HEI guidelines, there are further issues brought to light regarding the sharing of guidelines. There are different practices of sharing documentation between the Teaching Council, the HEI, and schools. The Teaching Council guidelines are available on their website, providing access to all individuals, whereas the HEI guidelines and most school specific school placement guidelines are not readily available on their websites. In the instances where the principal does not pass on HEI guidelines to cooperating teachers, the partnership does not mirror a complementary partnership because individuals may not fully know their role and the role of others to complement the support for student teachers. Again, as there was no evidence that schools share their school placement policy with placement tutors, it infers that the guidelines are for the school's use only. The experience of CT4, who did not engage with any guidelines and has minimal conversations with placement tutors (and withholds some information from placement tutors), is an example that falls outside the category of complementary partnerships. Despite this, CT4 provided support for the student teacher, without reification or CPD. Instead, aligning with Bernay et al. (2020), CT4 relied on her experience as a student teacher, who had cooperating teachers, to carry out her role.

The findings contain examples of partnerships that are relationship based (Brisard et al., 2005) and therefore distanced from the complementary model (Furlong et al., 2000). One example was PT3 and CT3 having more in-depth professional conversations due to knowing each other

previously, and PT2 building relationships over the years with cooperating teachers. While there are greater interactions in these examples, partnerships do not extend as far as a collaborative model, which would involve pedagogy lecturers and teachers working and planning together to develop an integrated curriculum for student teachers (ibid). There were expressions of interest in a collaborative model forthcoming from one pedagogy lecturer, who stated schools could be involved in course design, and from CT3, who expressed an interest in working with the HEI to form a module for the HEI: these suggestions draw similarities to the Oxford Internship model (see chapter four).

Conway et al. (2009) describe the structure of school-university partnerships in Ireland as aligning with the work placement model. It is important to note that Conway et al.'s study was conducted prior to any school placement guidelines. Comparable to the points above, the partnerships do not fit neatly into this category: while student teachers do undertake school placement to implement learning from the HEI, the cooperating teachers and schools are not in receipt of professional development to carry out their role from either the Teaching Council or the HEI. The sub-theme 'professional development to support and advance partnerships' revealed there was a desire for professional development for cooperating teachers, from PT2, PT3, and all cooperating teachers. That said, and as outlined previously, the Teaching Council are in the process of establishing a Treoraithe Professional Learning Group to develop cooperating teacher CPD; when this happens, the school-university partnership will fully reflect a work placement model, albeit how it works in practice will still be dependent on whether individuals involved form relationship based partnerships or structural based partnerships (Brisard et al., 2005).

Despite the findings demonstrating that there is not a consistent partnership type, as it can vary depending on individuals involved, all partnerships share the commonality of occurring solely during school placement[30]. This highlights that school-university partnerships are confined to the first stage of the continuum of teacher education, with the role of the HEI essentially disappearing after ITE. According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) communities of practice should cross boundaries into other communities of practice to understand the profession in its entirety, which in turn would support partnerships. However, this finding brings to the fore that knowledgeability and reciprocal learning is difficult when boundary crossing only happens one way: the HEI (placement tutors and student teachers) boundary cross into schools, but schools and cooperating teachers typically do not boundary cross into the HEI. Consequently, school-university partnerships are not present across the full landscape of teacher education, with the induction and CPD stages of the continuum of teacher education excluded, with school placement being the only time the triad come together, and even then, they may not come together.

Revisiting the organisational viewpoint (section 7.2), schools and the HEI can be impacted by how individuals participate in communities of practice. Wenger (2018:223) describes organisations as central 'in sustaining the interconnected communities of practice', but school placement being the only time that HEIs and schools connect can disrupt this. Nevertheless, despite partnerships only occurring during school placement and many interactions not constituting a community of practice, most participants feel school-university partnerships are effective. The findings therefore do not concur with Chambers and Armour (2012) who describe school-university partnerships as dysfunctional. It is fair that most participants drew

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[30] The HEI does run initiatives with schools, but it did not appear in the dataset.

that conclusion if they equate partnerships to only occurring during school placement, although *Céim* indicates that there can be partnerships beyond school placement (Teaching Council, 2020).

Furthermore, when a model of partnership is in place for many years, and cooperating teachers and placement tutors have experienced a similar model as student teachers, participants may not be aware of other types of school-university partnerships (Chapter Four), although PT1 drew on her experience in the UK as a mentor teacher, and PT4 believed that the cooperating teachers who previously worked in the UK were the most effective cooperating teachers. Perhaps school-university partnerships could be considered effective if the work placement model is the partnership model that HEIs and schools are striving for, but that could be considered more so as a functioning partnership, rather than an effective partnership, as they are short, transactional partnerships, and do not permeate the full continuum of teacher education.

Again, what organisations i.e., HEIs and schools are striving for within partnerships can determine if partnerships are deemed effective. *Céim* outlines the aspirations of partnerships as 'the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education. These processes, structures and arrangements also include School/HEI partnerships which focus on improving learning and teaching' (Teaching Council, 2020:4). When compared to the stages of development of a community of practice, the Teaching Council definition recognises the potential stage, as it identifies that there are commonalities in which to build a community from, as well as the coalescing stage as each member can bring potential learning to other members, thereby supporting the active stage.

That said, this aspiration comes to fruition in some cases, but unfortunately, it does not for all. For example, the latter half of the Teaching Council definition aligns with PT2's practice as PT2 stated that visiting student teachers allows her to judge whether *'what I'm doing is translated in practice... are our students being provided with enough'.* This demonstrates that there is scope to improve the teaching within the HEI too and contributes to answering Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015:25) question: 'How can boundaries be used systematically to trigger a reflection process about the practices on either side?'. The main learning for the HEI is articulated by PT2 and PT4 who seek *'feedback...on the school placement process as delivered by the college'* (PT2), and while this is important, the learning is restricted to the school placement process only. Therefore the 'focus on improving learning and teaching' between HEIs and schools requires further teasing out. Additionally, and by contrast, coalescing and active stages are missing in many examples, such as CT3 stating she does not '*know how you could work collaboratively with the tutor*' and either a lack of time or limited time for placement tutors and cooperating teachers to meet.

Returning to the point of partnerships being contained to the ITE stage of the continuum, *Céim* is for HEI use so it is unlikely schools will refer to this, meaning the initiation of partnerships beyond school placement mostly resides with HEIs. Moreover, there is no definition or mention of partnerships in Droichead documentation (Teaching Council, 2017). Furthermore, the Cosán framework does not define partnerships, yet the Teaching Council (2016:6) 'calls on all stakeholders to build on the spirit of partnership...ensuring that these principles become a living reality in the ongoing work of teaching and learning that is at the heart of all schools'. The latter half of the definition potentially indicates that the HEI is omitted from the partnership, but perhaps the HEI is included as part of 'all stakeholders': a similar illustration as seen with the key partners in Figure 1.1 from the *Guidelines on School Placement* (Teaching Council,

2021a) would remove the ambiguity here. All cooperating teachers, all pedagogy lecturers, and some principals provided examples on how schools and HEIs could work together, outside of school placement and student teacher learning only, highlighting the possibilities to advance partnerships beyond ITE. Some participants identified where links could be made between ITE and induction, for example CT1 uses skills from Droichead to support student teachers, and CT4 expressed a desire to learn from Droichead to help mentor student teachers: Ó Gallchóir et al. (2019) are critical that this not already happening. This correlates with the recommendation of Farrell (2021) who believes Droichead could be extended to involve ITE. Additionally, there is a desire for more CPD for teachers from the HEI as part of their own professional development. Interestingly, the Teaching Council (2021a:6) states that school-university partnerships 'support professional collaboration', 'foster innovation in pedagogical practice for all teachers' and 'support engagement with and in research by all teachers', raising the question why school-university partnerships are not capitalised on more systematically beyond ITE. If school-university partnerships are confined to ITE, boundary crossing only works one way: as previously stated, members of the HEI (i.e., placement tutors and student teachers) boundary cross into schools, but schools do not boundary cross as readily into the HEI unless the HEI invites the school to boundary cross, usually through initiatives.

The analysis of the findings show that school-university partnerships in this study cannot be categorised into one model of partnership. The individuals involved can impact whether partnerships are structural or relationship based. The findings mostly align with Conway et al.'s (2009) work placement model, a HEI-led model (Furlong et al., 2000), with some elements of a complementary model evident, and desires towards a more collaborative model expressed by some participants. Regardless of model type, school-university partnerships are confined to the ITE stage of the continuum. This contributes to some challenges experienced during

partnerships, such as a lack of awareness of guidelines, the reliance on the secondary handing over of documentation, and the lack of time to build relationships between individuals in order to feel comfortable in having open conversations.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter illustrated that communities of practice across the landscape of practice are 'not static entities' (Lillejord & Børte, 2016:559), with some communities of practice activated, while others are not and remain in the potential stage of development. The individuals involved come to communities of practice with other responsibilities and work within a structure that is time poor to advance partnerships. Furthermore, the lack of support structures, such as CPD, or ambiguity attached to some responsibilities, do not create spaces for communities to function at an active level. While there are strides to make partnership more collaborative, such as removing the hierarchical status of the HEI, there is more work to be done, particularly considering the negative forms of power identified. Furthermore, the participants all strived to support student teachers learning to teach and have made suggestions to enhance school-university partnerships, which is promising for the future of partnerships. That said, restricting partnerships to ITE curtails the advancement of effective partnerships and learning for all members across the landscape of practice. Boundary crossing currently only works one way, meaning boundaries into schools are permeable, whereas boundaries into HEIs are non-permeable, unless individual HEIs decide otherwise. The final chapter revisits the research questions and provides recommendations, while acknowledging with the limitations of this study.

<center>**Chapter Eight: Conclusion**</center>

This thesis concludes with revisiting the research questions that guided the study. This chapter articulates the contributions of this research to the landscape of teacher education, inclusive of recommendations for policy and practice. The limitations of the study are also acknowledged.

8.1. Revisiting the first research question

The first research question posed was 'What are the experiences of student teachers, placement tutors, and cooperating teachers in supporting student teachers in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process? As this study is situated in a social theory of learning framework, that acknowledged that the landscape of teacher education involves a range of partners, it is unsurprising that an array of experiences were reported. While student teachers, cooperating teachers, and placement tutors have prescribed roles as per Teaching Council guidelines (2021a), how one occupies this position varies, while also containing some similarities. As a result, peripheral, marginalised, occasional, transactional, and core participation of participants was evident (Wenger-Trayner, 2022). Consequently, the outcome is inequity of experience, not just for student teachers, but for all members of the triad. The findings unearthed examples of fruitful interactions between some participants, that drew upon a dimension or two of mutual engagement, negotiation of a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998), which underpinned principles of partnerships (Kruger et al., 2009); however, the activation of all three dimensions was rare. Efficacious examples of each dimension are detailed below: it is necessary that all three dimensions become part of all partner interactions.

<center>250</center>

Partnerships rely on relationships, thus mutual engagement is crucial (Bullough et al., 2004; Bernay et al., 2020; Day et al., 2021). Mutual engagement was present when relationships formed between dyads. For example, ST2 and ST4 spoke of ongoing support from their cooperating teachers, while CT3 spoke of helping PT3 fill out ST3's assessment sheet. A 'missing link in the triadic relationship' (O'Grady et al., 2018:374) is however present, and therefore merits an intervention to rectify this, with section 8.2 offering some suggestions. Negotiation of a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998), whereby there were continuous interaction and give-and-take, such as student teachers getting involved in the school community, and cooperating teachers learning new methodologies from student teachers, show that student teachers can be learning assets for teachers (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This feeds into the principle of mutuality as there are benefits for all members of a community of practice, as well as trust, as each member contributes to the partnership, which ultimately results in reciprocity of individuals within communities of practice, as each member is valuable and valued (Kruger et al., 2009). The element of joint enterprise was clear when placement tutors managed student teachers' expectations through finding a common ground during meetings. Finally, a shared repertoire was seen when a school had a department of teachers dedicated to assist student teachers on school placement, resulting in a clear commitment and clear communication in support of student teachers.

The findings that illuminated some of the dimensions of communities of practice, along with principles for structuring partnerships, highlight the support in operation for student teachers, yet this level of support is not guaranteed for all student teachers. The fact that the three dimensions of mutual engagement, a negotiation of a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire rarely featured as a collective practice, demonstrates that partners are, for the most part, not communities of practice. Ultimately, this allows for the status quo of inequitable student

teacher support to continue. Perhaps, this is because the initial phase of the construction of communities of practice is not put together by the participants, and partners enter into a relationship by virtue of agreeing to partake in school placement, which may or may not result in a community of practice. The coalescing stage of developing associated communities of practice is often neglected, as the abilities of self and others is often overlooked, such as some placement tutors and cooperating teachers wanting student teachers to avail more of their support, and student teachers not recognising what they contribute to their cooperating teacher and placement tutors. By essentially skipping the first two phases of the development of communities of practice, it can have a knock-on effect for the activation of communities of practice. Essentially, when time or support is not set aside for the coalescing stage of development, communities of practice cannot progress sufficiently to the active stage of development. That said, building the three dimensions into the practice of partners across the landscape of practice is not an easy feat: the findings revealed that partnerships are complex and there are many variables that result in different school-university partnership processes and structures, such as a lack of awareness and/or understanding of prescribed responsibilities, and past and present influences impacting interactions. The associated challenges and opportunities related to the documented experiences are detailed next.

8.2. Revisiting the second research question

The second research question links with the first research question by investigating 'how do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in enhancing school-university partnerships?' Through investigating the lived experiences of the triad and garnering pedagogy lecturers and principals' opinions, a range of challenges and opportunities became apparent. The challenges are presented, followed by recommendations pertaining to key partners, that can ultimately lead to opportunities to enhance school-university partnerships. The

recommendations form part of this research's contribution on how school-university partnerships can be enriched, which should be of interest to the Teaching Council, HEIs, and schools, both nationally and internationally, and their array of practitioners in communities of practice that constitute the landscape of practice.

Challenge: A lack of awareness of school placement guidelines.

Guidelines outlining the roles and responsibilities of key partners during school placement have been available since 2013, yet ten years later, not all partners are aware of their existence. This major flaw in policy distribution tempers partnerships from the outset. This challenge related to some participating cooperating teachers and partly occurred because the guidelines were not directly sent to them. Teaching Council guidelines are disseminated to HEIs, who then send the guidelines, along with their localised guidelines, to principals. The expectation is that principals give cooperating teachers the guidelines, yet this does not always happen, and consequently some cooperating teachers did not know about the guidelines. This can be exacerbated by the fact that not all schools have a localised policy for school placement.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

This issue could be easily rectified by clearer communication from the Teaching Council, the HEI, and from principals. Firstly, **the Teaching Council** (2021a) should send the *Guidelines on School Placement* directly to all registered teachers. While the Teaching Council (2023a) state they do not have a 'direct relationship with schools', they have a direct relationship with teachers, therefore first-hand distribution of guidelines is feasible. For example, the Teaching Council communicate directly with registered teachers through email, by letter, and a text message system, to pay registration fees, to vote for Teaching Council elections, to

communicate the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers etc, so the same process could be utilised for communicating the *Guidelines on School Placement* (ibid).

Secondly, a responsibility falls to **the HEI** to communicate their guidelines directly to cooperating teachers. This would require a mechanism for connecting cooperating teachers with the HEI, such as cooperating teachers registering to an online portal. Perhaps such a system could be set up for the cooperating teacher CPD days that are currently being developed, where cooperating teachers are automatically registered as they attend CPD: the cooperating teacher would need to register their subjects and the HEIs that they host student teachers from. Indeed, the Teaching Council guidelines could be sent through this portal also.

Thirdly, **principals** should share the Teaching Council and HEI guidelines with cooperating teachers. Principals receive school placement guidelines annually from a range of ITE providers, with the expectation that these are passed on to each cooperating teacher. To reduce the administration associated with distribution of guidelines each year, principals could upload any guidelines related to school placement onto their website, along with their other school policies, and inform all teachers of their existence.

Challenge: 'Mismatched interpretations or misunderstandings' of prescribed responsibilities (Wenger, 1998:84).

The Teaching Council (2021a:1) states that the *Guidelines on School Placement* are a clear blueprint to support quality school placement, yet the findings revealed that some participants were unsure of what a prescribed responsibility meant or redirected a responsibility to a

different partner. It is vital that key partners understand their own role, along with the role of others, so that student teachers' needs are collectively catered for, which in turn benefits pupils.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

Knowledgeability and competence for a range of communities of practice can be catered for through induction and CPD, with the Teaching Council, the HEI, schools, and individual practitioners all assuming responsibilities here.

Participating placement tutors were in receipt of induction and CPD from the HEI that catered for role knowledge. While this practice should continue, there is scope to expand professional development for placement tutors nationally. **The Teaching Council** should work in collaboration with **HEIs** to provide induction programmes and annual CPD for placement tutors. This could involve the Teaching Council discussing the roles and responsibilities of placement tutors to ensure standardisation of practice across HEIs. As well as that, HEIs could share practices that they have found effective, while also providing a space for difficulties to be teased out. This would constitute a form of support, as well as the knowledgeability of the processes and structures that placement tutors follow across different programmes. An added advantage of the Teaching Council facilitating CPD would be the coming together of placement tutors to potentially build communities of practices across HEIs. **Placement tutors** should assume professional responsibility to engage with CPD annually.

In contrast to the placement tutors, cooperating teachers were not in receipt of any induction or CPD, from neither the HEI, nor the school. Consequently, some cooperating teachers did not have knowledgeability of their own role, nor what competence should look like, and used past experiences instead to decipher this. To combat this issue, the Treoraithe Professional

Learning Group, that has been set up by **the Teaching Council**, should develop an induction programme and annual CPD for cooperating teachers. Any ambiguities related to the roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers could be dealt with, which would allow for the standardisation of the role across schools. Induction and CPD from the Teaching Council should involve input from **all HEIs**. Following on from the Teaching Council's overview of the guidelines, each HEI could provide breakout sessions that links the guidelines with their individualised programme. This would result in the school placement guidelines, both national (Teaching Council) and localised (HEIs), being shared and explained directly to cooperating teachers. It then provides cooperating teachers with the opportunity to clarify any ambiguities, misunderstandings, or misconceptions.

Schools also need to play a role in the induction and CPD of cooperating teachers. Schools, inclusive of **principals** and **cooperating teachers**, should be invited to input during professional development days developed by the Treoraithe Professional Learning Group, where they share examples of effective practices. Challenges should also be explored so there are collective understandings of obstacles that cooperating teachers may face. As an idea, the categorisation of cooperating teachers as described by Clarke et al. (2014) could provide a frame in which to compare school experiences against. Additionally, schools could share their own school placement policies on the day. In doing so, the commonalities and/or differences between expectations between schools and the Teaching Council and HEIs would become more visible. As well as that, schools should provide similar professional development in their school, which incorporates time and space for cooperating teachers to come together and share their experiences and practices, meaning that the activation of non-subject related communities of practice can be realised. **Individual cooperating teachers** would take on a responsibility to share and contribute to such communities of practice. Moreover, when teachers assume the

cooperating teacher role, it is incumbent that they adhere to their prescribed responsibilities so that student teachers are provided with equitable support.

For both placement tutor and cooperating teacher induction and CPD, it is vital that the knowledgeability of other key partners' roles and responsibilities are identified and discussed, i.e., professional development should not focus solely on one individual's responsibilities as they need to understand the role of others to work collaboratively in support of student teacher learning. As well as that, professional development should not be too broad or generic, as the various needs, contexts, and experiences that partners bring with them in their interactions with others require due consideration. As the findings show, there are a range of factors that influenced participant practice, thus the lived realities, both past and present, need to be explored so they can be used as a learning asset, rather than a substitute for current standards and guidelines. Additionally, the mentoring skills evidenced in Droichead should be incorporated into ITE CPD (Ó Gallchóir et al., 2019; Farrell, 2021), as it could help partners engage in professional conversations, while assisting relationship building. In turn, this widening of the lines of communication would provide cooperating teachers with further opportunities to clarify the roles and responsibilities that they are unsure of in the guidelines.

In conjunction with induction and CPD days, resources that key partners can draw on throughout the year should be developed by **the Teaching Council**, with input from **HEIs** and **schools**. For example, a school placement website or portal could be set up, which includes all relevant policies and guidelines, webinars, videos of good practice, such as professional conversations between cooperating teachers and student teachers and placement tutors etc to further remove any ambiguities associated with roles and responsibilities. Both HEIs and

schools could input on the practice that works for them and what they require from other partners to support them in their role. This would lead to visible, standardised, and ongoing supports being available, while catering for competence and knowledgeability across key partners during school placement. The **student teacher** voice should also be included here, whereby they can outline their experiences and what is helpful and challenging for them during school placement. Allowing each perspective to be shared should contribute to deconstructing hierarchical relationships that currently exist.

Challenge: Potential communities of practice not being activated.

The findings revealed missed opportunities to activate potential communities of practice. For example, two cooperating teachers did not have another cooperating teacher to work with to support them in their role. As well as that, there is potential to activate teacher educator communities of practice.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

CT2 was the only cooperating teacher who worked with another cooperating teacher outside of her subject area. This signifies the opportunity for **schools** to activate schoolwide communities of practice for cooperating teachers, rather than confining teachers to groupings based on the subjects they teach. A responsibility lies with **principals** and **cooperating teachers** to facilitate and engage with the coming together of cooperating teachers. This should be built into cooperating teachers' timetables; the funding for this needs to come from **the DoE**, mirroring the release time and substitute cover provided to schools for Droichead. However, as identified in the previous chapter and the outset of this chapter, placing individuals together does not equate to a community of practice. Therefore, the induction and CPD programmes suggested in the previous recommendation, should form compulsory components of

cooperating teachers undertaking the role. Additionally, and as suggested earlier, cooperating teacher communities of practice could be forged across schools if cooperating teachers were brought together at national CPD days: here networking activities between cooperating teachers should be facilitated.

There is also scope to establish communities of practice for teacher educators, that could include cooperating teachers, placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers, and principals. This recommendation draws parallels with Farrell's (2021) suggestion of forming professional learning communities. Communities of practice need to be built upon the three dimensions of mutual engagement, negotiation of a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire, along with reification, rather than leaving it up to chance whether communities of practice are actually formed amongst participants. This coming together of teacher educators would make potential communities of practice more visible. As well as that, and mirroring Dolan's (2019) recommendation, teacher educators could be introduced to other national and international communities of teacher educators, which would further connect them to a wider landscape of support.

Establishing communities of practice of teacher educators/professional learning communities would recognise all partners as teacher educators, who have a role in ITE, rather than the misconception that this is just the placement tutor's role. Furthermore, it provides more opportunities for partners, such as placement tutors and cooperating teachers who are traditionally time poor to interact, to build relationships outside the usual five or ten-minute informal chat during school placement. The logistics of establishing such communities would require consideration, such as who is responsible for setting this up and how can it be organised

to represent each voice equally, so it is an effective partnership built on trust, mutuality, and reciprocity (Kruger et al., 2009). The financial requirements also require consideration. To cater for such logistics and nuances, this research advocates for **a national association or body for teacher educators** to structure communities of practice.

Challenge: The secondary nature of the cooperating teacher role, coupled with limited time to interact with partners.

As Clarke et al. (2014) point out cooperating teachers are ultimately teachers of pupils, and their primary role can take precedence over supporting student teachers or meeting placement tutors. The secondary nature of the role is compounded by insufficient recognition and status for this role. A greater level of prestige and support is required to acknowledge cooperating teachers as a key partner in ITE, thus cementing their position as a teacher educator. Cooperating teachers, schools, the DoE, the Teaching Council, HEIs, and placement tutors all have a part to play here.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

When cooperating teachers agree to take on the role, it is vital that their prescribed responsibilities are adhered to. It is incumbent on **the DoE** and **schools** to support cooperating teachers in doing so, while **cooperating teachers** must adopt a professional responsibility to fulfil their role. Extending the supports evidenced in Droichead, such as providing CPD (as previously advocated) is needed, as well as setting time aside for meetings during the school day such as timetabling classes for cooperating teachers and student teachers to meet. As mentioned earlier, funding from the DoE is required so that it mirrors the professional development supports of other programmes, which would go towards recognising the importance of this role. Additionally, schools should assign discrete time, as evidenced in

Droichead, for the purposes of student teacher development. Replicating the experience of ST1, all schools should have a department that oversees and coordinates supports for student teachers, which includes guiding cooperating teachers in their role. As a suggestion, the DoE could build these practices into examples of highly effective practice in the domain 'Teachers' collective/collaborative practice' in their quality framework for post-primary schools. It then becomes a concrete example that schools can work towards.

Building on the earlier point of the lack of dedicated time for cooperating teachers and placement tutors to meet as a barrier for their dyadic interactions, **the HEI** should put protocols in place whereby **placement tutors** provide advance notice to schools when they are visiting student teachers and ensure they meet with cooperating teachers. **Cooperating teachers** should then make themselves available to meet with the placement tutor. This does not necessarily mean that the cooperating teacher opts to meet a placement tutor over teaching a class. Instead, the cooperating teacher can inform the placement tutor of times that suit them to meet during their visit. Again, dedicated time on cooperating teachers' timetables could be factored in to facilitate such meetings (O'Grady, 2017).

Challenge: A lack of triadic interactions.

There were no triadic interactions found in this study.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

This study recommends triadic meetings; however, the findings, particularly the inconsistent dyadic interactions and presence of negative forms of power, highlight that triadic interactions are currently a long way off; therefore, it is advisable to build on the dyadic interactions first and then progress to triadic interactions. This recommendation in part emulates from the

scenario of two cooperating teachers stating they would speak differently about the same situation depending on who they were conversing with, with information either being held from the placement tutor or the student teacher. It is vital that **cooperating teachers** provide honest accounts to both placement tutors and student teachers. Importantly, cooperating teachers need to observe student teachers teaching in order to provide a rounded viewpoint of their practice. Again, dedicated time is required to allow for such observations, as well as triadic conversations. This needs to be provided for by **the school** and again requires funding from **the DoE**. However, if participants have more time to meet, it does not guarantee fruitful triadic interactions. For example, PT3 noted that just because a Teaching Council (2021a) responsibility infers '*let's all do it together',* she would require support in this, hence CPD for all members is needed to help with this process.

CPD to structure triadic interactions is intended to provide student teachers with consistent and supportive feedback (Mtika et al., 2013). This would link with the earlier suggestion of **the Teaching Council** facilitating CPD sessions for cooperating teachers and placement tutors, with **HEIs** and **schools** providing inputs. While the focus here would be on triadic interactions, it would essentially help with dyadic conversations too. Furthermore, during their induction, cooperating teachers should be provided with shadowing opportunities with experienced cooperating teachers and placement tutors to help them convey constructive feedback to key partners. Such professional development that focuses on professional conversations need to be extended to student teachers. How to conduct and engage in professional conversations could be in the form of webinars from the Teaching Council, again co-constructed with HEIs and schools, but with input from **student teacher representatives**. These webinars could be shown to all student teachers during pedagogy lectures in **the HEI**. As a suggestion, some microteaching sessions could role-play dyadic and triadic interactions, where student teachers

practice vocalising, rather than silencing their opinions, when engaging in professional conversations. It would help reinforce that different perspectives do not equate to student teachers implying their placement tutor, or indeed other partners, are '*wrong*' (ST2). Therefore, it is important that **<u>pedagogy lecturers</u>** engage with CPD related to dyadic and triadic interactions to facilitate this. In this particular HEI, all pedagogy lecturers assume the role of a placement tutor, therefore they would already be involved in the suggested CPD.

Challenge: School-university partnerships contained to the first stage of the continuum of teacher education.

School-university partnerships are not capitalised on beyond ITE, unless HEIs run initiatives with schools, thus this points to a systematic flaw. If partnerships transcend the continuum of teacher education, there are more opportunities to build relationships with mutual benefits across the landscape of practice, rather than short, transactional arrangements that are currently in place.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

This study advocates that **<u>the Teaching Council</u>** provides a named place for HEIs in Droichead and Cosán so school-university partnerships formally permeate the full continuum of teacher education/landscape of practice, facilitating reciprocal relationships beyond school placement. This could further break down the viewpoint that knowledge resides mainly with HEIs. For example, HEIs could be in receipt of CPD from **<u>schools</u>**, which would acknowledge the calls from HEIs in the *Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement* (Department of Education, 2023a:60) to support them in their role, such as keeping up to date with curricular reform etc. Similarly, **<u>HEIs</u>** could provide CPD for teachers. This boundary crossing would illuminate that

each member of teacher education can be a learning asset for one another (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), consequently making partnerships more desirable.

Challenge: Voluntary partnerships, which predominately adopt the work placement model.

The system of voluntary school participation means partnerships are imbalanced from the outset. In conjunction with this, the findings mostly mirror a work placement model, that is a functioning partnership, rather than an effective one. Building on the previous recommendation, school-university partnerships have the potential to extend beyond school placement, which would allow for closer, stronger, and more collaborative partnerships to be forged.

Associated recommendation and opportunity:

This study builds on the previous chorus of insider-based studies that call for mandated school-university partnerships. It is imperative that the Teaching Council listen to the persistent calls from practitioners who have identified voluntary participation as a barrier in partnerships. That said, it proposes an alternative approach, as it heeds the advice of Acquaro and Bradbury (2023) and Day et al. (2021) who forewarn that the mandating of partnerships does not guarantee collaboration. Therefore, this research builds on the recommendation from one pedagogy lecturer who stated there should be a '*menu or list of various types of partnerships'*. With the offering of different partnership types, the mandating of schools in partnerships by **the Teaching Council** provides options, thus is more desirable as schools can chose the type of partnership that meets the need of the school community, as well as the HEI. School-university partnerships are then not a one size fits all approach (Acquaro & Bradbury (2023), and the individualised needs of communities and organisations are considered. For example, schools and HEIs can form research partnerships: while this does occur, such as the Researcher in

Resident scheme[31] (Teaching Council, 2023b), it moves from being an initiative to becoming an option within a formalised structure. Consequently, **schools/principals** and **cooperating teachers** that opt to host student teachers must enter into a guarantee to fulfil their prescribed responsibilities, which includes an induction and CPD programme. The aforementioned format of induction and CPD is therefore put in place, which has named responsibilities for **the HEI**, **placement tutors**, and **student teacher representatives** too. Therefore, a mandated approach to school-partnerships within a Teaching Council policy, that contain an array of partnership options, is recommended. As a result, the importance of schools and universities working collaboratively together, to serve both their needs and contexts, is formally recognised. Such possibilities better align to the Teaching Council's definition of partnerships.

Additionally, the Teaching Council should explore the different international models of partnerships (as outlined in section 4.2.) with schools and HEIs who agree to host student teachers and explore structures that would benefit their specific contexts and needs. How to avoid reverting to a work placement model that overlooks collaboration (as evidenced internationally) would need to be teased out.

While the recommendations all intend to advance the practice of school-university partnerships, the study is not without its limitations. These limitations are now addressed.

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[31] Through the Researcher in Resident Scheme, the Teaching Council actively supports schools or clusters of schools, wishing to partner with researchers in HEIs.

8.3. Research limitations

While I endeavoured to reduce this study's limitations, limitations are present. Firstly, this research is not generalisable as the study was confined to one concurrent ITE programme and student teachers during their second year of the programme: there are thirteen other post-primary ITE programmes in Ireland, with both concurrent and consecutive programmes in place. It was beyond the scope of this research to include all ITE programmes and all student teacher year cohorts, hence the experiences reported, and many of the recommendations pertain to one HEI and student teachers at the start of their ITE programme. Additionally, most of the placement tutors and cooperating teachers that participated were past student teachers of the same HEI, further reducing the generalisability of this research. That said, if individuals across the landscape of practice recognise experiences like their own practice, and also acknowledge that experiences can differ amongst individuals they interact with during partnerships, the recommendations may be beneficial to other ITE programmes and associated practitioners. Furthermore, the sample size was small considering the number of potential participants that could have been recruited, therefore not all experiences of cooperating teachers, placement tutors, student teachers, pedagogy lecturers, and principals associated with this one HEI were provided.

Another limitation occurred when I invited placement tutors and pedagogy lecturers to the study at the same time, which resulted in pedagogy lecturers opting to complete the questionnaire and not volunteer for the interviews and focus groups. As a result, this study does not contain the dual perspective from individuals that are both of a pedagogy lecturer and placement tutor within the one HEI.

A limitation pertaining to the principals' perspectives was that it may have been difficult for some principals to segregate their thoughts on partnerships with this one HEI as they may host other student teachers across many ITE programmes, so they may have reported on their general experiences over their specific experience. Another limitation resulted from not collecting the name of schools on the questionnaire, and while it meant the responses were anonymous, I could not look online for a school placement school policy from the principals that said they had one.

While this study has its limitations, it has many valuable contributions to make to the field of teacher education: some of which were contained within in the recommendations, but additional contributions are discussed next.

8.4. The study's contribution

This study provides a unique perspective into how school-university partnerships are understood: it expands on previous studies that draw on a community of practice framework as it recognises the wider landscape of practice within a social theory of learning and has an extra dimension pertaining to the concept of power. As noted in chapter two, how Wenger (1998) describes communities of practice has been criticised for being too broad (Storberg-Walker, 2008); however, my illustrations of communities of practice within a landscape of practice (Figures 2.2, 2.4 & 2.5) provides a clear frame in which to understand the complexity of school-university partnerships. It presents a more holistic view of practice because it accounts for all key partners during school placement, identifying dyadic and triadic interactions, along with access points to support and resources.

Shifting the focus for individual practitioners and schools from communities of practice to landscapes of practice is a key contribution of this study. As pointed out in chapter two, the language associated with communities of practice, i.e., mutual engagement, negotiation of a joint enterprise, a shared repertoire, and reification are not used by practitioners. Therefore, it is unsurprising that practitioners are not typically engaging in communities of practice and perhaps this expectation is unrealistic. Instead, the onus should be on the Teaching Council, along with HEIs, to structure these dimensions within induction and CPD programmes. Consequently, this would illuminate what each member brings to the partnership through facilitating the coalescing stage of development, while also providing practitioners with the appropriate tools and skillset to carry out their responsibilities in the active stage. To build on this structure, a responsibility should then fall to schools and individual practitioners to focus on the key components of a landscape of practice framework, i.e., they need to know what competence looks like in their role and agree to adopt that practice, and they need to have knowledgeability of the role of others so they can work collaboratively together. In line with this, practitioners and schools create conditions that avoid a political and flat landscape, and instead welcome the diverse perspectives from key partners during partnerships.

While this study focuses on the teaching profession, the way in which I have conceptualised the framework can contribute to its application in other professions. Partnership is not a concept confined to teacher education, many professions and organisations consist of a range of individuals, each with certain roles and responsibilities that ultimately intend to complement the role of the other to meet certain needs and/or wants. How individuals understand their own role and that of others, as well the level of access and interactions within and across communities of practice, can have both positive and negative implications for individuals and organisations. As a result, I recommend that a social theory of learning framework that

recognises and activates a range of communities of practice across the landscape of practice, that builds on the principles of trust, mutuality, and reciprocity is given due consideration for other professions.

Another unique contribution of this study was gathering the triads opinions of what their role and responsibilities were by using the Teaching Council (2021a) *Guidelines on School Placement* as an artefact. This allowed for the realities of their practice to be unearthed against the aspirations of policy. In doing so, it pinpointed some aspects where support can be missing for student teachers, as well as placement tutors and cooperating teachers. This then contributed to several recommendations made in this chapter. Some of the recommendations are new, while others add to the previous chorus of studies that advocate further support to enhance school-university partnerships. It is of little use to continually call for school-university partnerships in policies if we do not listen to the voices of those involved in the process who are best positioned to recognise the support they need to enhance partnerships. In addition to this, some partners suggested alternative partnership types they would like to see forged between schools and universities, showing that if partners are afforded time and space to interact, partnerships that expand beyond the work placement model are feasible.

8.5. Implications for my own practice

As stated in section 5.4.1, the Ed D programme is built on the premise of practitioners researching and enhancing their own practice (Maynooth University, 2023). Reflecting on the findings of this study, my immediate practice, inclusive of my interactions with others, will be influenced by this study, which is an advantage of insider research. However, I acknowledge that I am a practitioner within a wider landscape of practice, so accordingly, it is important to share learning that can contribute to policy and practice at a national level. Table 8.1 details

the actions I will take, which align with many of the recommendations previously detailed in this chapter.

Individual actions
Ensure I meet all the prescribed placement tutor responsibilities as per Teaching Council and HEI guidelines. Share my role in more detail with student teachers and cooperating teachers so they can link in/avail of the support. Ensure student teachers are clear on their prescribed responsibilities. This will form the basis of the pre-school placement meeting. I will discuss/co-construct ways that student teachers can meet their responsibilities. Ensure I speak with cooperating teachers during school visits. If the cooperating teacher is not available, I will follow up with an email and/or phone call. Share the findings of this study with the HEI and the wider community of HEIs and schools nationally.
Actions within the HEI
The findings of this study will be shared with the school placement team in the HEI and how to implement the following actions will be decided upon: The roles and responsibilities of all key partners as per Teaching Council and HEI guidelines will be discussed in more detail during school placement briefings and pedagogy lectures for student teachers, and placement tutor induction and CPD. This should also include how key partners can work collaboratively together. Additionally, ways to overcome negative forms of power dynamics require teasing out to prevent the silencing of opinions etc. The voice of all partners should be present in these briefings, lectures, induction, and CPD e.g. invite principals, cooperating teachers, and student teachers to input; this could be through physical presence, virtual attendance, or emailing on their opinions etc. Design and roll out cooperating teacher induction and CPD programmes. Develop a mechanism to connect cooperating teachers with the HEI, such as an online portal, so that the HEI can communicate directly with cooperating teachers, such as sharing guidelines. Develop resources that remove any ambiguities associated with roles and responsibilities. For example, creating a dedicated school placement website, which could include webinars, videos of good practice etc. Consider how suggestions made by participants can be incorporated into the programme e.g. CT3 suggested inputting into a module with the HEI, where live streams or recorded segments of a class are shared, resulting in learning for the cooperating teacher, student teachers, and pedagogy lecturers. The partners can share what worked well and what can be enhanced (the ethical implications and logistics of this require exploration).

Actions beyond the HEI
Share the findings of this study with the Teaching Council via email. I will condense the key findings that relate to policy and share the policy recommendations. I will explore what opportunities are available to discuss and action elements of this study, such as ways to link in with the Treoraithe Professional Learning Group.
While this study is not generalisable, there are elements of this research that will speak to other practitioners across HEIs and schools. Therefore, it is important to share the findings and associated recommendations with others so that they can decipher what learning is relevant for their own practice. Accordingly, I will distil sections of this dissertation into shorter segments for publication and conferences, that will make engagement more manageable.

Table 8.1. Implications for my own practice

8.6. A concluding invitation to other practitioners

To conclude, I encourage you to reflect on your own positioning in the landscape of practice.

I invite you to map the space(s) you occupy on Figure 8.1, while simultaneously noting other

key individuals and communities of practice that make up the landscape of practice:
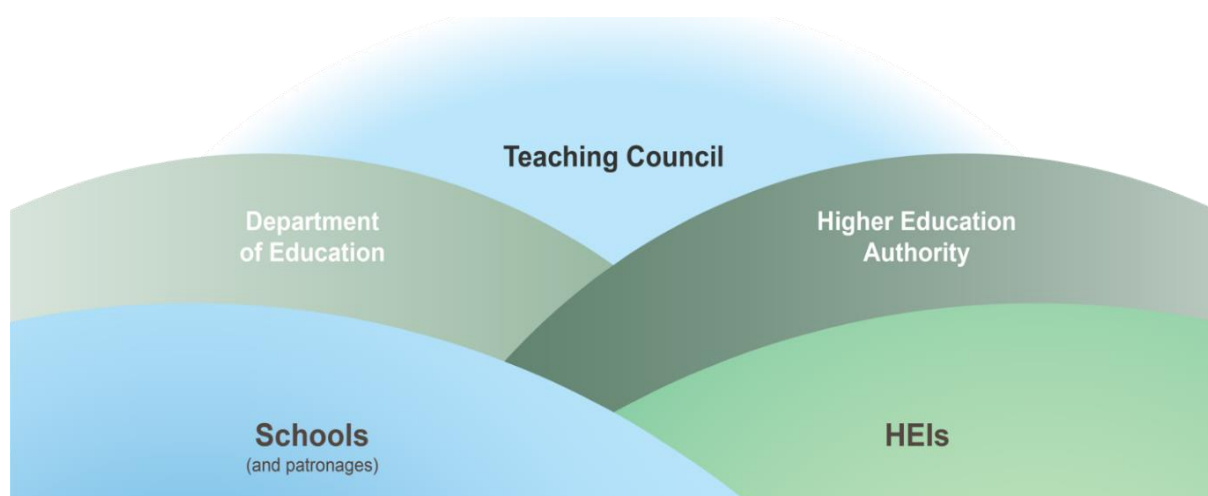
Figure 8.1: Mapping your own landscape of practice

I leave you with the following questions:

- What does competence look like in your role?

- Do you have knowledgeability of the range of roles and practices across the landscapes of practice?

- Do you activate all potential communities of practice that you could be part of?

- How can you be a learning asset and how can you learn from other partners as you boundary cross?

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Appendices

Appendix A: Breakdown of school placement for the programme in this study

*The study involves participants from year two of the programme (highlighted below).

Stage of programme	Duration of school placement	Level taught	Requirements
Year 1	Three weeks	Junior Cycle (lower post-primary, approximately 12-15 years old).	Two days observation in both subjects prior to teaching. Two weeks and three days teaching 5 x 40-minute classes, or 4 x60 minute classes per week per subject.
Year 2	Four weeks	Junior Cycle (lower post-primary, approximately 12-15 years old). Transition Year (interim year between lower post-primary and higher post-primary, approximately 15/16 years old).	One class of observation per week per subject. Teach 8 x 40-minute classes per week per subject or 5 x 60-minute classes per week per subject.
Year 3	Four weeks	Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle.	Two days observation for both subjects. Teach a minimum of 8 x 40-minute classes per week or 5 x 60-minute classes per week per subject.
Year 4	Four weeks	Special Community and Further Educational settings.	Two observation days at the start of school placement. Observe minimum one lesson per week per subject throughout school placement.

			Teach 5 hours per week in both subjects.
Year 5	Ten weeks	Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle.	Avail of all opportunities to engage in observation of classes during school placement (minimum one class observation per week per subject). Teach 6 x 40-minute classes or 4 x 60-minute classes per week for one subject and teach 4.5. hours, approximately 7 x 40 minutes classes per week.

The HEI's School Placement Handbook 2022/2023 BA/PME 1-5

Appendix B: Policy trajectory related to school-university partnerships from 1991 to 2023

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2" style="background-color:#fbe7c0;">A trajectory of reviews, papers, and working groups: the 1990s

A consistent call for school-university partnerships, greater links between HEIs and schools

and reference to the voluntary nature of school placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991
OECD Review of Irish Education.</td>
<td>Made reference to:
The voluntary nature of school placement.
Importance of partnerships between schools and HEIs.
Greater contact needed between schools and HEIs.
The need for a National Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992
Education for a Changing World: Green Paper on Education (Department of Education and Science).</td>
<td>Made reference to:
The need for close partnerships between schools and HEIs.
The need for a Teaching Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993
National Education Convention (Coolahan, 1994).</td>
<td>Made reference to:
Schools and HEIs should work closer together.
Student teachers should be provided with in-school mentors while on school placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995
Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education (Department of Education and Science).</td>
<td>Made reference to:
School placement supporting the pedagogical skills of student teachers.
HEIs to investigate 'the use of experienced teachers to guide and assist student teachers' (Department of Education and Science, 1995:133).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997
A technical working group and steering group set up in relation to a Teaching Council (Coolahan, 2017).</td>
<td>To make recommendations on the structure and functions of a teaching council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998
An advisory group on post-primary education (Byrne, 2002).</td>
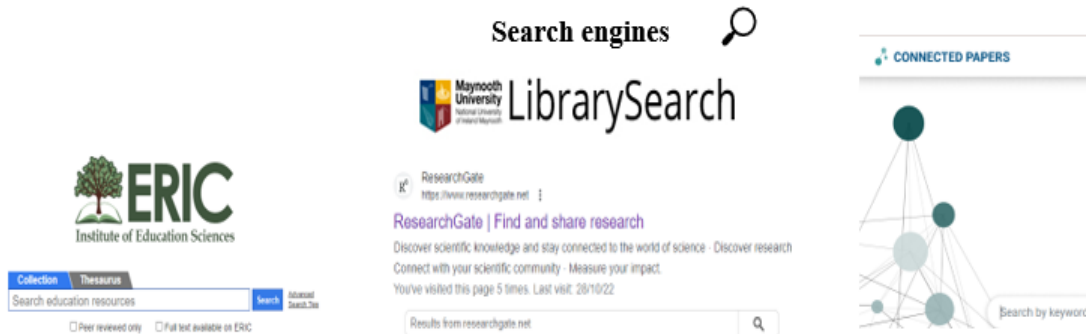<td>To improve teacher education at post-primary level.</td>
</tr>
</table>

	Unpublished reports, reviews, European policy, the formation of the Teaching Council and subsequent policies and guidelines: 2000-2023
2002 Byrne Report.	Made reference to: The informal nature of school-university partnerships and the informal role of the teacher in the school. Recommended the establishment of partnership boards between HEIs and schools. Importance of resources and additional personnel to support school-university partnerships. Unpublished and no national discussion on the recommendations contained in this report.
2005 OECD Teachers Matter, Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers.	Made reference to: Links between schools and ITE programmes are not utilised sufficiently.
2006 Teaching Council established.	Following the 2001 Teaching Council legislation, the first meeting of the Teaching Council happened in 2006. Subsequent guidelines and policies on teacher education have been published and reviewed.
2010 Teaching Council Draft Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education.	Made reference to: Background report: Teacher Education in Ireland and internationally. Extensive school placement during ITE. School placement must occur in a recognised school, with the HEI responsible for mentoring and supervising the student teacher.
2011 Teaching Council Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education.	Made reference to: A key principle underpinning teacher education is that it is to 'be designed and provided using a partnership model involving teachers, schools and teacher educators' (Teaching Council, 2011a:10). The term school placement replacing teaching practice. Responsibility with the HEI to ensure personnel are appropriately qualified, they focus on student centred experiences, and make their facilities available for teaching, learning, and research. New and innovative models of school placement. Mentoring, supervision, observations, and conversations between student teachers and experienced teachers.

2011 Teaching Council Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers.	Made reference to: The term school placement replacing teaching practice. The amount of time ITE programmes should dedicate to school placement. School placement should occur in different settings. New and innovative models of school placement. Mentoring, supervision, observations, and conversations between student teachers and experienced teachers.
2012 Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland (Sahlberg et al.)	Made reference to: ITE programme as the most crucial factor in ensuring a high performing education system. Surprised student teachers sourced their own school placement: should be the responsibility of the HEI who have built up partnerships with schools. School placement should take place in more than one educational setting. School-university partnerships should be formalised. HEI and schools should be jointly responsible for student teacher assessment.
2013 Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement	A clear blueprint for all facilitating a quality school placement experience. Act as a resource for greater consistency of school placement experience. Made reference to: The roles and responsibilities of personnel in HEIs and schools. Placement tutor replaced the term supervisor.
2017 Teaching Council: Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers. Revised.	Made reference to: Enhanced partnership between HEI, placement tutor, and cooperating teacher. HEI providers to provide CPD to cooperating teachers, while schools should accommodate HEI personnel wishing to update their teaching experience. Student teachers to be supported by at least two placement tutors. Student teachers must pass school placement. HEI should create a culture of engagement between student teachers in their ITE programme, as well as student teachers in other HEIs.
2019 The Structure of Teacher Education in Ireland: Review of Progress in Implementing Reform (Sahlberg).	Acknowledged the greater emphasis placed on school placement since the 2012 report. Made reference to: Difficulties student teachers have in sourcing school placement.

	Suggests reimaging school placement: use of clinical teacher training schools and a national database system to identify school placement schools. No structure in place to support or reward cooperating teachers. ITE providers state that onus should not rely with the HEI to support cooperating teachers. Difficult to ensure consistency of experience during school placement.
2019 (not released until 2021) Teaching Council Report and Action Plan of the School Placement Working Group.	Most significant challenges: sourcing of school placement schools, cost of school placement for student teachers and the roles and responsibilities of partners, most notably the teacher. Recommended: -the setting up an online national database for sourcing schools for placements -a national database of placement tutors -a demonstration model programme of professional learning for cooperating teachers.
2020 Education & Training 2020 - Schools Policy Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching. A guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education (working groups in 2014/2015) (European Commission, 2020).	Made reference to: The importance of school-university partnerships. Policy action should include incentives and dedicated resources to support school-university partnerships.
2020 Teaching Council Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education	Revised standards for ITE. Made reference to: A shared vision for school placement. Student teachers should receive high levels of support during school placement. Importance of school-university partnerships.
2021 Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement.	Made reference to: School placement being the fulcrum of teacher education. The roles and responsibilities of personnel in HEIs and schools. Treoraithe replaced the term cooperating teachers. School placement based on the goodwill of schools.
2023 Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement (Department of Education).	Made reference to: Equity of school placement experience for student teachers.

	A role for HEI providing CPD for cooperating teachers and teachers. Goal 5: A Collaborative and Communicative System: refers to collaboration across education sectors and to improve communication. Increase the clarity of role of teacher educators.

Appendix C: Databases and search terms used to locate suitable research papers.

Search engines

Maynooth University LibrarySearch

ERIC
Institute of Education Sciences

Collection | Thesaurus
Search education resources   Search   Advanced Search Tips
☐ Peer reviewed only   ☐ Full text available on ERIC

ResearchGate
https://www.researchgate.net
ResearchGate | Find and share research
Discover scientific knowledge and stay connected to the world of science · Discover research
Connect with your scientific community · Measure your impact.
You've visited this page 5 times. Last visit: 28/10/22
Results from researchgate.net

CONNECTED PAPERS
Search by keywords

Key terms searched

- School-university partnerships: models, types, partnerships in teacher education, partnerships between cooperating teachers and student teachers, partnerships between placement tutors/supervisors and student teachers, partnerships between cooperating teachers and placement tutors/supervisors, relationships between schools and universities
- Student teachers, pre-service teachers, trainee teachers, the apprenticeship of observation
- Cooperating teachers, mentors in initial teacher education
- Placement tutors, supervisors in initial teacher education
- Principals in teacher education, principals in school-university partnerships
- Pedagogy lecturers, methods lecturers
- Boundary crossing in teacher education
- Third space.
- Power dynamics/Power differentials in teacher education and initial teacher education

Appendix D: Roles and responsibilities of principals as per Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement (2021a)

School Principals

- Lead a whole-school approach to school placement in accordance with the policy formulated by the School Management Authority

- Facilitate student placement, in consultation with appropriate staff and having regard to school capacity

- Work collaboratively with HEIs and placement tutors to support the school placement.

- Assign student teachers to Treoraithe as appropriate.

- Provide a school orientation to the student teacher at the outset of the placement.

- Afford the student teacher opportunities to work alongside other teachers.

- Encourage the student teacher to seek advice and support when needed.

- Are available to student teachers for professional support and advice.

- Advise HEIs in a timely manner of any serious concerns relating to a student teacher's practice or conduct.

- Facilitate HEI staff wishing to update their teaching experience, where feasible.

- Facilitate Treoraithe availing of discretionary time while student teachers are teaching more independently

- Will, where appropriate, delegate the above functions to the deputy principal or other members of staff.

Appendix E: Information sheets and consent forms

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
(Student Teachers)

Purpose of the Study.

I am Ciara Sloan, a doctoral student on the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) programme with a specialism in Teacher Education in Maynooth University. As part of the requirements for the Ed.D programme, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr Maija Salokangas. The working title of this study is 'An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers' learning to teach at post-primary level'. The purpose of this research is to explore the collaborative process between student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and placement tutors within school-university partnerships. It will also involve the experience of pedagogy lecturers in a Higher Education Institution and school principals in this process. The study is guided by two research questions: 'What is the experience of student teachers, placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) in merging theory and practice in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?' and 'How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in formalising and sustaining school-university partnerships?'

What will the study involve?
The study will involve an interview **and** a focus group. The semi-structured interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes duration and will take place online via Microsoft Teams. This interview will take place in March 2022 during school placement and will be video recorded. The focus group will take place after school placement, in May 2022 with three other second-year student teachers in [HEI name removed]. The focus group will be approximately 60-90 minutes duration and will take place on campus unless public health advice does not allow this, otherwise it will take place online via Microsoft Teams. The focus groups will also be video recorded. You will be provided with the list of questions prior to the interview and focus group: questions will center around your experience of school placement, the merging of theory and practice, and collaboration with placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe).

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 have you been asked to take part?
You have been asked because you are in the second year of your Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme and undertaking your first school placement. The study seeks to gain an understanding of your experience of navigating between an ITE programme and school, and

your interactions with cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and placement tutors, while learning how to teach.

Do you have to take part?
No, you are under no obligation to take part in this research. You are invited to take part and give approximately 45-60 minutes of your time to complete an interview **and** 60-90 minutes of your time to take part in a focus group, as your contribution will be very valuable to the field of teacher education. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and given a copy and the information sheet for your own records. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw your information until it is irreversibly anonymised in February 2023, without giving a reason. You can withdraw your data by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your relationships with [HEI name removed] or your results as part of School Placement or your relationship with Maynooth University.

What information will be collected?
The questions will focus on your experience of teaching and learning in both a school and on your ITE programme. Questions will focus on applying theoretical knowledge gained in your ITE programme to your school placement experience. It will also investigate your interactions and collaboration with placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) to support you in your teaching. Questions will be sent to you prior to participation so that you know what information you will be asked. Some probing questions may be asked based on answers provided. I will debrief with you after interviews and focus groups so you can add or withdraw information if you so wish.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?
Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time and your names will be replaced with pseudonyms. No hard copies of information will be held, electronic information will be held securely on the researchers Maynooth University OneDrive in a password encrypted folder. Once your interviews and focus groups have been transcribed the recordings will be deleted. The OneDrive folder will be accessed only by me, Ciara Sloan, and my supervisors Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas.

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 will happen to the information which you give?
All the information you provide will be kept on a Maynooth University OneDrive in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. During the research, the data will also be retained on the Maynooth University server. After the research is complete and published, the data may be used for subsequent research in the same area, the data are still irreversibly anonymised so you will not be identified, however you can opt not to consent to the use of your data for such potential studies.

What will happen to the results?
The data gathered will be used to inform the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie. The research will be written up and presented as an Ed.D thesis.

What are the potential benefits of this study?
Because this study explores collaborative processes required to support student teachers learning to teach, it will therefore contribute towards recommendations on how to create a theory-practice nexus in teacher education and build effective and lasting school-university partnerships. It will contribute towards the enactment of elements of the Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education policy document. Additionally, it will highlight the role and responsibilities and the realities of work by cooperating teachers (treoraithe), schools, placement tutors and HEIs, as well as student teachers, along the continuum of teacher education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study. It is possible that talking about your experience may cause some distress. To limit this, you will have a copy of interview and focus group questions prior to partaking. You are also entitled to decline to respond to questions you do not wish to answer. You can also request to discontinue the interview or focus group at any stage. Taking part in this study does not impact on your School Placement results, and information provided will not be passed on to your placement tutor, cooperating teacher, your school principal or colleagues, or student teacher peers.

What if there is a problem?
At the end of the interview and focus groups, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. You may contact my primary supervisor Dr. Rose Dolan at rose.dolan@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above. You can also avail of [HEI name removed] support services at [link removed] if you are experiencing distress from participating in this study.

Any further queries?
If you need any further information, you can contact me: Ciara Sloan, ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie
If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

(Cooperating Teacher/Treoraí)

Purpose of the Study.

I am Ciara Sloan, a doctoral student on the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) programme with a specialism in Teacher Education in Maynooth University. As part of the requirements for the Ed.D programme, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas. The working title of this study is 'An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers learning to teach at post-primary level'. The purpose of this research is to explore the collaborative process between student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and placement tutors within school-university partnerships. It will also involve the experience of pedagogy lecturers in a Higher Education Institution and school principals in this process. The study is guided by two research questions: 'What is the experience of student teachers, placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) in merging theory and practice in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?' and 'How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in formalising and sustaining school-university partnerships?'

What will the study involve?

The study will involve an interview **and** a focus group. The semi-structured interview is of approximately 45-60 minutes duration and will take place online via Microsoft Teams. This interview will take place in March 2022 during school placement, while you are acting as a cooperating teacher/treoraithe for a second-year student teacher from [HEI name removed]. The focus group will take place after school placement, in May 2022 and will involve three other cooperating teachers/treoraithe that hosted a second-year student teacher from [HEI name removed]. The focus group will be approximately 60-90 minutes duration and will also take place online via Microsoft Teams. Both interviews and focus groups will be video recorded. You will be provided with the list of questions prior to the interview and focus group: questions will center around your experience of being a cooperating teacher/treoraithe, your role and responsibility as a cooperating teacher/treoraithe, collaboration with student teachers and placement tutors, and your beliefs/experiences around school-university partnerships.

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 have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you are a currently a cooperating teacher/treoraithe for a student teacher in [HEI name removed]. The study seeks to gain an understanding of your experience of as a cooperating teacher/treoraithe, and your interactions with student teachers and placement tutors within school-university partnerships.

Do you have to take part?
No, you are under no obligation to take part in this research. You are invited to take part and give approximately 45-60 minutes of your time to complete an interview **and** 60-90 minutes of your time to take part in a focus group, as your contribution will be very valuable to the field of teacher education. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and will have a copy of this and the information sheet for your own records. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw your information until it is irreversibly anonymised in February 2023, without giving a reason. You can withdraw your data by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your relationships with [HEI name removed] or Maynooth University.

What information will be collected?
Information from your interview and focus group will be collected, video recorded and analysed to form part of my Ed.D thesis in Maynooth University. Questions will be sent to you prior to participation so that you know what information you will be asked. Some probing questions may be asked based on answers provided. I will debrief with you after interviews and focus groups so you can add or withdraw information if you so wish.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?
Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time and your names will be replaced with pseudonyms. No hard copies of information will be held, electronic information will be held securely on the researchers Maynooth University OneDrive in a password encrypted folder. Once your interviews and focus groups have been transcribed the recordings will be deleted. The OneDrive folder will be accessed only by me, Ciara Sloan, and my supervisors Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas.

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 will happen to the information which you give?
All the information you provide will be kept on a Maynooth University OneDrive in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. During the research, the data will also be retained on the Maynooth University server. After the research is complete and published, the data may be used for subsequent research in the same area, the data are still irreversibly anonymised so you will not be identified, however you can opt not to consent to the use of your data for such potential studies.

What will happen to the results?
The data gathered will be used to inform the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie. The research will be written up and presented as an Ed.D thesis.

What are the potential benefits of this study?
Because this study explores collaborative processes required to support student teachers learning to teach, it will therefore contribute towards recommendations on how to create a theory-practice nexus in teacher education and build effective and lasting school-university partnerships. It will contribute towards the enactment of elements of the Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education policy document. Additionally, it will highlight the role and responsibilities and the realities of work by cooperating teachers (treoraithe), schools, placement tutors and HEIs, as well as student teachers, along the continuum of teacher education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study. It is possible that talking about your experience may cause some distress. To limit this, you will have a copy of interview and focus group questions prior to partaking. You are also entitled to decline to respond to questions you do not wish to answer. You can also request to discontinue the interview or focus group at any stage. I will also not discuss any information provided with your colleagues, the student teacher, your principal or placement tutors.

What if there is a problem?
At the end of the interview and focus groups, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. You may contact my primary supervisor Dr. Rose Dolan at rose.dolan@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above. You can also avail of employee assistance support via your school/ETB/Department of Education if participation has caused you distress or at https://www.gov.ie/en/service/23acf5-employee-assistance-service/

Any further queries?
If you need any further information, you can contact me: Ciara Sloan, ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
(Placement Tutor)

Purpose of the Study.

I am Ciara Sloan, a doctoral student on the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) programme with a specialism in Teacher Education in Maynooth University. As part of the requirements for the Ed.D programme, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr Maija Salokangas. The working title of this study is 'An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers learning to teach at post-primary level'. The purpose of this research is to explore the collaborative process between student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and placement tutors within school-university partnerships. It will also involve the experience of pedagogy lecturers in a Higher Education Institution and school principals in this process. The study is guided by two research questions: 'What is the experience of student teachers, placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) in merging theory and practice in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?' and 'How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in formalising and sustaining school-university partnerships?'

What will the study involve?

The study will involve an interview **and** a focus group. The semi-structured interview is approximately 45-60 minutes duration and will take place online via Microsoft Teams. This interview will take place in March 2022 during school placement, while you acting as a placement tutor for a second-year student teacher from [HEI name removed]. The focus group will take place after school placement, in May 2022 and will involve three other placement tutors (part-time and full-time) in [HEI name removed]. The focus group will be approximately 60-90 minutes duration and will also take place online via Microsoft Teams. Both interviews and focus groups will be video recorded. You will be provided with the list of questions prior to the interview and focus group: questions will center around your experience of being a tutor on school placement, your role and responsibility as a placement tutor, collaboration with student teachers and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and beliefs/experiences around school-university partnerships.

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 have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you are a practising placement tutor for second-year student teachers of [HEI name removed]. The study seeks to gain an understanding of your experience of as a placement tutor, and your interactions with student teachers and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) within school-university partnerships.

Do you have to take part?

No, you are under no obligation to take part in this research. You are invited to take part and give approximately 45-60 minutes of your time to complete an interview **and** 60-90 minutes of your time to take part in a focus group, as your contribution will be very valuable to the field of teacher education. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and will have a copy of this and the information sheet for your own records. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw your information until it is irreversibly anonymised in February 2023, without giving a reason. You can withdraw your data by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your relationships with [HEI name removed] or Maynooth University.

What information will be collected?

Information from your interview and focus group will be collected, video recorded and analysed to form part of my Ed.D thesis in Maynooth University. Questions will be sent to you prior to participation so that you know what information you will be asked. Some probing questions may be asked based on answers provided. I will debrief with you after interviews and focus groups so you can add or withdraw information if you so wish.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time and your names will be replaced with pseudonyms. No hard copies of information will be held, electronic information will be held securely on the researchers Maynooth University OneDrive in a password encrypted folder. Once your interviews and focus groups have been transcribed the recordings will be deleted. The OneDrive folder will be accessed only by me, Ciara Sloan, and my supervisors Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas.

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 will happen to the information which you give?

All the information you provide will be kept on a Maynooth University OneDrive in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. During the research, the data will also be retained on the Maynooth University server. After the research is complete and published, the data may be used for subsequent research in the same area, the data are still irreversibly anonymised so you will not be identified, however you can opt not to consent to the use of your data for such potential studies.

What will happen to the results?

The data gathered will be used to inform the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request

by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie. The research will be written up and presented as an Ed.D thesis.

What are the potential benefits of this study?
Because this study explores collaborative processes required to support student teachers learning to teach, it will therefore contribute towards recommendations on how to create a theory-practice nexus in teacher education and build effective and lasting school-university partnerships. It will contribute towards the enactment of elements of the Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education policy document. Additionally, it will highlight the role and responsibilities and the realities of work by cooperating teachers (treoraithe), schools, placement tutors and HEIs, as well as student teachers, along the continuum of teacher education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study. It is possible that talking about your experience may cause some distress. To limit this, you will have a copy of interview and focus group questions prior to partaking. You are also entitled to decline to respond to questions you do not wish to answer. You can also request to discontinue the interview or focus group at any stage. I will also not discuss information provided by you to your colleagues, other placement tutors, student teachers, schools and the HEI.

What if there is a problem?
At the end of the interview and focus groups, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. You may contact my primary supervisor Dr. Rose Dolan at rose.dolan@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above. You can also avail of staff supports from [HEI name removed] at [link removed] if you feel distressed from participating in this study.

Any further queries?
If you need any further information, you can contact me: Ciara Sloan, ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.
Thank you for taking the time to read this

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
(Pedagogy lecturers)

Purpose of the Study.
I am Ciara Sloan, a doctoral student on the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) programme with a specialism in Teacher Education in Maynooth University. As part of the requirements for the Ed.D programme, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas. The working title of this study is 'An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers learning to teach at post-primary level'. The purpose of this research is to explore the collaborative process between student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and placement tutors within school-university partnerships. It will also involve the experience of pedagogy lecturers in a Higher Education Institution and school principals in this process. The study is guided by two research questions: 'What is the experience of student teachers, placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) in merging theory and practice in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?' and 'How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in formalising and sustaining school-university partnerships?'

What will the study involve?
For pedagogy lecturers, the study will involve completing an online questionnaire via Microsoft forms in April/May 2022. The questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Questions will center around what is taught to second-year student teachers prior to their first school placement, whether placement tutors and cooperating teachers are aware of pedagogy lectures, who has responsibility for lines of communication between the ITE programme and schools etc.

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 have you been asked to take part?
You have been asked because you are a pedagogy lecturer from [HEI name removed]. The study seeks to gain an understanding of your experience of supporting student teachers learning how to teach, the theory-practice divide, of school-university partnerships etc.

Do you have to take part?
No, you are under no obligation to take part in this research. You are invited to take part and give approximately 15-20 minutes of your time to complete a questionnaire as your contribution will be very valuable to the field of teacher education. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to consent at the start of the questionnaire. Submission of the questionnaire is also considered a form of consent: do

not complete the questionnaire if you do not consent as your name will not be collected, therefore it will not be possible to withdraw your questionnaire post submission. A decision to not take part will not affect your relationships with [HEI name removed] or Maynooth University.

What information will be collected?
Information from your questionnaire will be collected and analysed to form part of my Ed.D thesis in Maynooth University.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?
Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be collected or identified at any time. No hard copies of information will be held, electronic information will be held securely on the researchers Maynooth University OneDrive in a password encrypted folder. The OneDrive folder will be accessed only by me, Ciara Sloan, and my supervisors Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas.

No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party.

'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 will happen to the information which you give?
All the information you provide will be kept on a Maynooth University OneDrive in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. During the research, the data will also be retained on the Maynooth University server. After the research is complete and published, the data may be used for subsequent research in the same area, the data is anonymised so you will not be identified.

What will happen to the results?
The data gathered will be used to inform the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request by emailing me at ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie. The research will be written up and presented as an Ed.D thesis.

What are the potential benefits of this study?
The potential benefits of the study are to explore collaborative processes required to support student teachers learning to teach and therefore contribute towards recommendations on how to create a theory-practice nexus in teacher education and building effective and lasting school-university partnerships. It will contribute towards the enactment of elements of the Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education policy document. Additionally, it will highlight the role and responsibilities and the realities of work of cooperating teachers (treoraithe), schools, placement tutors and HEIs, as well as student teachers, along the continuum of teacher education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study. You are entitled to decline to respond to questions you do not wish to answer in the questionnaire. I will not

discuss information provided by you with your colleagues, other pedagogy lecturers, the HEI, student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe), placement tutors or schools.

You may contact my primary supervisor Dr. Rose Dolan at rose.dolan@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above. You can also avail of staff supports from [HEI name removed] at [link removed] if you feel distressed from participating in this study.

Any further queries?
If you need any further information, you can contact me: Ciara Sloan, ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
(Principal)

Purpose of the Study.
I am Ciara Sloan, a doctoral student on the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) programme with a specialism in Teacher Education in Maynooth University. As part of the requirements for the Ed.D programme, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas. The working title of this study is 'An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers learning to teach at post-primary level'. The purpose of this research is to explore the collaborative process between student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe) and placement tutors within school-university partnerships. It will also involve the experience of pedagogy lecturers in a Higher Education Institution and school principals in this process. The study is guided by two research questions: 'What is the experience of student teachers, placement tutors and cooperating teachers (treoraithe) in merging theory and practice in the process of learning to teach and the perceived role of self and others in this process?' and 'How do these experiences illuminate the opportunities and challenges in formalising and sustaining school-university partnerships?'

What will the study involve?
For school principals, the study will involve completing an online questionnaire via Microsoft forms. The questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Questions center around your current experience of hosting second-year student teachers on school placement, your views on the role of schools in Initial Teacher Education, the selection of cooperating teachers (treoraithe), opportunities and challenges associated with school-university partnerships etc.

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 have you been asked to take part?
You have been asked because you are a currently hosting a second-year student teacher from [HEI name removed]. The study seeks to gain an understanding of your experience as a principal of school-university partnerships and supporting student teachers learning how to teach.

Do you have to take part?
No, you are under no obligation to take part in this research. However, I hope that you will agree to take part and give up approximately 15-20 minutes of your time to complete a questionnaire as your contribution will be very valuable to the field of teacher education. It is entirely up to

you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to consent at the start of the questionnaire. Submission of the questionnaire is also considered a form of consent: do not complete the questionnaire if you do not consent as your name will not be collected, therefore it will not be possible to withdraw your questionnaire post submission. A decision to not take part will not affect your relationships with [HEI name removed] or Maynooth University.

What information will be collected?
Information from your questionnaire will be collected and analysed to form part of my Ed.D thesis in Maynooth University.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?
Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be collected. No hard copies of information will be held, electronic information will be held securely on the researchers Maynooth University OneDrive in a password encrypted folder. The OneDrive folder will be accessed only by me, Ciara Sloan, and my supervisors Dr. Rose Dolan and Dr. Maija Salokangas.

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 will happen to the information which you give?
All the information you provide will be kept on a Maynooth University OneDrive and it will not be possible to identify you. During the research, the data will also be retained on the Maynooth University server. After the research is complete and published, the data may be used for subsequent research in the same area.

What will happen to the results?
The data gathered will be used to inform the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The research will be written up and presented as an Ed.D thesis.

What are the potential benefits of this study?
The potential benefits of the study are to explore collaborative processes required to support student teachers learning to teach and therefore contribute towards recommendations on how to create a theory-practice nexus in teacher education and building effective and lasting school-university partnerships. It will contribute towards the enactment of elements of the Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education policy document. Additionally, it will highlight the role and responsibilities and the realities of work of cooperating teachers (treoraithe), schools, placement tutors and HEIs, as well as student teachers, along the continuum of teacher education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study, however you are entitled to decline to respond to questions you do not wish to answer in the questionnaire.

I will not discuss information provided by you with other principals, the HEI, student teachers, cooperating teachers (treoraithe), placement tutors or other schools.

What if there is a problem?
You may contact my supervisor Dr. Rose Dolan at rose.dolan@mu.ie if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above. You can also avail of employee assistance support via your school/ETB/Department of Education/NAPD or https://www.gov.ie/en/service/23acf5-employee-assistance-service/ if participation has caused you distress.

Any further queries?
If you need any further information, you can contact me: Ciara Sloan, ciara.sloan.2020@mumail.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete the attached questionnaire.
Thank you for taking the time to read this

Consent Form [Student teacher/Placement tutor/Cooperating teacher]

I……………………………………agree to participate in Ciara Sloan's research study titled 'An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers learning to teach at post-primary level'.

Please tick each statement below:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me verbally & in writing. I've been able to ask questions, which were answered satisfactorily.   ☐

I am participating voluntarily.   ☐

I give permission for my interviews with Ciara Sloan to be video recorded and uploaded to Maynooth University's platform.   ☐

I give permission for the focus group with Ciara Sloan to be video recorded and uploaded to Maynooth University's platform.   ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether that is before it starts or while I am participating.   ☐

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data right up it is irreversibly anonymised in February 2023.   ☐

It has been explained to me how my data will be managed and that I may access it on request. ☐

I understand the limits of confidentiality as described in the information sheet   ☐

I understand that my data, in an anonymous format, may be used in further research projects and any subsequent publications if I give permission below: ☐

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview and focus group   ☐
I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview and focus group   ☐

I agree for my data to be used by Ciara Sloan for further research projects   ☐
I do not agree for my data to be used by Ciara Sloan for further research projects   ☐

Signed…………………………………. Date……………….

Participant Name in block capitals …………………………………………...

I the undersigned have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a manner that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.

Signed…………………………………. Date……………….

Researcher Name in block capitals CIARA SLOAN

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 Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@mu.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

For your information the Data Controller for this research project is Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. Maynooth University Data Protection officer is Ann McKeon in Humanity house, room 17, who can be contacted at ann.mckeon@mu.ie. Maynooth University Data Privacy policies can be found at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/data-protection.

Two copies to be made: 1 for participant, 1 for PI
*The consent forms were through Microsoft forms on the Maynooth University platform.

Appendix F: Permission letter from the HEI and ethical approval from Maynooth University

Dear Ciara,

I am very happy to support your request to carry out research for your PhD thesis with stakeholders in ████████████

I have forwarded your request to the Registrar and he recommends that I remind you of the need to be compliant with GDPR during the course of your research. He also requests that you furnish his office with your ethical approval from MU when that has been accomplished.

I wish you every success with your really interesting PhD study. I look forward to the contribution your research will make to our knowledge and understanding of this core facet of ITE School Placement in the School of Education.

Kind Regards,

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY,
MAYNOOTH, CO. KILDARE, IRELAND

Maynooth University
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

████████ Maynooth University Research Ethics Committee

25 February 2022

Ciara Sloan
School of Education
Maynooth University

Re: Application for ethical approval for a Project entitled: An exploration into the collaboration of stakeholders within school-university partnerships in supporting student teachers' learning to teach at post-primary level.

Dear Ciara,

The above project has been evaluated under Tier 2 process, expedited review and we would like to inform you that ethical approval has been granted.

Any deviations from the project details submitted to the ethics committee will require further evaluation. This ethical approval will expire on 28/02/2023.

Kind Regards,

Appendix G: Interview questions

Interview questions (italics is the version for the interviewer that includes probes, prompts and Teaching Council roles and responsibilities)

Cooperating teachers semi-structured interviews questions

Section 1: Focus on the cooperating teacher:
- How long have you been a cooperating teacher? Are you a cooperating teacher for any other student teachers (from this HEI and/or other HEIs)?
- Can you describe how you have come to have a role as a cooperating teacher? *If told: How was this communicated to you? If it hadn't been requested by principal/management, do you think you would opt to carry out this role? Why/Why not? What information were you provided with or what communication did you receive to carry out this role? Has this changed over the years? Have you been a cooperating teacher in any other school? Did this experience differ?*
- Can you describe what the role of a cooperating teacher entails? *Where do these expectations/roles and responsibilities? Has the role changed since you began it – years ago?*
- What do you think is expected of cooperating teachers in general? *Where do these expectations come from?*

So there's some aspects that you have spoken about that correlate with the roles and responsibilities that have been outlined in the School Placement Guidelines by the Teaching Council such as...I'm going to draw on some that we haven't discussed yet and would welcome your thoughts on them: *I'm going to pop these into the chatbox for ease of reference:
- Introduce the student teacher to: the pupils, the classroom, the teacher's plan of work for that class, class rules and procedures, and the roles of other staff directly involved with the pupils in the class. *Why do you think that is important?*
- Afford the student teacher opportunities to observe their teaching (and that of their colleagues). *Does the student teacher observe your teaching, are there conversations between you and the student teacher after observations? Can you describe such conversations for me? Does the student teacher share their observations with you? Why do you think that is?*
- Inform the student teacher regarding pupils needs and attainments.
- Assign the teaching of areas of the curriculum to the student teacher while retaining the primary responsibility for the progress of the pupils.
- Discuss the student teacher's planning and resources with them as appropriate. *Thinking of the second-year student teacher, are you aware of the student teachers learning in this regard, how to plan and devise resources? How? How does the student teacher respond to such discussions?*
- Observe the student teacher's practice and provide oral or written feedback to the student teacher in an encouraging and sensitive manner. *From all that you see how do you decide what feedback the student needs?/What type of feedback would you give student teachers? What informs that feedback: for example, do you draw on your own experience, from publications, own experience as a teacher, experience as a cooperating teacher? Are you aware of what the student teacher has learnt in [HEI name removed] at this stage of their ITE programme? How are*

323

you aware? How does the student teacher respond to feedback? Do you feel your feedback is valued by the student teacher? How do you know?

o   Encourage, support and facilitate the student teacher in: critical reflection on their practice, the use of a variety of teaching methodologies and in engaging with and responding appropriately to feedback from pupils.

o   Encourage the student teacher to seek advice and support where necessary.

o   Allow student teachers to teach independently, as their competence develops (in line with HEI requirements for the particular placement), and as deemed appropriate by Treoraí and the principal.

o   Work collaboratively with the student teacher, the school placement tutor and the school principal. *Have you experience of such collaboration/Does this occur? Can you draw on examples of collaboration? How should this occur?*

o   Advise the principal of any serious concerns regarding a student teacher's practice or professional conduct. *If you had concerns, how would you address such concerns, who would you inform? Would you inform the student teacher/the HEI?*

o   Have discretionary time while student teachers teach independently to facilitate engagement with the student teachers at other times.

Bearing these points in mind, should there be more or less to the role of the cooperating teacher?

• What do you think of the name change of cooperating teacher to treoraí? *Were you aware of this change?*

• What influences how you carry out your role? *For some people it might the school placement guidelines by the Teaching Council, the SP guidelines/handbook from the HEI, it might be your own ITE experience, own schooling, own teaching experience, colleagues, other cooperating teachers etc, what has had an influence on you? You've stated that you have been a cooperating teacher for...years, have the influences or how you carry out your role changed over the years? How so?*

• How have you been supported in this role? In an ideal world, what supports would be helpful in your role?

• What has your experience as a cooperating teacher for second-year student teacher(s) been like? What do you like about your role? What are the difficulties associated with this role? *Does acting as a cooperating teacher have an effect on your own professional learning, how so? Do you think you should be involved in assessing the student teacher?*

Section 2: Focus on the student teacher:

• How do you find working with student teachers on their first school placement? How does this compare to working with other student teachers?

• How do you think student teachers view the role of a cooperating teacher? *How do you know? /Why do you think that might be the case? For second-year student teachers this is their first time having a cooperating teacher, do you find there are different or similar expectations as student teachers are in the latter years of the ITE programme e.g., 3rd, 4th and 5th years? How do you know?*

• How do you view the roles and responsibilities of student teachers? *What has informed this viewpoint? Does your viewpoint of the roles and responsibilities of student teachers align with your experience? Does it differ with the other your groups of student teachers?*

Section 3: Focus on the placement tutor:

- Have you ever been a placement tutor? *If yes, does that influence how you see the role?*
- How do you view the role of the placement tutor? *Earlier I asked you about the name change of a cooperating teacher to a treoraí, similarly the placement tutor has gone through a name change, as it was previously a supervisor: What do you think of that name change? Does the change in names/titles make a difference? How so?*
- Should there be more or less involved within the role of the placement tutor?
- How do you think placement tutors view the role of the cooperating teacher? *How do you know?*
- Can you speak through your interactions with placement tutors? *Do you meet with the placement tutor when they visit the school? If no, why? If yes, what is discussed?*

Section 4: School-university partnerships

- Do you think school-university partnerships are currently effective in supporting students learning to teach? *If you were to think about the connection between your school and the HEI, would you classify it as a partnership? Are the voices of the different stakeholders in partnerships valued equally? Can you explain why you feel that way? Drawing on your experience this year...did you feel that was a partnership? Is that usual?*
- What could make school-university partnerships better?
- If you had concerns around a student teacher/another cooperating teacher/placement tutor/the HEI: how would you address those concerns?
- Are there advantages and/or opportunities associated with school-university partnerships?
- Are there difficulties, obstacles, and/or disadvantages associated with school-university partnerships?

Concluding questions:

- What is your opinion on the best way to learn how to teach?
- Is there anything further you would like to add that hasn't been discussed?

Placement tutors semi-structured interviews questions

Section 1: Focus on the placement tutor:
- How long have you been a placement tutor for the HEI? Are you a placement tutor for any other year groups? Have you been a placement tutor for any other HEI? *Has that experience been similar or different?*
- Can you describe how you have come to have a role as a placement tutor? *Full-time placement tutor isn't voluntary and a part-time placement tutor is therefore q. for full-time placement tutor: if you had the choice of being a placement tutor or not as part of your job description, would you opt in or out (why)? If part-time, why did you decide to take on a role as a placement tutor? Has that changed? /Do you always have student teachers? Are there years you'd prefer not to be. What are the factors that influence that?*
- Can you describe what the role of a placement tutor entails? *Where do these expectations/roles and responsibilities come from? As it is your first year has it been what you had expected? How so?*
- What do you think is expected of placement tutors in general? *Where do these expectations come from? Has the role changed since you began it – years ago?*

*So there's some aspects that you have spoken about that correlate with the roles and responsibilities that have been outlined in the School Placement Guidelines by the Teaching Council such as...I'm going to draw on some that we haven't discussed yet and would welcome your thoughts on them: *I'm going to pop these into the chatbox for ease of reference:*
  - Ensure that the student teacher is appropriately supported in all matters pertaining to the placement.
  - Observe the student teacher teaching and engage them in a dialogue when giving constructive feedback. *What informs that feedback? Do you draw on your own experience/what they are learning in lectures/own experience as a teacher/experience as a placement tutor? From all that you see how do you decide what to focus on? Are you aware of what the student teacher has learnt in [HEI name removed] at this stage of their ITE programme? How are you aware?*
  - Assess the student teacher's practice in accordance with the HEI's requirements.
  - Reinforce with the student teacher key considerations regarding teaching and learning in accordance with the HEI policy.
  - Encourage the student teacher to engage fully in the life of the school.
  - Discuss with the Treoraí good practice in class planning and the use of teaching and learning resources.
  - Support the Treoraí and student teacher in engaging in reflective dialogue.
  - Collaborate with the Treoraí/Treoraithe and acknowledge their role in supporting the student teacher.
  - Discuss the student teacher's practice and experience with the Treoraí, as appropriate. *How has this occurred with your second-year student teachers' treoraithe this year?*
  - Are open to learning from the principal, Treoraí/Treoraithe and other staff within the school. *What type of learning does this involve?*
  - Engage with the principal in relation to the student teacher's practice and experience, as appropriate.

o   Acknowledge the role, work and commitment of the host school and Treoraithe in supporting student teachers on placement.
o   Are cognisant and respectful of the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school, school policies, the school timetable and any special school-based arrangements.
o   Ensure that the student teacher is supported and assessed by two or more school placement tutors, at least one of whom has relevant curricular/subject expertise. It is a requirement that all student teachers are supported and assessed by two or more Placement Tutors. From May 2022, at least 50% of all School Placement Tutors shall be registered as teachers with the Teaching Council in accordance with the Routes of Registration as outlined in the Teaching Council Registration Regulations (2016). Prior to qualification, a student teacher shall be summatively assessed at least once by a registered teacher, during their programme of initial teacher education. *Interaction with other placement tutors.*
o   Offer additional supports to student teachers experiencing difficulties while on school placement. *What additional support do you think you could give student teachers who are experiencing difficulties?*
o   Provide guidance and advice to the student teacher regarding their suitability to be a teacher.

Bearing these points in mind, should there be more or less to the role of the placement tutor?
•   What influences how you carry out your role? *For some people it might the school placement guidelines by the Teaching Council, the SP guidelines/handbook from the HEI, it might be your own ITE experience, own schooling, own teaching experience, colleagues, other placement tutors etc, what has had an influence on you? You've stated that you have been a placement tutor for...years, have the influences or how you carry out your role changed over the years? How so?*
•   How have you been supported in this role? In an ideal world, what supports would be helpful in your role?
•   What has your experience as a placement tutor for second-year student teachers been like? What do you like about your role? *Are there advantages and/or opportunities associated with the role as a placement tutor?* What are the difficulties associated with this role? *Does acting as a placement tutor have an effect on your own professional learning, how so?*

Section 2: Focus on the student teacher
•   How do you find working with student teachers on their first school placement? How does this compare to working with other student teachers?
•   How do you think student teachers view the role of a placement tutor? *How do you know? /Why do you think that might be the case? For second-year student teachers this is their first time having a placement tutor, do you find there are different or similar expectations as student teachers are in the latter years of the ITE programme e.g., 3rd, 4th and 5th years? How do you know? Inspector: name change from supervisor to placement tutor...what do you think of the change of name? Does that change across the years/differ with 3rd/4th/PME? How do you know? How have student teachers responded to your support and assessment? What kind of support do you think is important for student teachers to get from a placement tutor?*
•   How do you view the roles and responsibilities of student teachers? *What has informed this viewpoint? Does your viewpoint of the roles and responsibilities of student teachers align with your experience? Does it differ with the other your groups of student teachers?*

Section 3: Focus on cooperating teachers
- Have you ever been a cooperating teacher? *If yes, does that influence how you see the role? How so?*
- How do you view the role of the cooperating teacher? *What informs this opinion?*
- What do you think of the name change of cooperating teacher to treoraí? *Does the change in names/titles make a difference? How so?*
- Should there be more or less involved within the role of a cooperating teacher?
- How do you think cooperating teachers view the role of the placement tutor? *How do you know?*
- Can you speak through your interactions with cooperating teachers? *Do you meet with cooperating teachers when you visit the school? If no, why? If yes, what is discussed? Is it always the same, does it differ?*

Section 4: School-university partnerships:
- Do you think school-university partnerships are currently effective in supporting students learning to teach? *If you were to think about the connection between the schools you visited and the HEI, would you classify it as a partnership? Are the voices of the different stakeholders in partnerships valued equally? Can you explain why you feel that way? Drawing on your experience this year...did you feel that they were partnerships? Is that usual?*
- What could make school-university partnerships better?
- If you had concerns around a student teacher/a cooperating teacher/another placement tutor/the HEI: how would you address those concerns?
- Are there advantages and/or opportunities associated with school-university partnerships?
- Are there difficulties, obstacles, and/or disadvantages associated with school-university partnerships?

Concluding questions:
- What is your opinion on the best way to learn how to teach?
- Is there anything further you would like to add that hasn't been discussed?

Student teachers semi-structured interviews

Section 1: Focus on the student teacher:
- Can you outline why you chose to become a teacher?

- Can you describe what you think the role and responsibilities of student teachers are? *Where do these expectations/roles and responsibilities come from?*

TC: Have due regard for the ethical values and professional standards which are set out in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

- What expectations are placed on student teachers? *Where do these expectations come from? Are you in agreement or disagreement on such expectations?*

- Can you describe your experience of your first school placement? Was it as you expected it would be? *How does it feel to go between being a student to a student teacher? How did you feel while on school placement? Can you describe what you expected it to be? What influenced that expectation? How did you find planning your lessons?*

TC: 'Engage constructively and collaboratively in a broad range of professional experiences as part of the school placement process': Did you engage in other professional experiences, other than the immediate teaching of classes? How did you find that? Should it be a part of your placement experience?
TC: Participate fully in each placement to develop their teaching skills and meet the placement requirements of their HEI.

- What influences how you teach? *For some people it may be their own school experience, it may be peers/family members, lectures, teachers in the placement school/cooperating teachers, a mixture: It may not be any of these.*

TC: Engage with other student teachers in the context of peer learning, insofar as practicable: Do you work with other student teachers to enhance your practice? Why/Why not?

- How do you find applying what you have learned in college to school placement? *A focus of pedagogy lectures in second-year is on differentiating lessons and catering for inclusion, how have you found applying learning from your lectures to your practice on school placement?*

TC: Recognise their stage in the learning-to-teach process and how this should inform their interactions with the school community: Can you describe the stage that you are at in this process and does that an impact/influence on how you engage with the school?
TC: Always be conscious that pupil needs are paramount and that a duty of care pertains.
TC: Prepare and deliver lessons to a standard commensurate with their stage of development and in line with HEI requirements and the policies of the host school (in particular homework, assessment and other relevant teaching and learning policies): How

did you find planning your lessons? Did you consult with the school's policies to inform your teaching?

*TC: Be familiar with the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies.

- How has your ITE programme supported you in your teaching/school placement?

- How has the school supported you in your teaching/school placement?

- In an ideal world, what supports would be helpful to you as a student teacher?

- What do you like about being a student teacher? What challenges or difficulties are associated with being a student teacher?

Section 2: Focus on the placement tutor
- How do you see the role of the placement tutor? *What has informed this viewpoint? Should there be more or less involved in the role of the placement tutor?*

- Can you speak through your interactions with your placement tutor? *How do you feel about feedback given by the placement tutor? Would you have felt the same way if it was more positive/negative? Did/Would you express this? Why/Why not? Do you speak through your own thoughts and experience in relation to your progress with your placement tutor? Why/Why not?*

*TC: Engage with constructive feedback from school placement tutors, Treoraithe and principals.

- How do you think the placement tutor views your role as a student teacher? *How do you know? /Why do you think that might be the case?*

Section 3: Focus on the cooperating teacher/treoraí
- How do you see the role of the cooperating teacher/treoraí? *What has informed this viewpoint? Should there be more or less involved in the role of the cooperating teacher? Do you think the cooperating teacher should have a role in your assessment? Why/Why not? Does your cooperating teacher observe your classes/provide you with feedback? If yes: How do you feel about feedback given by the cooperating teacher? Do you express this? Why/Why not? Do you speak through your own thoughts and experience in relation to your progress with your cooperating teacher? Why/Why not? If cooperating teacher does not observe: Would you like your cooperating teacher to observe/give feedback?*

*TC: In collaboration with the Treoraí and other teachers in the school as appropriate, seek and avail of opportunities to observe and work alongside other teachers.

*TC: Take a proactive approach to their own learning and seek and avail of support as a collaborative practitioner: if observations were not a requirement of the HEI, do you think

you would have asked/availed of this? Why/Why not? Were in involved in any other collaboration/support with teachers beyond this? How did that come about?

- Can you speak through your interactions with your cooperating teacher/treoraí?

TC: Meet with the principal and Treoraí/Treoraithe to plan the placement having regard to the breadth of activities set out: Did you meet with the Treoraí prior to the placement; can you describe what this involved? Did you also meet with the principal?

TC: Engage with constructive feedback from school placement tutors, Treoraithe and principals.

- How do you think the cooperating teacher/treoraí views your role as a student teacher? *How do you know? /Why do you think that might be the case?*

TC: Support the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school.

Section 4: Focus on school-university partnerships
- Can you speak through the interactions between your cooperating teacher/treoraí and your placement tutor? *Did the cooperating teacher and placement tutor meet/speak about your progress? In your opinion, should they? Why/Why not? If your placement tutor and cooperating teacher gave you different and/or opposing feedback, what would be your reaction to differing advice? Were you included on your progress? Do you have enough say/want more say? What do you feel student teachers contribute to partnerships?*

TC: Recognise that they have much to contribute to the school community.

- In your opinion, are the interactions between the college and schools effective in supporting you learning how to teach? What could make partnerships better?

- If you had concerns about your lectures in preparation for teaching/the school you were on placement with/your placement tutor/your cooperating teacher/students/interactions between any of the above, how would you deal with those concerns?

TC: Engage with all in the school community in a respectful and courteous manner.

TC: Respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information gained while on placement.

Concluding questions:
- What is your opinion on the best way to learn how to teach?

TC: Work towards becoming critically reflective practitioners: What have you learnt from your first school placement experience that will support you as you progress through the years to become a qualified teacher? Is there anything that you would do differently

now/continue to do? /What advice would you give to other student teachers starting their first school placement?

- Is there anything further you would like to add that hasn't been discussed?

Appendix H: Focus group questions

(Version for the interviewer that includes probes in italics).

Cooperating teachers/Treoraithe focus group questions
Thank you for taking part in the semi-structured interviews in the last academic year. The following topics are based on the findings from a combination of interviews.

1. Reading Documentation:
In some instances, the information on how to carry out the role of a cooperating teacher/treoraí (from the Teaching Council and/or the HEI) seems as if it is not user or time friendly. Are there similar barriers in accessing documentation such as specifications or syllabi or looking at our school's documentation, DEIS/SSE planning documentation etc. *Would you read those documents/policies? Are some policies/documents prioritised over others? What makes one important, and the other not as important?*

2a. Having Professional Conversations with other Cooperating Teachers/Treoraithe
In some cases, you spoke with other cooperating teachers/treoraithe about how to enact the role and what supports to provide the student teacher. Beyond logistical arrangements (e.g., timetable, use of facilities) do conversations occur on what that support in relation to teaching and learning looks like? *For those who don't speak to another cooperating teacher: if you are the only cooperating teacher for this student, is it feasible to have conversations with other colleagues who act as cooperating teachers in other subject areas? Does it matter if you have different subjects in terms of how you support the teaching and learning of a student teacher?*

2b. Having Professional Conversations with Student Teachers
In some interviews reference was made to sometimes helping student teachers with their lesson plans, and whether you do or do not look at lesson plans, how comfortable are you with speaking with student teachers about their lesson plans? *There was a consensus across interviews to provide student teachers with feedback, in conversations with student teachers about their progress, either in their lesson plan or in their teaching and use of methodologies etc, what are those conversations like? Do they come easy; do they flow? Why/Why not? Do you have similar type conversations around methodologies and planning with other cooperating teachers/colleagues?*

In some instances, some of the 'easier' topics to teach were given to student teachers, one such reason was to counteract the cooperating teacher/treoraí potentially reteaching topics, in other instances it was not desirable to give exam classes to student teachers, can such issues be counteracted or reduced through supports from the cooperating teacher/treoraí? *Could the cooperating teacher/treoraí speak with the student teacher about the teaching, rather than having to reteach topics?*

In some interviews there was a level of disappointment when student teachers did not share methodologies they were using or did not initiate conversations after observation classes, whether this happened for you or not, why do you think some student teachers do not initiate such conversations? *Should the onus lie with the student teacher? Having student teachers on school placement was referred to as a learning experience for cooperating teachers/treoraí (e.g., learning new methodologies), are there conversations with the student teacher and/or*

placement tutors on gains for the cooperating teacher/treoraí in the school placement process? If yes, how do you articulate that? If no, is there a reason why?

There were some references to 'popping in and out' of classes as a way of checking how student teachers were getting on and having casual check-in's to avoid appearing critical, the term potential boundary issues was referenced, an example: a student teacher may not respond well to feedback or a cooperating teacher/treoraí is unsure if their advice is suitable, how can such boundary issues be overcome, or can they be overcome/reduced?

2c. Having Professional Conversations with Placement Tutors

In some interviews, providing generic feedback to the placement tutor was evident, what inhibits professional conversations becoming more specific between a cooperating teacher/treoraí and a placement tutor? *From the interviews, time not being readily available can inhibit conversations with placement tutors, in the short time frame, what information about the student teacher do you prioritise? Why? The conversations you do have, what are they like, are they easy, do they flow? If you had more time to interact with the placement tutor, how would you use that additional time?*

When speaking with a student teacher about their teaching and when speaking with a placement tutor about the student teacher's teaching, are there differences or similarities in how you structure those conversations? *If yes, why do you think that is?*

3. Structuring sustainable school-university partnerships

In some interviews the desirability of training/professional development for cooperating teachers was mentioned (as there is professional development for support teachers in the Droichead process), what support would be required for cooperating teachers/treoraithe under such a structure?

What would a collaborative partnership look like from your viewpoint:
To note: The Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement (2021:3) states that collaboration:
'...occurs when those involved in school placement work together as partners to achieve the shared goal of developing the knowledge, skills and competencies which student teachers need while ensuring the best outcomes for pupils during the process. This is underpinned by the sharing of knowledge and learning, the building of consensus and the improvement of skills critical to the success of school placement'.

Placement tutors focus group questions
Thank you for taking part in the semi-structured interviews in the last academic year. The following topics are based on some findings from a combination of interviews.

1. Visiting schools as a placement tutor
In many instances, the placement tutor is referred to as an inspector when visiting schools: there was reference to the need for a culture change to recognise the supportive role the placement tutor plays alongside the assessment role, can the culture of being referred to as an inspector be changed? If so, how? If not, why not? *Does it matter if you are called an inspector instead of a placement tutor? Does it impact relationships?*

School placement is dependent on the goodwill of schools and cooperating teachers/treoraithe, does this affect your interactions with schools and cooperating teachers? *Is there a level of worry of a potential consequence for you and/or the ITE programme if things do not go smoothly on a school placement visit?*

2a. Interactions and having professional conversations with other placement tutors
Do you have conversations with other placement tutors about your role? If yes, what do those conversations entail? *What are those conversations like, do they come easy, do they flow? Would you speak to other placement tutors beyond those that you are paired up with in the assessment of the student teacher?* If no, why do you think that is and is it something you would like to happen? *In some interviews there was a desire to have more professional dialogues with colleagues, what would be helpful in those conversations?*

2b. Interactions and professional conversations with student teachers
In some interviews, including placement tutor interviews and student teacher interviews, some student teachers altered their planning and/or teaching to suit their placement tutor, in your opinion why is the practice of tailoring planning and teaching prevalent? *In interviews placement tutors emphasised the importance of consistency and having the same professional standards, in your opinion is there consistency? How do you ensure consistency?*

In many instances, placement tutors share their past experiences as a teacher with schools and student teachers, in your opinion does having experience as a classroom teacher impact or make a difference to the relationship between placement tutors and student teachers and schools?

During school placement, placement tutors offered support to student teachers but the response to that support was mixed. (Also in some interviews, cooperating teachers were disappointed when student teachers did not avail of their support or advice). In your opinion why do you think student teachers may not avail of support offered? *Who should initiate check ins between the placement tutor and student teacher? Should the onus lie with the student teacher?* When student teachers do avail of this support, what are those conversations like? *Are they easy, do they flow?*

2c. Interactions and having professional conversations with cooperating teachers/treoraithe

In some interviews, cooperating teachers/treoraithe stated they provided generic feedback to the placement tutor, and this was noted in some placement tutor interviews: what inhibits professional conversations becoming more specific between a cooperating teacher/treoraí and a placement tutor? *From the interviews, time not being readily available can inhibit conversations between placement tutors and cooperating teachers, in the short time frame, what information about the student teacher should be prioritised? Why? The conversations you do have, what are they like, are they easy, do they flow?*

If you had more time to interact with the cooperating teacher, how would you use that additional time? *What type of feedback or conversations with cooperating teachers would support you in your role?*

When speaking with a student teacher about their teaching and when speaking with a cooperating teacher about the student teacher's teaching, are there differences or similarities in how you structure those conversations? *If yes, why do you think that is? Some references were made about cooperating teachers not being forthcoming with feedback or if feedback is critical some cooperating teachers do not want the student teacher to hear it, how do you deal with such scenarios?*

3. Structuring sustainable school-university partnerships

In some interviews the importance of training/professional development for cooperating teachers was mentioned (as there is professional development for support teachers in the Droichead process), what support would be required for cooperating teachers/treoraithe under such a structure that would help with working with placement tutors and student teachers? *In your opinion how accessible are the HEI's expectations, such as lesson planning and pedagogies to cooperating teachers/schools?*

What would a collaborative partnership look like from your viewpoint:
To note: The Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement (2021:3) states that collaboration:
'...occurs when those involved in school placement work together as partners to achieve the shared goal of developing the knowledge, skills and competencies which student teachers need while ensuring the best outcomes for pupils during the process. This is underpinned by the sharing of knowledge and learning, the building of consensus and the improvement of skills critical to the success of school placement'.

When you were preparing for today, were there things you thought about that you really wanted to say but haven't because the conversation didn't go that way?

Student teachers focus group questions

Thank you for taking part in the semi-structured interviews in the last academic year. The following questions are based on the analysis of a combination of interviews.

1.Interactions and professional conversations with cooperating teachers/treoraithe:
Having student teachers on school placement was referred to as a learning experience for cooperating teachers/treoraithe (e.g., learning new methodologies), did you feel like you contributed to the learning/professional development of your cooperating teacher/treoraí? *How so? How were you aware of this? If not, do you feel that student teachers can contribute to the learning experience of cooperating teachers/treoraithe? If yes, how, if no, why not?*

There was reference to being flexible to the needs of schools and the cooperating teachers/treoraí as they facilitated your school placement (based on goodwill), did this affect how you interacted with your cooperating teacher/treoraí? *Is there a level of worry of a potential consequence for you and/or the ITE programme if things do not go smoothly on school placement? In some interviews there was mention of gaining respect or authority through how you presented yourself in relation to pupils, what about how you presented yourself to cooperating teachers, did you think through your interactions with cooperating teachers similar to how you thought through your interactions with pupils? Similar question in relation to placement tutors, did you think through your interactions with the placement tutor?*

Did you approach a cooperating teacher/treoraí to seek their advice on your lesson planning and/or methodologies? *If yes, what did that conversation look like? Did it flow, was it easy? How should such conversations be initiated or who should initiate them? One student teacher mentioned that a cooperating teacher/treoraí helped for the 'inspection', if this is said by the student teacher: did this happen for classes that were not being assessed?*

2. Interactions and having professional conversations with placement tutors
When you spoke to your placement tutor in a pre-school placement meeting, did you seek their advice on your lesson planning and/or methodologies? *If yes, what did that conversation look like? Did it flow, was it easy? Did you contact the placement tutor during school placement to seek advice? Are you comfortable seeking advice from your placement tutor?*

When you speak with your cooperating teacher/treoraí and when you speak to your placement tutor about your teaching, are there similarities or differences in how you approach or engage in those conversations?

There was a reference to the desire for more interactions with the placement tutors, if there was more time with the placement tutor, how would you use that additional time?

4. Interactions and having professional conversations with other student teachers
In some cases, you collaborated and/or sought advice from other student teachers from [HEI name removed] while on school placement in relation to lesson planning and/or methodologies, were the conversations similar or dissimilar to conversations you had around lesson planning and/or methodologies with your placement tutor and your cooperating teacher/treoraí? *If yes, why do you think that is? Do the conversations flow, are they easy, why/why not?*

There were some references to student teachers from other ITE programmes being on school placement the same time as you, did you discuss lesson planning and/or methodologies with student teachers from other universities? *Why/Why not?*

5. Structuring sustainable school-university partnerships

When your cooperating teacher/treoraí and placement tutor spoke about your progress you were not involved in that conversation, should you be involved in some of that conversation? How do you think you would feel in such a scenario? *Would you be comfortable? What would help to become comfortable in conversations with your placement tutor and/or cooperating teacher/treoraí?*

What would a collaborative partnership look like from your viewpoint:
To note: The Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement (2021:3) states that collaboration:
'...occurs when those involved in school placement work together as partners to achieve the shared goal of developing the knowledge, skills and competencies which student teachers need while ensuring the best outcomes for pupils during the process. This is underpinned by the sharing of knowledge and learning, the building of consensus and the improvement of skills critical to the success of school placement'.

When you were preparing for today, were there things you thought about that you really wanted to say but haven't because the conversation didn't go that way?

Appendix I: Questionnaires

At the start of both questionnaires, participants were asked to select yes if they consented to the study and only to continue filling out the questionnaires/submit the questionnaire if they consented to this study.

Pedagogy lecturer questionnaire

Section 1: Overview
1.Did you lecture second-year student teachers from the HEI in the academic year 2021/2022?
Yes
No

2.Do you also have the role as a placement tutor in the HEI?
Yes
No
Sometimes

3.If yes/sometimes, were you a placement tutor for a second-year student teacher(s) this academic year?
Yes
No

4.If you answered yes to question 2: From your experience, are student teachers on their first school placement generally able to apply what they have learnt in their pedagogy lectures into practice on school placement? Please elaborate on your answer.

Section 2: The placement tutor
5.Are full-time placement tutors aware of what student teachers learn in pedagogy lectures? (Space to elaborate under 'other').
Yes
No
Unsure
Some are aware, while others are not
Other

6.If you answered yes or some are aware, how are full-time placement tutors made aware of this?

7.Should full-time placement tutors be made aware of what is learnt in pedagogy lectures? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

8.Are part-time placement tutors aware of what student teachers learn in pedagogy lectures? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes

No
Unsure
Some are aware, while others are not
Other

9.If you answered yes or some are aware, how are part-time placement tutors made aware of this?

10.Should part-time placement tutors be made aware of what is learnt in pedagogy lectures? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

Section 3: Cooperating teachers/treoraithe
*Treoraithe replaces the term cooperating teachers (treoraí is the singular term)

11.Are cooperating teachers/treoraithe aware of what student teachers learn in pedagogy lectures? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Unsure
Some are aware, while others are not
Other

12.If you answered yes, how are cooperating teachers/treoraithe made aware of this?

13.Should cooperating teachers/treoraithe be made aware of what is learnt in pedagogy lectures? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

14.If you think placement tutors and/or cooperating teachers/treoraithe should be informed about the content of pedagogy lectures, whose responsibility is it to communicate this? (You can select a few options if deemed necessary, or add further individuals/groupings under 'other')
A School Placement Director
School Placement Office
Head of the School of Education
Pedagogy lecturers
Student teachers
Other

Section 4: School-university partnerships
Partnership refers to the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education. These processes, structures and

arrangements also include School/HEI partnerships which focus on improving learning and teaching (Teaching Council, 2020:4).

15.Do you think partnerships between schools and universities are important? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

16.Do you think school-university partnerships are currently effective in supporting students learning to teach? Please elaborate under 'other'.
Yes
No
Sometimes
Unsure
Other

17.Apart from hosting student teachers on school placement, do you think schools have a role to play in ITE provision? Please elaborate under 'other'.
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

18.In your opinion, what are the advantages and/or opportunities of school-university partnerships?

19.In your opinion, what are the challenges and/or difficulties associated with school-university partnerships?

20.In your opinion, what could enhance school-university partnerships?

21.If you had advice for schools re partnership with ITE programmes, what would it be?

22.Please feel free to add any other comment that you think is important

Principal questionnaire

Section 1: School placement overview

1. Did you host a second-year student teacher from the HEI in the academic year 2022?
Yes
No

2.Who organises school placement in your school?
I do (the principal)
A deputy principal
A school placement coordinator
Other

Section 2: Expectations and roles of the HEI
This includes general communication re school placement from the HEI, expectations and roles of student teachers and placement tutors from the HEI.

3.What communication/interactions do you have with the HEI re school placement?

4.Is this communication sufficient? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Other

5.What are your expectations of student teachers from the HEI on their first school placement?

6.Do you communicate your expectations of student teachers to the HEI? (Space to elaborate under 'other').
Yes
No
Sometimes
Other

7.Do you communicate these expectations to student teachers? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Sometimes
Other

8.Do you discuss student teacher progress with student teachers? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Sometimes
Other

9.Do you meet with placement tutors from the HEI when they visit your school? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Sometimes
Other

10.If always/sometimes, outline your interactions with placement tutors from the HEI?

11.If you do not have interactions with placement tutors from the HEI, why might this be?

Section 3: Expectations and roles of the cooperating teacher/treoraí
*Treoraí replaces the term cooperating teacher (Plural treoraithe)

12.How are cooperating teachers/treoraithe assigned to student teachers in your school?

13.What are your expectations of the role of the cooperating teacher/treoraí? (Tick all that apply. There is space to add further expectations under 'other')

- Introduce the student teacher to: the pupils, the classroom, the teacher's plan of work for that class, class rules and procedures, and the roles of other staff directly involved with the pupils in the class.
- Afford the student teacher opportunities to observe their teaching (and that of their colleagues).
- Inform the student teacher regarding pupils needs and attainments.
- Assign the teaching of areas of the curriculum to the student teacher while retaining the primary responsibility for the progress of the pupils.
- Discuss the student teacher's planning and resources with them as appropriate.
- Observe the student teacher's practice and provide oral or written feedback to the student teacher in an encouraging and sensitive manner.
- Encourage, support and facilitate the student teacher in: critical reflection on their practice, the use of a variety of teaching methodologies and in engaging with and responding appropriately to feedback from pupils.
- Encourage the student teacher to seek advice and support where necessary.
- Allow student teachers to teach independently, as their competence develops (in line with HEI requirements for the particular placement), and as deemed appropriate by Treoraí and the principal.
- Work collaboratively with the student teacher, the school placement tutor and the school principal.
- Advise the principal of any serious concerns regarding a student teacher's practice or professional conduct.
- Have discretionary time while student teachers teach independently to facilitate engagement with the student teachers at other times.
- Other

14.What informs your expectations of cooperating teachers/treoraithe?

15.Do you inform cooperating teachers/treoraithe of your expectations? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Sometimes
Other

16.Do you discuss student teacher progress with cooperating teachers/treoraithe? (Space to elaborate under 'other').
Yes
No
Sometimes
Other

Section 4: School placement policies
17.Does your school have a school placement policy?
Yes
No
Unsure

18.If yes, what informs your policy?

19.If yes to question 17, who writes this policy?

20.Are you aware of the Guidelines on School Placement (2013/revised edition 2021) by the Teaching Council?
Yes
No
I am aware of the 2013 version, but not the updated version
I am aware of the revised edition, but not the 2013 version

21.If yes, have you read the Guidelines on School Placement (2013/revised edition 2021) by the Teaching Council?
Yes
No
Some of it, but not all

22.If yes to question 20, do you consult the Guidelines on School Placement (either the 2013 version or the revised edition 2021) by the Teaching Council?
Yes
No

23.Are you aware of the Guidance note for School Placement 2021/2022 by the Teaching Council?
Yes
No

24. Are you aware of the HEI's Guidelines on School Placement?
Yes
No

25. Do you share the HEI's guidelines on School Placement with cooperating teachers/treoraithe? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
If they have been a cooperating teacher/treoraí before I send it on the first occasion but not every year

26. Do you share the Guidelines on School Placement and Guidance note by the Teaching Council with cooperating teachers/treoraithe in your school?

I share the Guidelines on School Placement and the Guidance note on School Placement
I share the Guidelines on School Placement but not the Guidance note for School Placement
I do not share the Guidelines on School Placement but I do share the Guidance note for School Placement
I do not share the Guidelines on School Placement or the Guidance note for School Placement

Section 5: School-university partnerships
Partnership refers to the processes, structures and arrangements that enable the partners to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education. These processes, structures and arrangements also include School/HEI partnerships which focus on improving learning and teaching (Teaching Council, 2020:4)

27. Do you think partnerships between schools and universities are important? (Space to elaborate under 'other')
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

28. Do you think school-university partnerships are currently effective in supporting students learning to teach? Please elaborate under 'other'.
Yes
No
Sometimes
Unsure
Other

29. Do you think schools have a role to play in ITE provision? Please elaborate under 'other'.
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

30. In your opinion, what are the advantages and/or opportunities in hosting student teachers?

31.In your opinion, what are the challenges associated with hosting student teachers?

32.In your opinion, what are the advantages and/or opportunities of school-university partnerships?

33.In your opinion, what are the challenges associated with school-university partnerships?

34.In your opinion, what could enhance school-university partnerships?

35.Do you think school-university partnerships should have a role beyond school placement? Please elaborate under 'other'.
Yes
No
Unsure
Other

36.If you had advice for ITE programmes re partnership with schools, what would it be?

37.Please feel free to add any other comment that you think is important

Appendix J: Reflection on the roles I have occupied in school-university partnerships and challenges to my assumptions

Role occupied	How I carried out my role and why
Cooperating teacher *Was asked to carry out the role by the principal.	Provided timetable to student teachers: letter from the HEI to do so and advised by my principal. Student teachers observed some of my lessons (no feedback after): requirement from the HEI. Student teacher took notes during the observed lessons. Student teachers taught some of my classes (I did not observe the teaching): it didn't really occur to me, wanted to give the student teacher autonomy to take classes. I don't remember it being a requirement from the HEI or cooperating teachers observing me as a student teacher. Informal check in with how the student teacher was getting on. I checked if they needed any help and how the pupils were: wanted the student teachers to feel supported. Speak with the placement tutor when they visit the school (usually short in duration). Did not always meet a placement tutor that visited but another teacher would speak to the placement tutor if I was in class. Filled out a report on the school placement experience and student teacher when placement had concluded and sent back to the HEI (forms provided by the HEI).
Assumptions	**How can these assumptions be disrupted?**
I wasn't aware of the Teaching Council *Guidelines on School Placement:* cooperating teachers aren't aware of these guidelines; this should be given to cooperating teachers.	Other cooperating teachers may be aware of the *Guidelines on School Placement.* The *Guidelines on School Placement* are readily available on the Teaching Council's website.
Student teachers would feel uncomfortable if I	Conversations with the student teacher would ascertain this, rather than presuming how someone else would feel.

observed them teaching my classes.	If you don't observe, how can you provide student teachers with support in regard to their teaching? Other cooperating teachers may observe student teachers' classes and could set criteria to help a student teacher feel comfortable.
Student teachers fill out a template after observing a cooperating teacher's class, but I usually wouldn't have a detailed conversation about the class: perhaps a short informal conversation.	Student teachers and cooperating teachers may have conversations post observation of a cooperating teacher's classes.

Appendix K: Data analysis methods

Sample of step 1 of reflexive thematic analysis, the familiarisation with the data mapped against the research questions

PT 1: Full-time placement tutor
Experience:
Intensive, supportive role (due to the stage of student teachers)
Role: it is a requirement but had opted prior and looking forward to the part of the role
Support and support network emphasised
Different skillset required
Enjoyable experience
Reflected: need for more support for assessment process
Experience was centered around the assessment role
Challenging: logistics and assessment and preparation for assessment
Supports in place but unable to attend due to same workplace commitments (lectures): not present for conversations
Support from colleagues
Support from experienced practitioner: microteaching, onsite shadowing
Would like an early check in call: had support call from School Placement Director, would like a group call check-in. Would like a colleague to shadow her
Constructive feedback
Student teachers value her having been in the classroom
Show empathy, supportive approach, checking-in, mental health and wellbeing, constructive, purposeful feedback
Expectations: past experience as a student teacher, a teacher and a placement tutor: Empathise on all levels
Wellbeing emphasised, alongside learning and teaching
Spoke with management for support for student teacher
More support mechanisms to help support student teachers (Mental health). *Partnerships go beyond teaching
Other student teacher to support another student teacher (that struggled)
School feels ownership, views placement tutor as the 'devil'
Respect for all school members
Communication needs to be open, lack of communication can cause stress
Challenging to look at standards for second-year student teachers: more support and input required
Variation in time to meet with cooperating teachers
Visitor to the school
Be mindful of role as you enter a school
Colleagues supportive, others no communication: has implications for the student teacher
Focus on the student teacher is different between placement tutor and cooperating teacher (Cooperating teacher: end product of a class)

Perceived role of self:
Show integrity, fairness, professionalism, emphatic
School ownership of staff and then student teacher: protective of the student teacher

Specialist to the subject area and engagement in the school
Outlined in documentation and informally
Past student of the HEI
Should promote hidden curriculum
Teaching Council guidelines as good starting point but own guidelines to be explored
Influences: Own professional standards, and from Teaching Council and the HEI, previous practice, what placement tutor aspires to, colleagues professional standards and conversations and standards set by management/line managers
Opportunity to see different school settings and practices
Inspire
Variety
Progressing methodologies and promoting the subject
Feedback needs to be direct, clear, succinct
Name changes not sufficient: culture change along with name changes so also needs physical change (increase in workload)
Cooperating teacher has an effect on student teachers e.g., good or bad experience based on cooperating teacher
Positive interactions with cooperating teachers. Discussion: professionalism, organisation, onsite visits needed for integrity of the subject.

Perceived role of others:
Student teacher of placement tutor: viewed as assessment, 'inspector', overlook support, assessment sheet: what are the marks on that, rather than feedback. Can reflect on it
Placement tutor of student teacher: ownership of own learning, responsibility (substitution classes: positive)
Placement tutor of cooperating teacher: similar to placement tutor without assessment but are a point of assessment: feedback to placement tutor, supportive: teaching and learning and wellbeing. Cooperating teacher has more holistic viewpoint, placement tutor has snapshot or overview. Should be more involved but 'fear' of variety of cooperating teacher assessment: CPD required for integrity
Cooperating teacher of placement tutor: the inspector, assess as opposed to supportive role
Referred to as the 'inspector' on several occasions.
Others (in schools) don't see the role of the placement tutor as placement tutors do: assessment over supportive.

Partnerships: Scope for more effective links, parts segregated, more cohesion needed
Value placed on cooperating teacher and management but more links needed for student teacher experience
Greater communication. More input given to schools.

Opportunities for school-university partnerships:
Helps own professionalism and standards
CPD
Use cooperating teacher more: involved in the assessment
School management: what they look for in employees apart from teaching and learning.

Challenges for school-university partnerships:
Poor communication can cause stress
Taking substitution classes as a reason for positive feedback on student teacher, rather than student teacher progress
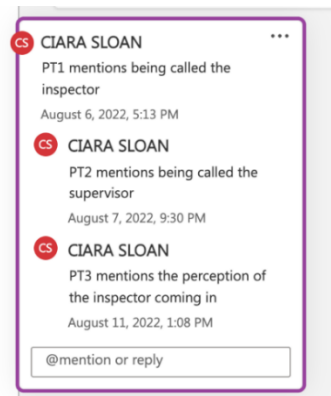
Demands on schools such as staff absenteeism, cooperating teachers going to class
Continuity: varies across schools. HEI is one body: easier, many schools so more difficult.

An example of mapping the data against the literature

Extract from literature review on placement tutors:

tutors were already undertaking this role, suggesting that practice proceeded policy. Hall et al. (2018:146), however, surmise that there is still a disconnect between policy aspiration and practice as many teachers revert to terms such as 'inspector', 'examiner' or 'college tutor' when speaking about the placement tutor.

The change of name from a supervisor to a placement tutor is not universal: the term supervisor is common across many countries. Despite the different terms used in varying contexts, there are similarities between the role of a placement tutor and the role of a supervisor. Even with similarities, it is important to negotiate the meaning of terms (Lee, 2011). A study by Lee (2011),

Sample of Boolean indicators used in MAXqda for cross-comparisons between transcripts

Appendix L: Codes that led to theme development

Codes with an * are inductive.

Code labels for theme one: The impact of communication on practice

- Sub-theme one: Communication of roles (Deductive).
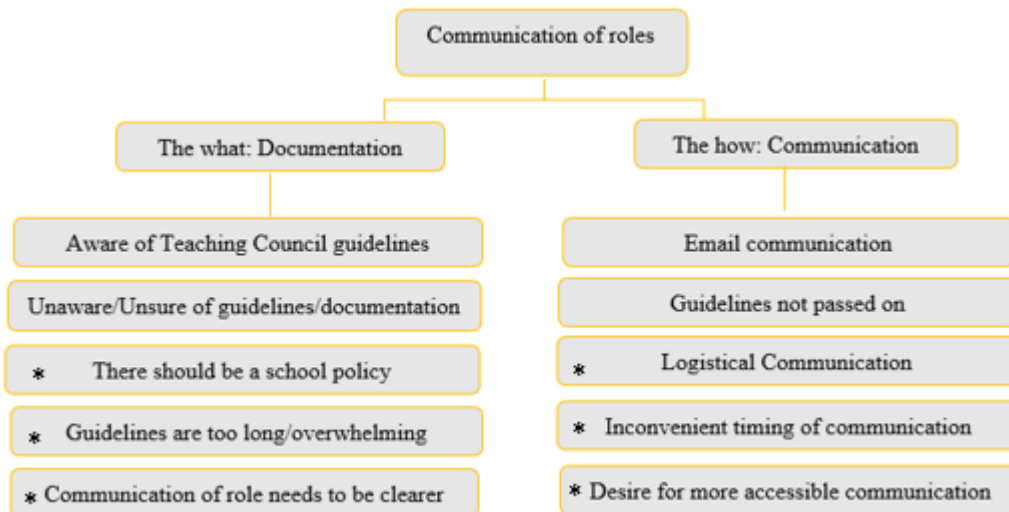
- Sub-theme two: opinions and clarity on prescribed roles were labelled as role perception of self (inductive).
- Sub-theme three: communication of terminology and guideline changes also shared some of the same labels as communication of roles (deductive) but were separated in the findings as some of the related data were coded as other (inductive).
- Sub-theme four: Professional conversations (Deductive and inductive).
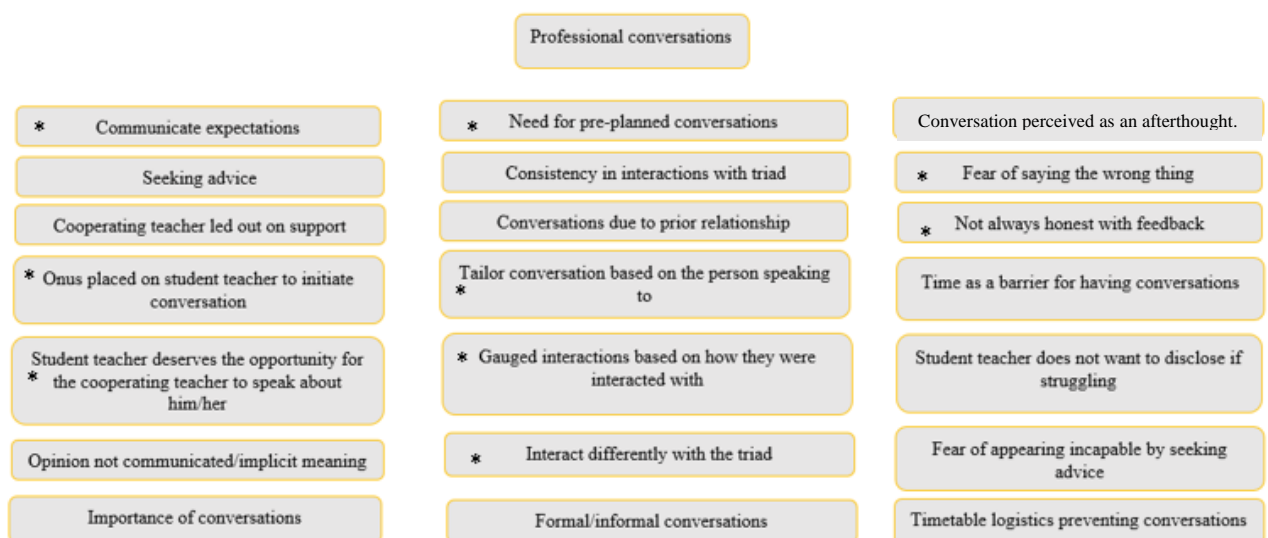
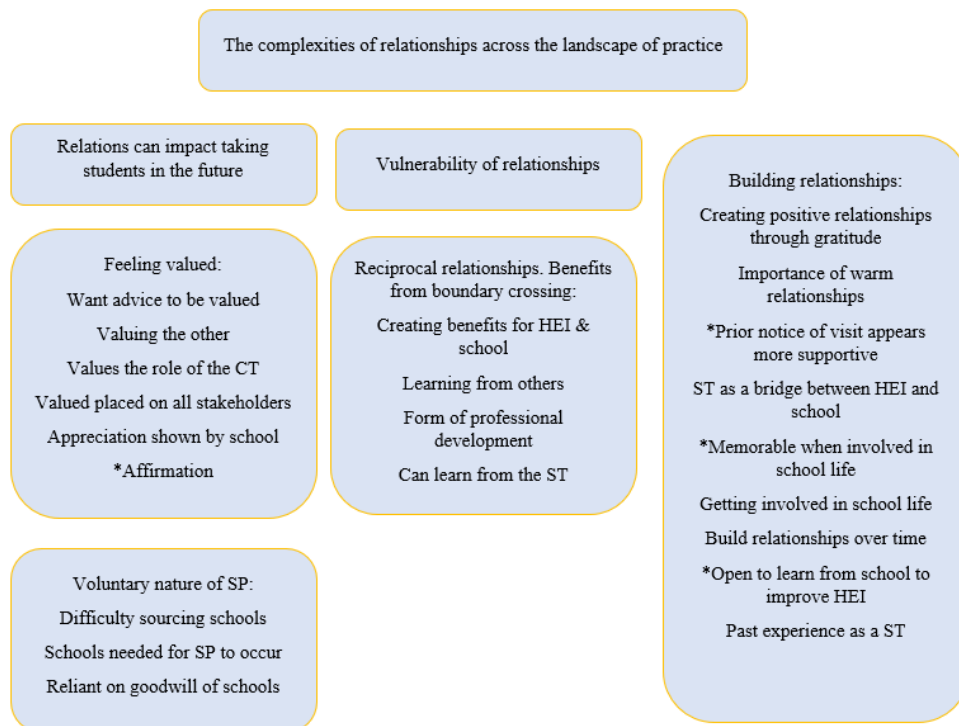**Code labels for theme two: 'The complexities of relationships across the landscape of practice' (mostly deductive, with some inductive).**

Sub-theme one 'contributing to relationships: valuing the role of self and others' was inductive, sub-themes two 'the voluntary nature of partnerships: the reliance on goodwill', three 'the impact of assessment on relationships', and four 'building relationships across the landscape of practice' were deductive.

The complexities of relationships across the landscape of practice

Relations can impact taking students in the future

Vulnerability of relationships

Building relationships:
Creating positive relationships through gratitude
Importance of warm relationships
*Prior notice of visit appears more supportive
ST as a bridge between HEI and school
*Memorable when involved in school life
Getting involved in school life
Build relationships over time
*Open to learn from school to improve HEI
Past experience as a ST

Feeling valued:
Want advice to be valued
Valuing the other
Values the role of the CT
Valued placed on all stakeholders
Appreciation shown by school
*Affirmation

Reciprocal relationships. Benefits from boundary crossing:
Creating benefits for HEI & school
Learning from others
Form of professional development
Can learn from the ST

Voluntary nature of SP:
Difficulty sourcing schools
Schools needed for SP to occur
Reliant on goodwill of schools

Code labels for theme three: 'Forming and supporting partnerships across the landscape of practice'.