A CONSTRUCTIVIST EXPLORATION OF THE TEACHER'S ROLE:

UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY PRACTICE NAVIGATION BETWEEN:
PEDAGOGY, PROFESSIONALISM & VOCATIONALISM

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Abstract

This constructivist grounded theory study, explores the role of the second level teacher in contemporary Ireland. It investigates how the officially espoused role of the teacher translates into action in the negotiated environments of practice.
The study yielded three significant constructs that penetrate the *reality* of a teaching life. The three constructs emerged organically from an analysis of research-participant reflections regarding their practice as teachers. These three interwoven constructs provide the scaffolding for the grounded theory findings:

   i.   pedagogy under pressure,
   ii.   teachers navigating a pathway between old and new professionalism
   iii. vocationalism and *pockets* of wonderful things

While each of the three constructs has its own discourse and associated web of meaning, there is also evidence of an over arching climate that weaves its influence across the playing out of each. This climate is identified as one of *intensification*. The intensification of teaching and learning significantly impacts on the teacher's role. The first of the three constructs; *pedagogy under pressure* emerges as a particularly problematic one. The implicitly instrumentalist vision driving the practice of education (emergent in the first construct) compromises not only progressive pedagogy, but also compromises the enactment of new professionalism as illuminated in the second construct. The intensification of education can also endanger the vocational impetus for teachers and render into '*pockets*' the '*wonderful things*' that sustain and nurture the teacher's ontological identity as profiled in the final construct.

The qualitative findings suggest that the teacher's role is therefore an increasingly complex one that navigates within and across three interwoven domains of what it means to be a teacher. Within this navigation, there is significant evidence of policy practice dissonance, and localised negotiations of policy rhetoric, driven by the imperative of terminal assessment. The study concludes that this climate of intensification militates against the realization of the more nurturing aims of education espoused in the Government White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (1995).

The study provides educational policy makers, teacher educators and teachers with an insightful road map with which to interrogate many assumptions regarding second level teaching. The study interrogates policy, practice and theoretical perspectives. It raises many challenging questions regarding the teacher's role and the current instrumentalist vision driving the practice of second level education in Ireland. These questions, findings and associated recommendations now deserve prompt study from teachers, teacher educators, policy makers and other educational stakeholers.

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

0.1.   Background to the research study

It was one of those kind Spring days in the Slieve Felim hills in Tipperary. I walked briskly, aware of the cloud topped dome of Mathar Clé (mother - mountain) beside Slieve Ciamalta (Keeper Hill). I am a teacher educator and my mind was idling on a recent discussion with nearly qualified teachers (NQTs), who had just returned from their final six week placement in second level schools. The discussion focused on their emerging sense of their role and identity as teachers. While discussions like these are facilitated "to legitimate multiple teacher identities" (Kitching, 2009:152), I was somewhat disillusioned regarding a strong emerging view from final year students that the teacher's role and identity in Irish second level schools predominantly revolves around one's capacity to deliver successfully on formal examination results. The strength of this view, based on their collective perceptions of what was *valued* in schools by students, teachers, school management and parents alike, remained with me long after my walk in the hills like a *stone in my shoe*. Perhaps as a teacher educator, I was naive to the realities of the educational marketplace and empathised with Welton's conclusion (1995:11) that: "In an increasingly disenchanted world bleached of spirituality and dominated by a manic market mentality, we are hungry for philosophical orientation and depth."

My professional understanding of my responsibility as a teacher educator is to help teacher graduates from a four year concurrent degree programme to:

- be familiar with theoretical and policy perspectives regarding their role as second level teachers

- be adequately prepared for the pedagogical, social and competency domains of classroom practice in contemporary educational environments

- develop the seeds of a wholesome educational vision - the ongoing nurturing of which, will hopefully sustain their professional lives as enthusiastic, competent facilitators of learning

To date however, these much contested aspirations in the field of Teacher Education: (Darling–Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Cochran Smith, 2006), are not easily achieved, streamlined processes with clearly delineated strategies for their realization. Therefore, the rationale for completing this doctoral research, is to enhance personal and professional understanding of the teacher's increasingly complex and contested role in contemporary Ireland. At a teleological level, I subscribe to Hostler's insistence (2005:17) that educational researchers have an obligation to "stand for something worth while that gives their personal and professional lives meaning, and to articulate that *thing* (italics mine) to themelves and others."

According to the OECD Report (2005:26) *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers,* "the broad consensus (of research), is that teacher quality is the single most important school variable influencing student

achievement." I believe this finding to be partially true - based on professional tacit knowledge and therefore deem teacher education (*initial, induction and in career*), a crucial field of study. However, I am also sceptical of any essentialising claims regarding teachers as *the* determining factor in students' success. I share Cochran Smith's concerns (2006:218-219), regarding other complex variables such as: school resources, leadership, resource provision for teachers' capacity building, and other indicators including: value placed on education, cultural and social capital, family structure, poverty, housing, health and employment. As a teacher educator, and former second level teacher, I bring this scepticism to my research, regarding policy practice alignment and the current vision influencing the practice of post primary teaching in Ireland.

In undertaking this study, I'm simultaneously an *outsider* and *insider* in the field of post primary education. I left the *field of practice* as teacher a decade ago but remain in relationship with the field from the perspective of preparing teachers for a professional life in second level schools. As researcher, I bring to this study an embodied identity, anchored in the social field of education, a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977; Reay, 2004), that resonates professionally from the cumulative structures of life as: a former teacher practitioner. Currently, I am a teacher educator, with a reflective perspective on the practice of teaching in contemporary classrooms. From this *positioning* within the field, I am searching for some clarity regarding the following research questions:

1. What *is* the role of the second level teacher in contemporary Ireland?

2. How does the officially stated/espoused role of the teacher translate into action in the negotiated environments of practice?

3. What visions of education are implicit in the current policy and practice of second level education in an Irish context?

0.1. Rationale For the Study

I am interested in exploring the above questions through a *constructivist conversation* with second level teachers. The role of the second level teacher in Ireland, generally remains unexamined. It is rarely interrogated in any systematic policy or public discourse. Despite the enactment of the Teaching Council Act (2001), and the subsequent launch of the Teaching Council (March 2006), there has been relatively little *explicit engagement* with exploring the second level teacher's role in contemporary society.

The purpose of this research study is to explore, deconstruct and reconstruct the teacher's role in relation to prevailing policy discourses and visions that influence the practice of second level education in Ireland. It wishes to interrogate potential consistencies and inconsistencies, adequacies and inadequacies and points of conflict between policy makers and practitioners. The study seeks to explore the interesting spaces between theory and practice and between different players and stakeholders who negotiate around contextualised visions of what the educational

enterprise is all about. What happens in practice is of prime importance in education and the voice of practitioners; particularly teachers, is often a muted one in wider educational discourse, as implied by Whitty's (2006:159-76) deficit critique of educational research, where teachers are frequently excluded and findings are frequently irrelevant to schools.

This deficit critique is also supported in an Irish context by: Sugrue and Uí Thuma (1994), Sugrue's (2009b) more recent review of ten years of published education research in Ireland, the work of Kelly and Sloan (2003), and Sexton (2007:79-105), in his rationale for an attitudinal study of Teacher Professionalism. Tovey & Share (2003:206) also note the research deficit with regard to hearing the *voices* of the key stakeholders in education (including teachers, students and parents).

0.2.   Perceived originality of the study and gaps in current knowledge

The research theme

In Ireland, there has not been an extensive research exploration of: the second level teacher's role and/or the associated vision driving second level education. The dynamic relationship between: vision, espoused role and the 'practice dynamic' has not been substantially explored. Some authors (Gleeson, 2004: Looney, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2005; Sugrue, 2004) do however provide insightful perspectives on the cultural and political influences that have shaped the development of second level curriculum. Contemporary studies around the theme of *professionalism,*

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professionalisation and teacher status have also been undertaken in an Irish context (Breathnach, 2000; Coolahan, 2001; Drudy, 2000, 2001; Sexton, 2007; Warren, 2000; White, 2000; Williams, 2000). These studies however, pre date the publication of the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct (2007) and the spotlight on the values surrounding the teacher's role in contemporary Ireland. Therefore teachers' responses to this emerging policy and its relationship with the *practice* of teaching have not been extensively explored. This study can help fill that gap while ensuring that *teacher voice* is articulated throughout. At a more ontological and epistemological level, the research aims to throw light on frequently unasked, unpopular questions about: the purpose of education. What's really driving second level education beyond topical issues of media contention, such as: recessionary cut backs, student teacher ratios, trends in points requirements for third level programmes, (re)introduction of third level fees, classroom management issues, whole school evaluation and publication of inspectorate reports?

The methodological approach

The adoption of an exploratory *constructivist grounded theory* approach, that gives *voice* to the authentic experience of teaching practitioners is relatively unique in an Irish context. The study design acknowledges the subjectivities of the researcher and the participants within their own sites of practice. However, it also seeks to draw out emerging commonalities and points of intersection that might give,

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qualitative texture and resonance to a narrative of potential generalizability in Irish teacher education contexts.

Role of relevant literature in the study

The role played by the literature may also be somewhat different to conventional approaches. There is a substantial literature analysis in Chapter One (focusing particularly on *policy literature* but also including *professional perspectives*). Subsequently, in Chapters 3, 4 & 5 there is an overview of relevant professional literature, dictated by the emergent findings and therefore grounded in participant experience. The epistemological rationale for this approach and the conversation between findings and literature throughout, is explained in Chapter Two.

Organic emergence of thesis structure

The overall emergence and presentation of findings, yielded an organic triad of chapters (namely Chapters 3, 4 and 5) with their own *'evidence based mapping'* or *'internal epistemological geography'* that collectively capture the *practice* of teaching in the *real* world. The triad of chapters navigates between: the classroom/pedagogical domain, the extended professional domain and the internal ontological domain of teacher motivation. The final chapter (Chapter 6) proposes a theme of integration that resonates across all three; a contextual climate of intensification that has some resonance with the discourse of New Public Management (NPM).

0.3. How the study may contribute to new knowledge

The study contributes to new knowledge in the field of Teacher Education. The study explores the *practice* of second level teaching, through three authentic lenses that emerged organically from teacher participant descriptions of their own practice. The findings may have an important significance:

- for teachers themselves in: providing a *data-rich analytical framework,* that clarifies the meaning and complexity of the teacher's role in contemporary Ireland;

- the findings may enable policy makers and the professional *Teacher Education Community* to understand the *complex internalities* that help us understand the dissonance between policy rhetoric and the practice domain;

- the study may also have particular significance for the Teaching Council (officially constituted to promote teaching as a profession in Ireland). This study has the potential to enlighten their work through its qualitative depth, which hopefully captures a *reliable slice of practitioner knowledge,* that resonates with the teacher constituency;

- the study has immense significance for the author's own professional practice, by enabling a *robust* and hopefully *deeply layered* understanding of the dynamic professional context, that newly qualified teachers must be prepared for;

- the study will add to the existing body of professional knowledge regarding teacher education, through the amplification of *the teacher voice.*

0.4.   Chapter overview

Chapter One - Setting the research context

An extensive literature review contextualises the study within a deficit discourse of *marketisation* and *commodification, a discourse* gaining momentum internationally. The chapter subsequently outlines the policy context for second level teaching in Ireland, with particular reference to the *policy architecture* of the early 1990s. It seeks to briefly critique the sometimes competing visions of education, identified as humanist and instrumental. The chapter also presents a brief overview of emerging constructions of the teacher's official role, as implied in the White Paper's (DES, 1995) policy framework for the ten aims of education and the more recent publications of the Teaching Council (2007).

Chapter two – Study design and research methodology

The chapter explores the author's interpretative epistemological stance. It explains the rationale for adopting a *constructivist grounded theory* methodology. The chapter explains the data collection processes and the four stages of data analysis, including the role of the literature - that culminated in the emergence and development of an overall *meaning construct*.

Chapter three –Pedagogy under pressure

Collectively, Chapters 3, 4 & 5 represent a triad of findings. They provide the structure and meaning framework to a larger theoretical construct regarding the teacher's role in contemporary Ireland.

Chapter Three - explores teacher-participant perception of their teaching and learning practices, and explicates the many ontological and pedagogical challenges negotiated in increasingly instrumentalist environments driven by terminal assessment.

Chapter Four–Teachers navigating a pathway between old and new

professionalism

This chapter interrogates the dynamic and contested discourse of teacher professionalism and explores how teachers' navigate a professional role that embraces: partnership with parents, three domains of collegiality, social change and the search for an authentic professional voice.

Chapter Five – Vocationalism and pockets of wonderful things

The final chapter in the triad of findings, takes us on a journey inwards, to the *intrapersonal* world of teacher motivation and intrinsic rewards. It explores the theme of ontological meaning and clearly identifies seven factors that help sustain and enhance a teaching life.

Chapter Six – Conclusions, recommendations, questions and reflections

The final chapter consolidates the three interconnecting constructs and briefly outlines their relationship with the discourse of *new public management*. This discourse (implicit throughout the study) brings cohesion to the overall theoretical framework that emerged organically from the findings. It places the significance of the findings within a more global discourse, that echoes the policy context of chapter one. It enables a final reflection on the 'policy practice dynamic' of the teacher's role and the visions driving the current practice of second level education. The chapter summarises the implications of the study and makes recommendations for the policy and practice domain of teacher education. The chapter also identifies many further questions and challenges.

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

1.0.   Ireland within a global discourse of marketisation in education?

The inexorable global trend towards the marketisation of education with its emphasis on measurement, standardisation and performativity, has been well documented in a frequently 'deficit discourse' across many theoretical perspectives: (Apple, *et al.,* 2005; Ball, 2008; Codd, 2005; Cochran Smith, 2006; Dunne & Hogan, 2004; Gewirtz, *et al.,* 1995; Hargreaves, 2003; Hogan, 1995; Lynch, 2006; Lyotard, 1984; MacIntyre, 2004; Marginson, 1997; Parker, 2007; Pring, 2005; Raduntz, 2005). More recently, in a specifically Irish context, authors including: Long (2008), Sugrue (2009a) Gleeson & O'Donnabháin (2009) have engaged with critiques of how this global discourse of quality, standards, and performativity, is impacting on the policy and practice of education in Ireland.

The now global imperative of this hegemonic discourse is insightfully captured by Raduntz (2005:231-246) in a chapter entitled: *The Marketization of Education Within the Global Capitalist Economy* and was comprehensively theorized by Ball in *The Education Debate* (2008). Seminal theorists Aronowitz & Giroux (1993:1) succinctly alerted us to this prevailing discourse in the early 1990s when they argued that: "the meaning and purpose of schooling at all levels of education"

were "refashioned around the principles of the marketplace and the logic of rampant individualism." The impact of marketisation and measurement on the professional lives of teachers, was noted by John Codd (2005:193-206), in his analysis of teachers as: 'managed professionals' in 'low trust' and 'high accountability' educational environments. Ireland is not immune from this trend of adaptation to the standardisation, measurement and accountability agenda. There is a whole new architecture to support the policy impetus of standardisation and measurement. This architecture includes: the National Qualifications Authority Of Ireland, (NQAI), the 'measurable outcomes' ideology of awarding bodies such as the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), and the centralised role of the State Examinations Commission (SEC). Collectively these agencies reflect the *Bologna* imperative and its credentialist agenda of standardised awards across national and international territories. At primary and post-primary levels in Ireland, there is a focus on school development planning initiatives (SDPI) and whole school evaluation (WSE).

1.1. The Influence of New Public Management?

Gleeson & O'Donnabháin (2009:28-29) call for a "recalibration" of what they perceive as "the current imbalance between bureaucratic and responsive models of accountability" in education. The authors confirm the emergence of a *new public management* culture (NPM) since the 1990s (confirmed by the adoption of the

Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) by the Department of Education and Science in 1994). In this climate "citizens are seen as consumers, better controls over performance are promised and there is heavy emphasis on value for money and accountability."

The language of 'audit achievement' cited by Long (2008:122), "the rhetoric of autonomy, frequently accompanied by imposition of external accountability measures," outlined by Sugrue (2009a:2) and lifelong learning as an economic imperative (Fleming, 2005), are all consistent with an increasingly marketised and instrumentalist impetus in educational endeavour. This philosophy of marketisation, standardisation and accountability are all hallmarks of the NPM culture. This culture is fuelled by the OECD's (2005:206) agenda for social and economic growth and the focus on measurement across international boundaries. "Teaching policy is high on national agendas. The far–reaching economic and social changes underway have made high – quality *schooling* (italics mine) more important than ever before." The focus on schooling as opposed to education is insightful.

1.2.   The policy architecture of the 1990s

During the 1990s in Ireland, a surge of educational policy reform was largely welcomed. But the policy architecture from that era reflects an increasing alignment between education policy in Ireland and wider market forces within the

context of what Hargreaves (2003) referred to as a *knowledge economy* or *knowledge society.* An economy or society where knowledge is a commodity, packaged through formal assessment, and qualification thus reified as education? This policy legacy of the 1990s builds naturally on the economic imperatives of the *Investment in Education* (OECD, 1966) landmark report, that subsequently fuelled the expansion and nature of educational provision in Ireland.

Tracing The Roots and Rhetoric of the Marketisation Agenda

The 1990s in Ireland was a decade of substantial policy reform. The agenda for change was fuelled by social, economic, technological, demographic, occupational and cultural change, in the context of growing unemployment levels, as noted by Leonard & Gleeson (1999:52). Government politicians were then enthusiastic *midwives* in the neo-natal ward of an emergent *celtic tiger economy,* and subsequently supported the Lisbon European Council goal (2000) regarding the central role of education and training in elevating the EU's global competitiveness. Subsequently however, Dunne (2005:145) argued that the significant emphasis on the economy and labour market, originally reflected in the Green Paper; *Education for a Changing World* (1992), occluded other more humanistic concerns. He argued that a 'productivity driven' society and an enterprise culture, sought to harness education in the service of the economy and; that the green paper had indeed 'colonising ambitions' to mould education as a business. This was evidenced by the proposal to rename school principals as chief executives and an

emergent language code of *performativity,* that emphasised: administration, management, planning, control, accountability and quality assurance.

The much applauded National Education Convention in 1993, which facilitated dialogue between the department and officially recognised partners (consistent with models of 'representative partnership' but not necessarily inclusive of all voices), created an amenable climate for dialogue in Ireland between philosophy and policy making. Its subsequent *Convention Report* (1994) seemed to acknowledge and reaffirm the need for a more balanced, philosophy/vision of education (accommodating humanist and instrumentalist agendas) than previously implied in the 1992 Green Paper.

> The legitimate plurality of educational purposes...the pursuit of a harmony between academic achievements and spiritual qualities, between liberal learning and vocational aptitude, between artistic capabilities and technical endeavours, between personal accomplishments and social responsibilities.
>
> Coolahan (1994:8)

The government White Paper; *Charting Our Educational Future* (DES, 1995) set out the policy framework for educational action for future years. Its first chapter entitled: *Philosophical Rationale for Educational Policy and Practice* does not arrive at an overall philosophical statement regarding the purpose of education but does agree a philosophical rationale, based on four specific principles for the role of the state in education. These four principles imply an empowering vision of the personal, the social, the economic and the cultural; through the agency of educational endeavour. These principles include (in summarised format) the:

1. Promotion of quality, equality, pluralism, partnership and accountability

2. Protection and promotion of fundamental human and civil rights
3. Nurturing the holistic development of the individual and promoting the social and economic welfare of society, including provision of skills and competencies necessary for the development of our economy and society
4. Empowering schools, colleges and partners in education to nurture and promote their particular values and traditions within a national framework

(DES, 1995:3-4).

However, in a chapter that subsequently vascillates between *instrumentalist* and *humanist* visions of education, the authors argue (1995:4), that such a philosophical framework is important because: "it promotes transparency and greater accountability, provides a rationale for the allocation and use of resources and makes it easier to evaluate educational provision." It is clear then, that the imperatives of transparency, accountability and evaluation were emerging as a central 'policy triad' to justify economic expenditure and facilitate evaluation of resource allocation. Following a similarly instrumentalist vision, the *White Paper* highlights the economic imperatives for state investment in education and draws on evidence from the OECD and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) to illuminate the central role of education, the "increasing centrality of knowledge and skills, in shaping economic organisation and national competitiveness" (1995:4). It similarly visualises the role of lifelong learning as a predominantly utilitarian and instrumentalist one (1995:5).

It could therefore be argued that the apparently more holistic and humanist vision articulated in the 1993 National Education Convention, was significantly diluted two years later in the formal policy framework, that returned to the more utilitarian

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spirit of the 1992 Green Paper. This highlights what McLaughlin (2005:25) named as: "the tension in the relationship between philosophy and educational policy, arising from the policy making climate of the day with its focus on economic growth." However this argument must also acknowledge the holisitc vision (1995: 9-10), of "societal and individual development through education" outlined in the White Paper (DES, 1995) and its ten associated aims, as guidelines for the "daily practices of teaching and learning in schools and colleges" (to be be elucidated subsequently with reference to the teacher's role).

This Irish educational policy climate was now consistent with the EU Education Council Report 2001, evaluated by Mikl (2003:49), which had as its stated goal "to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." Mikl (2003:53), warns however of the unlikelihood that shaping education according to the needs of competitiveness and employability would lead to morally better persons. There is a danger of knowledge thus becoming detached from the personal lives of people in what Lyotard (1984), had called the 'mercantilisation' of knowledge that loses its character as an end in itself. The evidence for the emergence of a reciprocal relationship between the economy and education was now easily recognisable in Irish and EU policy documents reflecting a discourse of commodification and education as *product*. A cultural shift was evident where educational policy now prioritised changing people to fit economic imperatives.

Dunne (2005:148-149), explained in relation to the knowledge economy: "The productive person is now the educated person" unlike earlier industrial times when labour and manufacturing skills propelled the economy. The productiveness of the economy was now dependent on the educational system for the supply of a skilled workforce, and the educational system in turn, relied on a productive economy for funding on the scale required, by a modern democratic system of schooling. Dunne (2005:149), thus captured the tension between humanistic and utilitarian visions. "This interlocking of education with the productive and economic sphere circumscribes the autonomy of education, rendering problematic the ideal of a humanistic education without utilitarian purpose." More recently, Gleeson & O' Donnabháin (2009) highlight this problematical equation in relation to the DES adoption of the Strategic Management Initiative. Having reviewed the adoption of business models of strategic planning, the authors are critical of the increasingly technical interest in education and the focus on high level goals, the dominance of performativity and managerialism and "measurable outputs of the system rather than the quality of individual learning..." (2009:40-42).

1.3. Competing and flawed visions of education?

Clearly then, there is an assumption in the critique thus far, that a negative instrumentalist agenda is compromising a more desirable 'humanistic vision.' This humanistic vision is assumed by some critics to have previously fostered education

for the moral and virtuous good of the individual and society; in accordance with 'classical' and 'enlightenment' visions, as initially proposed and debated by: Aristotle, Plato, Kant, and Rousseau among others. But the humanist vision can also be critiqued as problematic. Russel Jacoby (1975:46-73), in an interesting critique of conformist psychology, questions many of the ontological assumptions that underpin the humanistic tradition of enlightenment and existentialism. He cites the easy temptation of individual psychology to ignore the 'structural problems' that oppress individuals and argues that unjust reality is just 'spiritualised away' in the 'everyone can be free' myth, where the ills of society are solved by looking at individual responsibility without interrogating the system that frequently creates social problems.

Seery (2008:135), also highlights the duality of deficit associated with individual psychology, that firstly "neglects the role of education in the reproduction of traditions, solidarities and identities" and secondly (from the perspective of critical theorists), how it masks "the political and emancipatory potential, even duty of education." There is little evidence however of the *political* or *emancipatory* in the policy architecture of Irish second level education. Linking humanism with existentialism, Jacoby (1975:62) challenges the myth of "the ideology of free competition, free initiative and equal opportunity" where everyone can transcend his situation. Using a Marxist analysis, rooted in critical theory, Jacoby thus exposes the flawed assumptions of personal freedom to choose; against the socio-political realities of power and powerlessness. Critical theory, he argues, sees the

roles played by individuals as part of an unfree society, one that isolates and alienates the individual. In an Irish context, a similar analysis is reflected in the work of the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI, 2006), who respectively demonstrate the likely correlation between structural poverty, multiple disadvantage, early school leaving and initiation into criminal activity.

The humanist vision of education must therefore be critiqued in the context of social, economic and political structures that impact on individual freedom and choice, in a world where there is cultural dissonance between school and the 'lifeworld' as experienced by many individuals. It is therefore possible to see how the humanist philosophy (despite its emancipatory potential for some) can be aligned to what Jacoby (1975:71) considered a bourgeois ideology, "conformist in essence... the ideology of liberation of a one dimensional society." Similarly, Tovey and Share (2003:206), challenge the assumptions of the dominant liberal model of *meritocratic individualism* within an unequal and hierarchical system.

A feminist perspective might also argue that the type of humanism outlined is founded on the *myth of individualism* and cannot foster the development of a greater sense of social cohesion or the creation of more moral persons or a more moral society, because this individual model ignores the reality of 'interdependency,' 'relationality' and the centrality of a 'care-for philosophy' in human existence. From this perspective, as outlined by: Lynch (2006), Lynch *et al.,* (2007), and Grummel *et al.,* (2009), humanism and the associated values of

individualism, inevitably conspire with competitive, instrumentalist consumerism which again, is focused on individual achievement and the transitory satisfaction of individual desire.

1.4. Theocentric and mercantile paradigms.

O'Sullivan (2005), illuminates in a uniquely Irish context, the role of two paradigms of influence on Irish education during the last century. The 'theocentric' paradigm was based on Christian and typically Catholic belief systems. This paradigm prevailed due to the privileged position awarded the Catholic church in the provision of education until the 1960s, but is still evident in the representation of Religious Orders on boards of management. This legacy is now a compromised one, in the context of the Ryan Report (2009), which chronicled the horrific abuse of children by some members of religious orders while in institutional care. It also documented the ongoing failure by some religious orders at senior levels to respond appropriately to allegations and evidence of abuse perpetrated by their own members.

The emergence of a 'mercantile' paradigm (education to serve the needs of the economy) gained momentum following the publication of *Investment in Education Report* (1966) in collaboration with the OECD as alluded to earlier. Thereafter, the state would take a more active part in the running of the education system. Dunne (2002:86), argues that education became more like a business, where students and their parents became customers and teachers became *mere functionaries* whose role

was; to satisfy the demand of their manager and clients. Therefore both humanist and instrumentalist visions of education in an Irish context, are woven through the fabric of 'theocentric' and more recent 'mercantile' influences, in what Murphy (2008:31) called: "a symbiosis between church and state" whereby "the Church's influence on all of the vital socialising agencies of the state" prevented a more critical analysis of the education system and society in general. This symbiosis as a policy and cultural backdrop to education is a morally compromised one, in the context of The *Ryan Report* (2009). Similarly, elements of the mercantilist vision have also proven problematic. The government bale out of corrupt lending practices in major banking institutions through the *National Asssets Management Agency* (NAMA, 2009) also represents a moral paradox for society. The institutionally compromised triad of Church, State and Business, now presents an interesting and challenging values context for teaching and learning in formal educational settings.

1.5.   The points system; a conspiracy between humanism and instrumentalism?

The points system is an interesting lens, through which we can examine the paradoxical and ambivalent relationship between the humanist (with theocentric rootedness) and instrumental (with mercantile lineage). The 'interlocking' of the humanistic and instrumental visions of education, can be seen in the practice of formal assessment, where the needs of the third level sector and the economy, impact (at second level-through the points system), on the *raison d'être* of education in practice. Official discourse refers to the *points system.* This is a muted

policy discourse however, not mentioned in the Green Paper *Education For A Changing World* (DES, 1992) or *National Convention Report* (DES, 1994) or Government White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995).

Popular discourse, however refers to '*the points race'* reflecting the *competitive instrumentalism* it has come to symbolise in public consciousness, thus illuminating an interesting analysis by Long (2008:123), regarding *protocols* that govern educational discourse in Ireland today. Collins (2007) has also drawn attention to what he perceives as the increasing irrelevance of the current Leaving Certificate Examination and the associated 'points system' in an era of lifelong learning and improved accessibility to third level. It is possible however, that the points system ironically feeds on a philosophy of individualism, one facilitated by conceptions of education, predominantly for personal advancement in a utilitarian sense. A counter argument however, highlights the objectivity, transparency and meritocratic nature of the points system, as endorsed by the report of the Commission on the Points System a decade ago (1999).

This potential disfigurement of the formative purposes of assessment, as typified by the points system, may compromise the achievement of a broader vision of education and perpetuate a *transmission* or *banking* model (Freire, 1982) driven by terminal assessment. Hence, what may have transpired is an unlikely (and perhaps unintentional) conspiracy or alliance between: *competitive instrumentalism* and a *tolerant unquestioning humanism*. This acquiescent humanism is rooted in

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individualism, (ontologically flawed from critical theory and feminist perspectives) but currently fanned by a highly marketised consumerist society, that feeds on the cult of the individual. Therefore the translation of vision into practice is frequently mediated through the lens of assessment (particularly assessment *of* learning as opposed to assessment *for* learning) and the commodification of knowledge as *output* and *qualification* as opposed to process and engagement.

1.6.   The teacher's role within a dualistic visionary mosaic

In the context of this apparently dual visionary mosaic that embraces the instrumentalist and humanist visions of education, what is the 'implicit role' of the second level teacher in the context of achieving the ten aims of education, as outlined in the White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995:10)? It is interesting that these aims are presented under the heading of *societal and individual development,* despite the policy document being infused with the rhetoric of ecomomic imperatives for investment in education. In any case, the realization of these official policy aims (assuming there is some relationship between policy and practice), should have significant implications for the teacher's role. These admirable ten aims of education (1995:10) include fostering:

1.   The values of Irish society - moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural

2.   Personal identity, self esteem and respect for others

3.   Promotion of quality and equality for all including the disadvantaged

4.   Development of intellectual skills, the spirit of inquiry & analysis

5.   Creativity & artistic ability

6.   Self reliance, initiative & innovation

7.   Physical and emotional health and well-being

8.   Education and training for economic development

9.   A tolerant, caring and politically aware society

10.   Awareness of national and European heritage, global awareness

        & respect for the environment

It is surely significant that only one of the ten aims specifically relates to *education and training for economic development* and that the teacher's role would therefore be expected to substantially embrace the admirably broad (though non-emancipatory) vision implied by the other aims. It is arguable, that the aims are fundamentally based around a *limited humanist tradition,* where implied assumptions of individual *enlightenment* are central to the construction of what constitutes education. There is no mention of *emancipation, interdependence* or *sustainability* and phrases such as: 'self reliance' 'politically aware' (as opposed to politically active) and *promotion of equality* could be interpreted as somewhat neutral and non-agentic. Subsequently, the research findings regarding teacher perception of their own *practice* will be explored against this policy backdrop.

What is the role of the second level teacher as conceptualised in the documentation associated with the setting up of the Teaching Council in 1998, and subsequently operationalised by the Teaching Council's official inception in March (2006)?

The teacher's official role was formulated in the report on the establishment of a Teaching Council in Ireland (1998:6) as cited by Byrne (2002). This construction demonstrates the increasing complexity of knowledge, skill and attributes presumably required to deliver the ten official aims of education. A teacher should be:

> A skilled practitioner in the science and art of teaching, one who applies professional knowledge, personal intuition, creativity, and improvisation to accomplish teaching's task; as problem solving and decision – making clinician; as curriculum maker, researcher evaluator and reflective practitioner; and finally as significant other person who exercises considerable moral influence.
>
> (2002:23).

This report (1998:6) also emphasised the broadening remit of the professional role of the teacher in Ireland, previously observed in the OECD Review of Irish Education (OECD, 1991). Here the role was seen to include: the instructional, the custodial, the inspirational and the disciplinary with teachers acting as agents of physical, moral, spiritual, emotional and academic development, in addition to having political and negotiating competence.

What is the contemporary teacher's role in an international context, as outlined by *Teachers Matter* (OECD, 2005) and how does the role in an Irish policy context map on to this international policy agenda? This report conceptualises the teacher's role as a complex one that needs to embrace multiculturalism, gender issues, social cohesion, disadvantage, learning and behavioural difficulties, new technologies, rapidly developing fields of knowledge and new approaches to student assessment. To facilitate the realisation of this complex role, the report proposes four key

domains of influence for the teacher. These include: the individual, the classroom, the school and the community (2005:2). The complexity of the teacher's role is subsequently and similarly outlined by the Teaching Council (2007:25-33), which embraces five key zones of: student, parent, curriculum, teacher as life-long learner and teacher in the context of state, community and school as represented below *(Figure 1).*
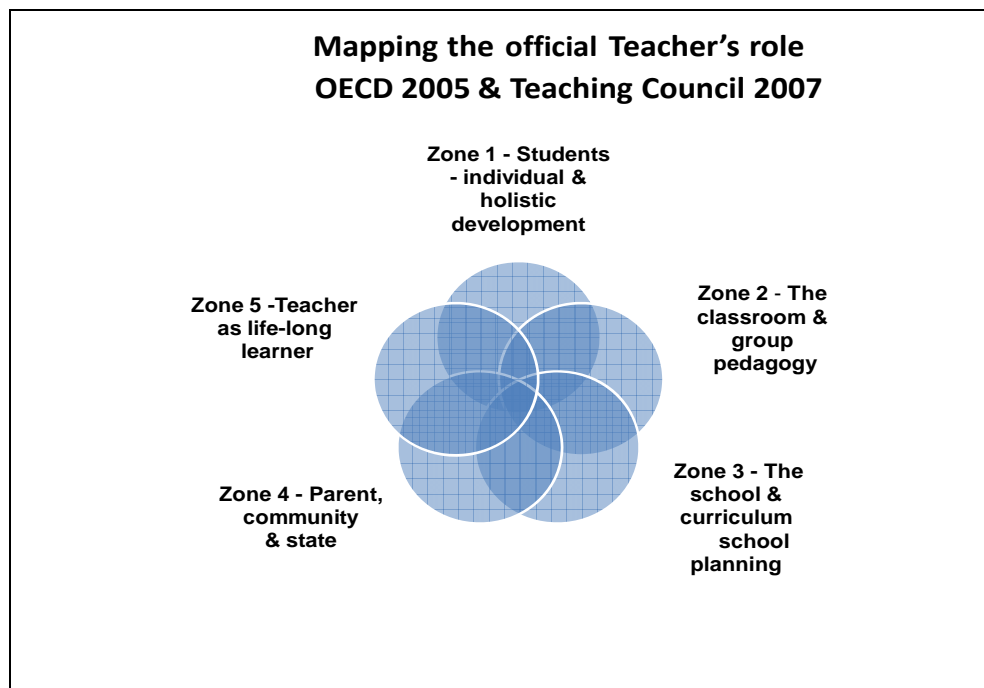
Figure 1 - <u>Mapping the Official Teacher's Role</u>

The mapping of roles from both policy documents as illustrated *(Figure 1),* demonstrates the policy alignment across internationalised constructions of the teacher's increasingly complex role. It is interesting to note that the traditional understanding of the teacher's role had expanded from being responsible for just two dimensions (individual and holisitic development of students and classroom pedagogy) to embracing: school and curriculum planning, parent, community/state

and lifelong learning. To guide the enactment of these diverse - though related

roles, the Teaching Council of Ireland (2007:15-18), outlines the core values which

should underpin the delivery of these roles. These include: *commitment, quality,*

student centered learning, responding to change, professional development,

holistic development of students, cultural values, social justice, equality and

inclusion, collegiality, collaboration, respect, care and cooperation.

The OECD Report: *Teachers Matter* (2005:2), asserts that: "teachers need to be

capable of preparing students for a society and an economy in which they will be

expected to be self directed learners, able and motivated to keep learning for a

lifetime." The movement towards this policy objective, is also reflected in the

ongoing review of senior cycle at second level by the National Council for

Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Their initial report (NCCA, 2005) includes

some interesting and innovative proposals for reform, regarding changes in

curriculum structure, (i.e. core subjects, short courses and transition units) that

might reflect local school culture and the use of a wide variety of assessment

techniques. In the current economic climate innovation as thus recommended, is

unlikely to happen quickly however.

Within this expanding policy role for teachers, there are also other significant

legislative changes reflecting progressive democracy and equality legislation.

These include: the integration into mainstream of *Special Needs Education*, as now

legally enshrined in the Education for Persons With Special Educational Needs Act

(2004) and compliance with equality legislation. There are also many legislative requirements: Education Act 1998 & Education (Welfare) Act 2000, and the setting up of the National Education and Welfare Board – (NEWB, 2002). Schools must now engage with: the development and implementation of codes of discipline, the establishment of Boards of Management, the recognition of the rights of parents as partners in education, and recognition of the rights of students to have a voice through student councils.

It is clear therefore, that the teacher's role is an increasingly complex one, situated within the dual discourse of instrumentalist and humanist visions of education. Is this complex and expansive policy role compatible with the current climate of a market economy, driven by terminal assessment? Can teachers in relatively large class sizes move from being curriculum centred, to being student centred, from passive learning to active learning, from constraint to choice and from authoritarian models to more participative ones? The role of teacher is further complicated by the increasingly varied socio-cultural landscape of significant change in the traditional structures of: family, community, church and state, - a *new cosmopolitanism* reflecting the significant changes in the social structures of society; as outlined in the Department of Education and Science Task Force Report *School Matters* (2006:52-68). Undoubtedly many effective teachers do manage (within complex environments) to reconcile the perennial challenge posed by Baker and Foote (2003:72)

> Reconciling the economic and social goals of education, preparing people for making a living and living a life, has proved historically difficult,

leading to endless swings of the policy pendulum. Teachers must dedicate themselves to bring together these two missions of teaching for the knowledge society and beyond.

1.7.   A new conspiracy with negative consequences for the teacher's role?

In a challenging, critical analysis, other authors (Codd, 2005:198; Ball, 2008; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin 2009; Sugrue, 2009a) convincingly argue, that a new conspiracy has emerged in education that impacts negatively on the role of the teacher. Codd labels it as the emergence of a *Third Way Approach,* a mixture of welfare state and neoliberalism, where the rhetoric emphasises the renewal of civil society, inclusiveness and social responsibility, but also embraces individualism, economic freedom and globalisation. (This is neoliberalism with a softer face). In terms of 'third way theory' – education is seen as central to the alignment of economic and social goals, thereby achieving the political purpose of a knowledge based economy.

Sugrue (2009a:2) argues that the rhetoric of autonomy "is frequently accompanied by high stakes national testing, league tables and general 'trial by media' of teachers in particular and public servants more generally." He also speaks (2009a:6) of the consequent remodelling of the education system around the "twin towers of self-evaluation and accountability" and "the language of managerialism" that has become "more orthodox and pervasive through repeated use in policy statements" (2009a:7). Similarly, Gleeson & O'Donnabháin (2009:40) call for education decision makers to address pressing modern issues such as "the future of

schools and the meaning of teacher professionalism" in the context of the need for a shift from 'contractual accountability' towards a more appropriate 'responsive accountability.' Codd (2005:205) also argues that in the context of contractual accountability, teachers are little more than skilled technicians, where performativity replaces the critical reflection and professional judgement of the autonomous professional. In this context, new modes of public accountability are more about control than professional integrity. However in an Irish context, one of the consistent reference points in the policy rhetoric of the 1990s is the existence in Ireland of a high quality, relatively autonomous teaching force, as reviewed by: Byrne (2002), Coolahan (2003:26), and the *Education at a Glance* Report (OECD 2002:242). Changes in this perception are evident however from Sexton's (2007:79-105) research, where *autonomy* emerges as an important value, but teachers currently perceive an erosion of this autonomy. If the *points system* of assessment is a fundamental driver of educational practice, if 'soft accountability' regimes such as Strategic Management Initiatives (SMI) percolate into school contexts in the possibly diluted forms of School Development Planning Initiatives (SDPI) and Whole School Evaluation, it is likely that there will be an impact on teacher autonomy.

1.8.   Towards a conclusion

This exploration has raised many questions and suggests some further avenues of exploration and research. Firstly, the policy backdrop as explored, suggests that an

instrumentalist and humanist policy climate prevails in Irish second level education. The instrumentalist discourse has gained particular momentum in the policy rhetoric since the 1990s, but its rootedness in the mercantile tradition can be traced to the 1960s. There is also ample evidence of a broad humanist vision of education (albeit without emancipatory hues) that still competes for space within an increasingly instrumentalist climate. It is also proposed that while there may be a tension between these policy discourses, there is also the possibility of a complementary alliance, witnessed in predominantly, terminal assessment driven, practice in the post primary sector.

The policy rhetoric (both national and international), within this dual discourse, is consistent in profiling the teacher's role as an increasingly complex one, requiring many competencies and attributes from teachers, whose pedagogical, legislative and socio-cultural environments inside and outside the school, continue to change at a rapid pace. Teachers are undoubtedly the bridge between these dual discourses of the humanist and instrumentalist but are also gatekeepers between the domains of policy and practice. Studies such as Sextons (2007:79-105) however, renders teachers *pragmatic* in nature and somewhat removed from visionary discourses or policy rhetoric of what the educational project is all about. This research study seeks to explore and illuminate the second level teachers' positioning in this space between policy and practice. For over a decade now different commentators have called for a realignment of second level education in Ireland (Collins, 2007; Delors, 1996; Gilmore, 1999; Gleeson, 2004; McGuinness, 2006; NCCA, 2005; Sugrue,

2004; and more recently Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009). In different ways, these authors have challenged the sustainability and viability of a centralised, hierarchical, sedimented model of second level education, where pedagogical practices are substantially prescribed by terminal assessment and influenced by inappropriate accountability regimes within the DES.

 At a more macro epistemological and axiological level, there is a perceived *discontinuity* between the current post primary model and the more typically dialogical 'child centred inquiry' of the primary school system. To date however, there has been an absence of the *teacher's voice* in seeking to understand the complexity of the pedagogical space inhabited by them. Meanwhile to paraphrase Maxine's Greene's words (2005:79), "There is always a space between the *'is'* and the *'should'* a space for imagining what might follow after, a space of hesitancy, reflection, and consideration." This research initiative now seeks to probe that complex space so that we might return to where we started from and enhance our knowing, by positioning ourselves closer to the insightful world of *reality* as inhabited by teaching practitioners.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0.   Introduction

The first part of this chapter explores the author's epistemological stance, one situated in interpretitive, constructivist and ecological postmodernism. The analysis outlines the rationale for adopting a *constructivist grounded theory* methodology and identifies ten specific criteria that deem it an appropriate one for illuminating the role and practice of the second level teacher in Ireland. This part of the chapter proceeds with a discussion of relevant points of contestation, regarding grounded theory's evolution from scientific underpinnings to its contemporary constructivist leanings. The *reliability criteria* favoured in the research design is also presented.

The second part of the chapter outlines: the participant sample, data collection processes, the four stages of data analysis, the role of the theoretical literature, the development of a meaning construct and the ethical framework adopted. The chapter concludes with a brief identification of the research challenges experienced and how these were resolved.

2.1.   The author's epistemological stance: interpretivist, constructivist and ecological postmodernism?

Interpretive and constructivist research values

This research endeavour is philosophically aligned to the research values of the interpretive and constructivist paradigms and the adoption of a qualitative research stance, typically espoused by: Bartlett *et al.,* (2001:36-69); Charmaz (2005, 2006); Parker, (2007); Ryan (2006:18-21) and Sarantakos, (2005:36-47). Six research values from this paradigm have been chosen to infuse the constructivist and interpretivist approach being adopted.

- *An emphasis on reflexivity* - as researcher, I will investigate my own epistemology, subject my own own assumptions to scrutiny, become aware of different perspectives, become a learner, engage in the social construction of a narrative, seek out inconsistencies and hopefully become comfortable and excited with irreconcilables.

- *Epistemological questions of knowledge* - how do I know what I know and how do I embrace or perceive what I do not know? My knowledge or that of my research participants is not totally self authoring, because our collective acquisition of ideas, images, words, grammar (all the existing technologies of thought), began with the acquisition of language, which is socially embedded within our cultural knowledge about the world (Bartlett, *et al.,* 2001:20-21).

- ***Integrated ontology of the researcher*** - as the author/researcher, my identity influences the research process. I bring my *current ontological self* to the research process, and the constructions and reconstructions negotiated with participants are processed through: subjective lenses of understanding, embodied experience (reflecting the cognitive, affective and deeply rooted biography) of selfhood. It embraces the *cultural* and *social capital* accumulated, (Bourdieu, 1986), the "evolving nexus (personal and professional) that constitute life and converge in the mystery of self" (Palmer, 2007:18).

- ***subjective interrelationship between researcher and participant***

  I will co-construct the emerging theory with my research participants who also bring their individual identities to the research process. Sometimes these constructions of reality might be shared across different research locations but not necessarily (See: Charmaz, 2005:509-510; Guba & Lincoln, 1989: 43; Mills *et al.,* 2006: 2-3 and Oakley, 1998:713).

- ***the existence of multiple realities*** – I believe that truth-making in the research process is provisional and that there is a multiplicity of truths, each legitimated by "the positioning of each actor in the research context" (Verma & Mallick 1999:36). This highlights the post-modern and post-structuralist view (influenced by the work of Lyotard, Foucalt and Derrida). "Though the academy claims to value multiple modes of knowing, it honours only one; an objective way of knowing that takes us into the "real" world by taking us "out of ourselves" (Palmer, 2007:18).

- *No fixed truth*, **only** *partial accounts* - knowledge is provisional, contextualised temporally, socially, culturally and epistemologically. It necessitates an ontological position mindful of current knowledge and truths that may change through future research. "There is no fixed immutable truth in social science" Woods (1999:3). See also Bogdan & Knopp Bilken (2003:23).

The implications of engaging with these six principles, throughout the constructivist process are insightfully identified by Charmaz (2005:509-510), in the context of constructivist grounded theory.

> Our conceptual categories arise through our interpretations *of* data rather than emanating *from* them or from our methodological practices. Thus, our theoretical analyses are interpretive renderings of a reality, not objective reportings of it.

Similarly, Russell (2007:15), documents the challenges of subjective interpretation, the hermeneutical skill in making the implicit explicit, the emphasis on illumination and extrapolation, rather than on causal determination. According to Ryan (2006:22), four key tools of the researcher within this interpretive paradigm are; the *concept of discourse*, *the concern with power*, *the value of narrative* and the need to be *reflexive.* The concept of discourse and the concern with power are paramount to an exploration of the teacher's role, in relation to how policy and vision impact on individual agency in local contexts.

> The fixing of meaning is never a neutral act but always privileges certain interests. Discourse is responsible for reality and not a mere reflection of it. Thus the question of what discourses prevail and whose interests they serve are most important.
>
> (Ryan, 2006:24).

The purpose therefore of the research is not just to illuminate (for example) the prevalence of an instrumentalist or humanist agenda in second level education, but also to identify and interrogate the political and economic agendas that perpetuate such visions or others that may emerge.

Locating the study within an ecological postmodern perspective?

Given my particular interest in exploring the visionary influence on the *role* of the educator, I am currently encouraged and attracted towards the work of seminal theorists from an *ecological postmodern* perspective, (Spretnak, 1999; Goodman, 2003; Palmer, 2007), who seek to valorise the spiritual and visionary elements that modernity has substantially suppressed. The term 'ecological postmodernism' was first coined by Charlene Spretnak (1991), in her book *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age*. Ecological postmodernism according to Goodman (2003:17), involves "a creative synthesis of modern and premodern truths and values, a going backwards in order to go forward." It argues towards a recovery of the traditional insights that were lost when the modern paradigm took such pervasive hold; before science, religion and philosophy lost their integrated wholeness. In an educational context, Palmer (2007), throughout his book *The Courage To Teach*, argues for a realignment in education of the head and heart, so that educators are encouraged to reach again into the spirit level that motivates and rewards, beyond the language of measurability and accountability. Palmer is not naive however, regarding the challenge of realignment between head and heart, given the hegemonic hold of capitalism and neoliberal, positivist number-

crunching. He speaks of society being invisibly controlled "by strings attached to…minds and hearts by invisible puppeteers" (2007:27). Goodman (2003:68), drawing on Gramsci's construct of hegemony, (paradoxically as a post modernist) acknowledges the ensnaring of consciousness, "not only through propaganda, indoctrination and advertising, but also covertly, through a whole range of lived social practices." Similarly, Baker & Foote (2003:78), coined the chilling metaphor of *karaoke teachers* and Maxine Greene (2005:80), calls for an *awakening of consciousness*, an *overcoming of the anaesthetic*. It is hoped that this research endeavour, through exploration with practitioners, will illuminate the spectrum of perceived agency or ensnarement that prevails.

Spretnak (1999:7) forsees an emergent antidote to the globalised and hegemonic focus on quantification and surveillance. She predicts "the resurgence of relocalisation, nurturing a sense of place (community, bioregion, and region), as a defense against the homogenizing effects of globalised mass culture." Collectively: Spretnak (1998), Goodman (2003) and Palmer (2007), subscribe to an ecological, educational philosophy that celebrates and seeks identity in: community, connection, continuity, interdependence, ecological balance and global sustainability that demands us as educators to confront larger ontological and axiological realities beyond individualism, consumerism and disconnection.

> The fundamental educational task of our times is to make the choice for a sustainable planetary habitat of interdependent lifeforms...against the pathos of the global competitive marketplace...We need to deeply challenge the economic globalisation that is moving like a tornado in our world.
>
> (Goodman, 2003: iv).

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Epistemologically and ontologically, ecological postmodernism is appropriate to this study, because it validates the craft knowledge of educators in specific educational contexts. Spretnak (1999:4), elucidates the physical and psychological knowing that comes from experience. "Yet our narratives, our ways of thinking, are *grounded* in our bodily experiences in nature and society." Ecological postmodernism's rootedness is in activism and experience. The theory has developed to give support to what is "known" and "embodied" from direct experience. Palmer (2007:54), argues for a more integrated ontology of knower and known and argues that:

> No scientist knows the world by holding it at arms length…Science requires an engagement with the world, a live encounter between the knower and the known...knowing of any sort is relational, animated by a desire to come into deeper community with what we know.

Polanyi's (1960) concepts of 'indwelling' and 'tacit knowledge,' on which our explicit and articulate knowledge depends, are favoured. In an effort to integrate positivist and post positivist dualities, Palmer (207:101) argues that: "Without tacit knowledge, scientists would be clueless about where to turn for revealing questions, for promising hypotheses, for *fruitful intuitions* and insights about the direction in which truth may lie." Through a conversation with practitioners, I will engage with the real world of practice and *abduct* from practitioners an embodied sense of knowing, that is grounded in experience of head and heart.

Goodman (2003:20), contests that in the western world, during the last few hundred years (especially the past few decades), we have: "denied all our experiences that do not fit into the rational, language-based schema of modernism and we have alienated ourselves from nature and our natural selves." She proposes that it is the dream that drives the action and that ecological postmodernism, because of its insistence that meaning not be banished from life, provides vital insights in the areas of education, including the creation of a more optimistic discourse around "creation" and "survival" (2003:20-21). Similarly, Pring (2005:196) also contests utilitarian subversion by state and economy and argues that there is no "unifying ideal, no coherent set of values from which to engage morally and critically with the powerful agencies which seek to use education for their own material or political ends." In giving voice to teachers as practitioners, I wish to explore the feasibility or otherwise of this dream/vision dynamic in education.

Both Goodman (2003:35), and Oakley (1998:703-731), question number - crunching as the final distillation of data in predominantly capitalist societies. Oakley traces the more integrated approach to investigation that existed in pre Newtonian times, before the divorce of science from philosophy in the 18th century. She reminds us of the importance of Kuhn's work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in which the scientific mind emerged as: "a type of concentration" that was "loose" and "intuitive" also facilitating creative visioning. Palmer (2007:57), writes of the danger of "thinking the world apart" rather than

"thinking the world together." In this research context, I wish to endorse the epistemological research stance proposed by Palmer (2007:109). He proposes that:

> knowing and truth-telling is neither dictatorial nor anarchic. Instead, it is a complex and eternal dance of intimacy and distance, of speaking and listening, of knowing and not knowing, that makes collaborators and co-conspirators of the knowers and the known.

Spretnak (1999:43), argues toward the need for integration by claiming that all of the foundational movements that contributed to the birth of modernity, e.g.

> Renaissance humanism, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment-were revolutionary reactions against various constraints imposed by the church-state lock on power in the medieval world.

In Spretnak's eyes "the pushing aside of all vernacular knowledge" or local craft knowledge was the equivalent of "structural violence" resulting from scientific arrogance inherent in modern models of research and development (1999:63). Ecological postmodernism therfore, seeks to replace *groundlessness* with *groundedness,* because we are connected to all previous human inhabitants (Spretnak, 1999:72). From an ecological postmodernism perspective, we are human beings who construct reality through our *grounded* experiences of living in family, community, neighbourhood, workplace and bioregion. Spretnak names this as the *real*, the world as experienced, negotiated and interpreted, where the cognitive and affective are equally valorised.

I therefore favour adopting a research methodology that has a strong resonance with this groundedness, i.e. *construcitvist grounded theory.*

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2.2. Rationale for adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach

Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; 2005, 2006, Clarke, 2005; Mills *et al.*, 2006; Seaman, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), provides an ontological and epistemological fit for a research endeavour that seeks to construct theory inductively-from the grounded experience of practising second level teachers. I am attracted to a research approach that facilitates a simultaneously rigorous and creative methodology. It is specifically appropriate because it:

1. Is relevant to broad research questions that are flexible and allow the theory to emerge from the field of practice (Tavakol *et al.,* 2006:1-6).

2. Prioritises the *voices* of the practitioner participants, the researcher and the experience behind those voices (Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2003:201).

3. Grounds the study in the practice and experience of *the real* (Spretnak, 1999) and seeks to build theory inductively to honour what actually happens in practice as opposed to what is espoused in policy or theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:23).

4. Facilitates a constructivist approach to data gathering that will be influenced by emerging participant responses (not prescribed in advance), and my own

theoretical sensitivity; the ability to recognise what is important in data and give it meaning (Charmaz, 2005:508).

5. Ensures flexibility to respond to informed hunches and *intuitive knowing* throughout the research process, so that the emerging theory is driving the research process (Sarantakos, 2005:119).

6. Honours my own centrality as researcher in making decisions about data collection and analysis, based on theoretical sensitivity, garnered from over twenty five years of professional practice, either as second level teacher or teacher educator and from knowledge of extant theory & literature (Seaman, 2008:4-5).

7. Provides through its analytic procedures (*open and axial coding, writing analytic memos, linking codes into categories, conceptualising, using constant comparitive method*), a reliable scaffolding on which to build theory and interrogate my own assumptions as researcher throughout the process (Charmaz, 2006:6).

8. Facilitates an exploration of the 'human agency' of teachers, human agency rooted in the symbolic interactionsim of the Chigago School, one that acknowledges the role of language and views social processes as open-ended and emergent (Charmaz, 2005:512).

9. Provides a framework within which to evaluate the overall theory building process and what I call its *reliability resonance* or what Charmaz (2005:528-529) named as: *credibility, originality, resonance* and *usefulness.*

10. Legitimizes the workable paradox of creativity and rigour in approaches to data gathering and analysis, by subjecting insights gained from: the embodied experience of teachers and the intuitive theoretical sensitivity of the author, to a rigorous data analysis process. (This approach validates the postmodern, ecological stance of connecting modern and premodern ways of knowing).

2.3.   From positivist underpinnings to constructivist leanings

While many permutations of grounded theory have emerged since its inception over forty years ago, it is true to say that its spiral like profile has gradually evolved from positivist underpinnings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992), to more post positivist and constructivist leanings (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1994, 1998). However, Charmaz (2000, 2005, 2006) is most credited with the 'constructivist leaning' now gathering momentum in grounded theory, as outlined by Seaman (2008:1-17).

Charmaz (2000:510) reflected the emerging resistance to more prescriptive grounded theory procedures and proposed that: "We can use grounded theory methods as flexible heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures."

Similarly, she reaffirmed (2006:9) that researchers "can use basic grounded theory guidelines with twenty-first century methodological assumptions and approaches" thus repositioning grounded theory as a more flexible approach, not seeking to be as 'scientific' as previously described. Mills *et al.,* (2006:4) similarly defend the emerging constructivist approach as: "more reflective of the context in which participants are now situated."

This emerging axiological ambivalence is contested by one of the founding fathers of grounded theory - Barney Glaser, who reaffirms the more objectivist stance of the researcher towards data collection in traditional grounded theory, as initially formulated in 1967. Charmaz (2000, 2005, 2006) however, refutes the priority given to traditional, positivist leanings and traces the emerging interpretivist modifications already evident in the seminal work of Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1994, 1998), who referred to the *construction* rather than *emergence* of grounded theory. I share this interpretation and there is ample evidence in the writings of Strauss and Corbin to demonstrate the *'constructivist shoot'* emerging from the trunk of the grounded theory tree! "Theorising is the act of constructing...from data, an explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationship" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:25) and also that: "theories themselves are interpretations made from given perspectives as adopted or researched by researchers" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994:279). Charmaz vindicates this constructivist approach and seeks to realign Grounded Theory with more constructivist roots, associated with its Chigago school antecedents: (Charles

Horton Cooley, 1902; John Dewey, 1922; and George Herbert Mead, 1932, 1934). According to Charmaz (2005:521-524), these roots in qualitative ethnographic approaches emphasize the contextual backdrop of observed scenes and their situated nature in time, place and relationships - a view also shared by Oakley (1998:703-704). In an attempt to move beyond the traditional positivist quest for empirical detail, Charmaz convincingly argues (2005:511), that a constructivist approach will "advance it – without the cloak of neutrality and passivity enshrouding mid-century positivism." She summarises the constructivist approach as one that: emphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it, adopts a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life, pays close attention to empirical realities *and* locating oneself in these realities (2005:509-510). Constructivist approaches therefore do not assume that data simply await discovery in an external world, or that methodological procedures will correct limited views of the studied world. Charmaz (2005:509-510) challenges Glaser's (1978:3) insistence on researcher as *tabula rasa* and exposes the illogicality of impartial observers entering the research scene:

> Instead, what observers see and hear depends upon their prior interpretive frames, biographies, and interests as well as the research context, their relationships with research participants, concrete field experiences, and modes of generating and recording empirical materials. No qualitative method rests on pure induction-the questions we ask of the empirical world frame what we know of it. In short, we share in constructing what we define as data.

In an interesting postscript however, that demonstrates the ongoing rigour still central to grounded theory, Charmaz (2005:525) emphasizes the importance of any pre-existing concepts *earning* their way into the analysis. Therefore subjective

knowing must also be scrutinised for its validity and interrogated for its unconscious and undeclared potential bias.

2.4. Reliability criteria

As researcher, my intention is, that this constructivist grounded theory approach, will achieve the reliability criteria summarised by Charmaz (2005:528-529) as: *credibility, originality, resonance* and *usefulness* but explicated by Boychuk-Duchscher & Morgan (2004:606) as:

- the discovery of theory that is faithful to the reality for the research area (the practice of second level education)

- makes sense to the persons studied (second level teachers and teacher educators)

- fits the template of the social situation, (the practice of second level teaching) regardless of varying school contexts

- adequately provides for relationships amongst concepts and

- may be used to guide action (with implications for teachers as a professional grouping, policy makers, the Teaching Council & teacher educators)

2.5. The research participant sample

The key questions driving the research process relate to: the role of the second level teacher in contemporary Ireland and the associated vision(s) currently driving second level education. In order to successfully explore these questions and obtain

'rich qualitative data,' I used a *purposive sampling technique* proposed by Blaxter *et al.,* (2001:79) and Ryan (2006:84-85), where the researcher identifies the most likely sources of valuable and interesting information, to meet the needs of the research questions. Glaser (1978), in the context of grounded theory, named it as *theoretical sampling;* the process of data collection whereby the analyst collects, codes and analyses the data and decides what data to collect next and where to find it. As researcher, I began the first phase of data collection by facilitating a 'conversational style' semi-structured interview inquiry with a small number of second level teachers. The research typography broadly resembled 'a case study approach' as described by Bogdan, & Knopp Biklen (2003:54-55). As researcher, I began "to collect data, reviewing and exploring them and making decisions about where to go with the study." I chose a small number of cases/interviewees that were not limited to just one location or site, as is sometimes typical of the traditional case study approach.

The research participants were known to me through professional educational networks and were enthusiastic 'information rich' participants in the research process. There is therefore, also an element of the *convenient* sample here. While grounded theory approaches prioritise purposive/theoretical sampling as opposed to more typical representative samples, my participant sample by coincidence, had a broad representational profile or *sample representativeness* as outlined by Cohen, *et al.,* (2000:119-110). Constructivist grounded theory emphasises an awareness of context. The 'participant sample' overview *(Figure 2)* provides contextual insight.

Total number of participants	9
Gender & age breakdown	5 male and 4 female age range - late twenties to late fifties
Total years of teaching experience	228 years
Total number of schools participants have taught in	20 different schools
School types represented	4 school types: voluntary secondary (all girls), voluntary secondary (all boys), co-educational (vocational school) and co-educational (community school).
Subject Profile	13 subject domains including: English, Gaeilge, Maths, Science, Physics, Business, Foreign Language, (German and French) Humanities (History and Geography) and Home Economics, CSPE & SPHE.

Figure 2 - <u>Participant Sample</u> *(See appendix 1, page 284 for detailed profile).*

2.6.   Overview of data collection

The primary source of qualitative data emerged from the detailed semi-structured interviews with practitioner teachers. However, two other methods of data

gathering were used to complement the core data gathering instrument. These were: document analysis of public policy documents and written reflections from professional practice dialogue with final year teacher education students. See (*Figure 3*) below. A detailed account of the rationale for choosing each of these data collection methods will now be provided.

Overview of Data Collection

3. Document analysis of public policy documents

1. Semi-structured conversational interviews

2. **Professional practice dialogue and reflection with final year teacher education students**
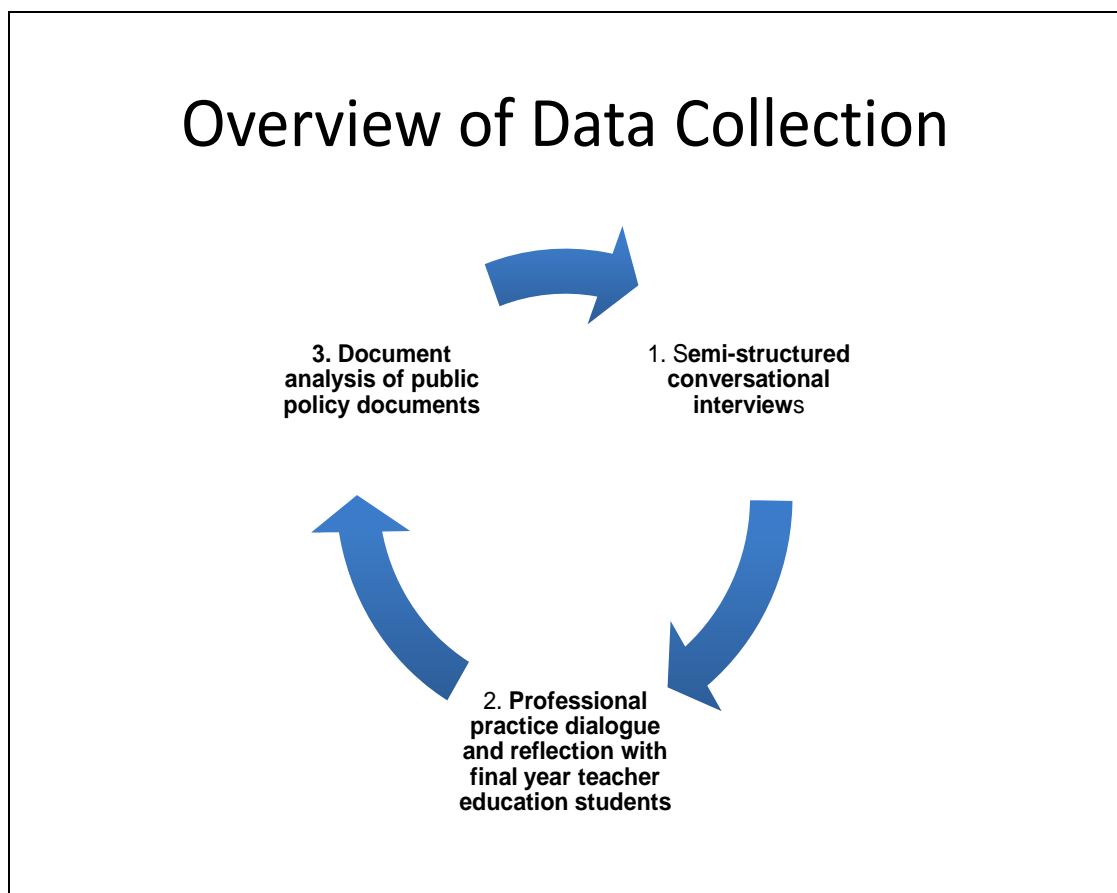
Figure 3 - <u>Overview of Data Collection</u>

2.6.1. Semi-structured conversational interviews with second level teachers

I used semi–structured interviews to facilitate a constructivist dialogue with second level teachers. These were chosen to honour the professional knowledge (tacit and explicit), of each individual voice. This approach provided 'qualitative depth' (May, 2001:124) and space for interviewees to talk about the research questions from within their own frame of reference. The semi-structured interviews facilitated a reflexive, interviewee centred, flexible and stimulating discursive environment, as proposed by Sarantakos (2005:270). Assuming that the interviewer has the skills to generate: motivation, cognition and rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee, semi-structured and unstructured interviews should according to Verma & Mallick (1999:122-128), lead to results and revelations obtainable in no other way.

Sarantakos (2005:270) provides a useful summary of the methodological paramenters in construcitvst approaches. These include: *reflexivity*, (reflecting on one's subjective approach), *naturalism* (studying reality as it really is), *primacy of the respondent* (experts in their own area and not just a source of data), *openness and flexibility* (capacity to change direction) and *explication* (findings emerge through the study and are provisionally interpreted during the process of interviewing). The model of interview adopted was mid way on a 'conversational

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continuum' between the *shared understanding* model and the *discourse* model (Ryan, 2006:76-79).

A semi-structured *interview style web* was developed to guide the interview processs as outlined *(Figure 4).*

Semi-structured 'Conversational' Interview Web

Why teaching?
 - becoming a teacher and
 early years
 School Culture

Fears and hopes for
the future.
Tomorrow's teacher?

Joy/Rewards/Challenges
What sustains?
Personal Mission

What's driving
today's second
level system?

Teacher's role
teaching/learning/curriculum/parents/school planning
community & state/lifelong learning...

Figure 4. 'Conversational Interview' Web

The *web* provided a framework to explore themes but was not a prescriptive list of questions. The interviewing stance was open-minded, acknowledging pre-suppositions, as I was unconvinced of the ontological feasibility of 'bracketing' (Seaman, 2008:2). Therefore as interviewer, I asked non directive, open type questions regarding the broad themes outlined *(Figure 4)* in the conversational

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web. I clarified, probed, encouraged, noticed nuance in tone and paid attention to the non verbal dimension. Where possible, I followed new leads and made connections with earlier utterances. I tried to adopt an active listening stance and highlighted possible contradictions, or at least sought an understanding of possible paradoxes and became comfortable with holding dualities, in the attempt to seek what May (2001:127), called an "intersubjective understanding."

The power relationship was one of equality, and the conversational mode, helped to create and maintain this egalitarian stance. I was conscious that my participants were the grounded practitioners, whose experience provided the meaning framework for the theoretical exploration. The importance of: building rapport, *interpersonal relations, understanding lifeworld, exploring ambiguity, interpreting, describing, being sensitive, and creating a positive experience* for participants is particularly relevant to the constructivist stance in qualitative research (Kvale, 1996:30).

The theme-based interview web, facilitated the "comprehensiveness of the data" and made "data collection broadly consistent for each respondent" while simultaneously affording the interviewee flexibility in deciding the sequence and construction of questions, as outlined by Cohen *et al.,* (2000:271). The interview web, enabled a spontaneous, conversational flow and exchange of ideas. It was designed to 'get at' or uncover the landscape of being a teacher in contemporary Ireland. It was a departure map, to explore broadly defined territory, but not one

with prescribed routeways. The circular clockwise arrows (*Figure 4*) might suggest an apparent sequence and order in the interviewing process, but the interconnecting lines demonstrate how the interview web accommodated intuitive responses (cognitive and affective) and topic shifts as appropriate.

The interviews (ranging in duration from 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes) were in each case recorded, uploaded to computer as *voice files* and subsequently transcribed verbatum. This time consuming approach (involving several playings of each recorded interview at slow speeds) helped me remain very close to the emerging data and facilitated an intrapersonal and reflexive (sometimes unconscious) recognition of emerging patterns in the data. As the interviews took place over an extended timescale (January 2008-April 2009), it offered me space to reflect, analyse and provisionally theorise between each interview. This *iterative* data collection and *tentative* analysis is essential to constructivist grounded theory approaches, where each data subset begins to influence the *leads* and *directions* subsequently adopted. This ensures a dynamic and emergent approach to the research process.

A complete transcript of each recorded interview was made available to each of the research participants within three weeks of each interview. Each participant was invited to comment further or to clarify anything if they so wished. Five participants expressed their gratitude and two participants expressed particular satisfaction for having a record of their own that was insightful to them.

Subsequently, when the first draft of emergent findings was constructed, a summary of findings was made available to each participant, with an invitation to respond if they wished *(See appendix 2, p.285).* Seven of the nine participants responded to this summary and affirmed the findings with brief responses such as: *very interesting/really captures our practice/clearly states the key challenges facing teachers, fascinated with the pedagogy section...so true/names some white elephants in our education system/has woken me up to the bigger issues/some serious stuff here...*

2.6.2.   Written reflection from dialogue with teacher education students

Currently, my professional role involves the facilitation of various modules with undergraduate students on a teacher education degree programme. One of these modules *Professional and Personal Development* is with final year degree students. During this module, the students (using a reflective portfolio journal) reflect on their emerging role as 'soon to be' newly qualified teachers (NQTs). As module leader, I facilitated many discussions around the students' understanding of their emerging role as teaching professionals. During this final year, students spend six weeks placement on teaching practice in a second level school. During this module, I recorded some of my own reflections as these conversations unfolded. My stance with the students for many of these sessions was like a focus group facilitator where we aimed to co-construct a collaborative understanding of the teacher's role in contemporary Ireland.

These focus group discussions enabled a rich dialogue between members that captured the essence of what was happening in practice in different schools (May, 2001:125). It enabled the research process to compare the veracity of theoretical concepts and official policy rhetoric with the reality of practice in the everyday grounded locations (Sarantakos, 2005:194-197). As focus group facilitator, I could encourage participants "to shift positions so as to explore alternative perspectives, contradictions and ambivalences" (Ryan, 2006:79). This approach to the focus group discussion capitalises on the diversity of teaching contexts, individual interpretation and thus creates enriched discursive data. (Bogden & Knopp Bilken, 2003:101). Unlike some traditional focus group approaches, this group was not contrived, i.e. "bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular theme" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:288). Therefore, it possibly had the potential to elicit more authentic data, based on the spontaneous dialogue of participants as opposed to the predominance of the researcher's agenda.

2.6.3. Document analysis - using 'public policy documentation'

Day (2001:176), articulates the historical significance of official documents. "Documents tell us about the aspirations and intentions of the periods to which they refer..." and Foucault (1989:7) establishes the historical gravitas that documents assume in due course, when he writes: "History is that which transforms documents into monuments!" Official policy documents such as: the

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Government White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995), *The Education Act* (1998), The *Teachers Matter Report* (OECD, 2005), *Codes of Professional Practice* (Teaching Council, 2007), and various reports from the National Council For Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), all provided an important policy context for this research study.

In grounded theory, Strauss & Corbin (1990:48-56), distinguish between technical and non technical literature and how each might be used to enhance data collection but also to theorise data collected from sources such as interviewing. In this research exploration of the teachers' role in practice, important policy documents (technical literature), provided a contemporary historical lens from which one could understand the archaeology of the present. Although secondary data, the potential use of qualitative 'textual analysis' and 'discourse analysis' to: deconstruct, interpret and reconstruct language, imagery, and content, can indicate corroboration of themes or conflicted analysis and opposing images (Blaxter *et al.,* 2001:151; Bogden & Knopp Biklen, 2003:124-127; Day, 2001:193).

Analysis of public policy documentation can also facilitate an ongoing reflection on the 'policy-practice debate' and an understanding of the negotiated reality between 'sites of practice' and 'documents of aspiration.' Day (2001) also reminds us of the political insights inherent in documents as records of who the policy makers are and whose voices are heard: "Documents are now viewed as media through which social power is expressed" (2001:183).

2.7. Data analysis

The complete process of data analysis however according to Ryan (2006:95), requires that data is "systematically organised, continually scrutinised, accurately described, theorised, interpreted, discussed and presented." Using the overview framework *(Figure 5),* I will now outline as systematically and accurately as possible, how the data analysis processes emerged for this study.

Overview of four-stage data analysis process

4. Developing a key construct that has reliability resonance

3. Emerging a theoretical framework (dancing the data and literature)

2. Axial coding and linkage into categories

1.Coding into broad open themes and concepts
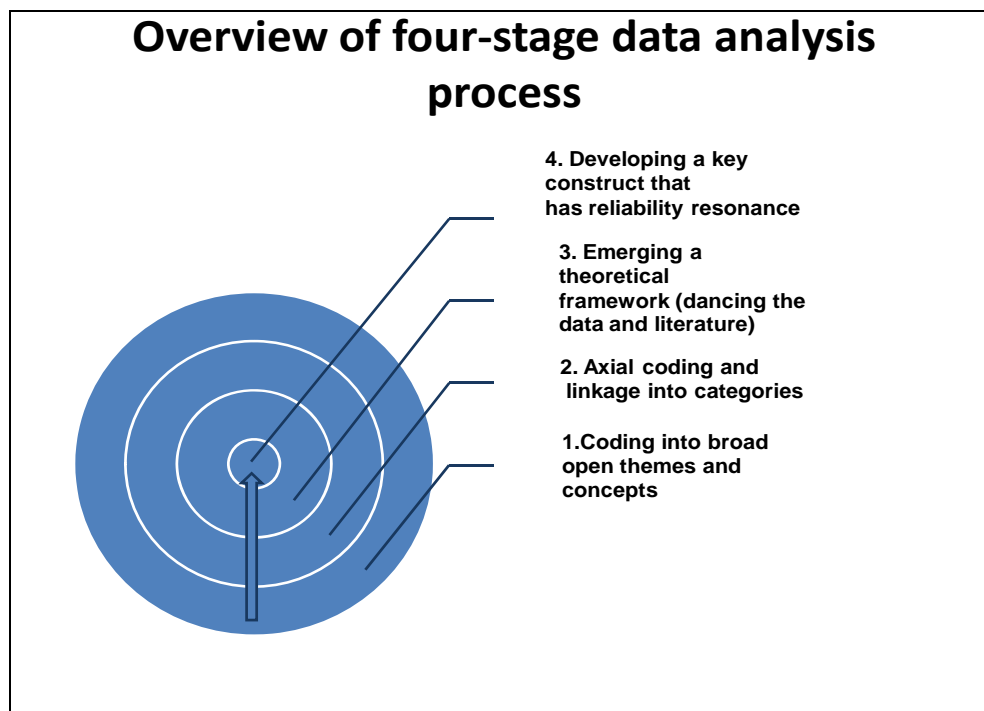
Figure 5 - <u>**Overview of Four Stage Data Analysis Process**</u>

The four stages as represented in *Figure 5* were not linear and sometimes looped like a spiral, simultaneously overlapping between stages. However the model does illustrate four identifiable processes. Each of these will now be outlined.

2.7.1.   Stage one – open coding

Coding was defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998:3), as the process through which; "data are fractured, conceptualised, and integrated to form theory" and where "similar data are grouped and given conceptual labels. This means placing "interpretations on the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:29). Detailed and systematic procedures for the different stages of the coding process are provided by Charmaz (2005:517-519) and Ryan (2006:98-99). Open coding involves allocating each sentence/paragraph of raw textual data (predominantly arising from interview transcripts) a label or concept category, that eventually helps to discriminate and generate themes as shown in the sample extract below *(Figure 6).*

Provisional codes/labels	Raw textual data from practitioner interviews
Instrumentalism	*I saw sudden change ...results and being outcomes driven...trappings and job very important – students losing humanity and teacher seen as an instrument to get reults – a means to an end and that was damaging to the teacher student relationship*
Curriculum overload & its implications	*There's no room for reflection. The system remains the most important...live your life to a bell...no one to challenge you...no one is standing back. There are just too many subjects*
Parents: an ambivalent attitude	*Parents – very little has changed here and teachers don't really engage with parents...the structure of secondary is different to primary*

Figure 6 – <u>Open Coding and Provisional Codes</u>

These concepts and associated codes represent an initial opening up of the text (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:102), to expose: "the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained therein." As recommended in constructivist grounded theory analysis, I remained very close to the data throughout the frequently *iterative* data collection and data analysis process. I listened to several playings of the recorded interviews, subsequently transcribed them verbatim to capture the participant voice and completed several close readings of the transcripts. Then, using the *track changes* facility in *Microsoft Word*, I assigned provisional codes and labels to the raw data as shown in *Figure 6. (See also more detailed coding sample-appendix 3, p.289).* Subsequently, codes relating to similar concepts were grouped together into significant themes as shown in *Figure 7. (See also appendix 4, p.291).*

Significant Theme - Karaoke Teachers: Instrumentalism & Teacher Identity
We are driven by economic outcomes. There's such a narrow focus on exams and assessment and nail the teacher...and helplines! (participant 1)   *Well that's why you go into the classroom to get results...to get the best out of a student academically. I had a student...who got 6 As... They are a very important aspect of teaching* (participant 2)   *Yes it started with Leeson Street and the Grind schools – when marking schemes were revealed in the 80s. It became teaching towards exam and to a large extent now the joy has gone out of the subject...* (participant 3)   *Increasingly the dominance of the exam in the system does have a very big bearing on how teaching and learning takes place. How we see our roles and our status...our effectivenes...* (participant 4)   *There's a fear that the bubble will burst if results are not good...It's in the teacher's blood you want them to achieve in exams...* (participant 5)

Figure 7- <u>Open Coding: From Codes to Significant Themes</u>

In total, ten significant themes were similarly constructed from the emerging data using an open and intuitive coding process, as summarised in the thematic chart *(Figure 8)*. This thematic coding did not require an entire series of micro coding as my aim was to extract significant and recurring themes from the raw data.

Figure showing ten themes arranged around a central "Teacher's role" node:

1. 'Karaoke Teachers' - Instrumentalism points race & issues of teacher identity
2. Curriculum overload & centralised decision making
3. The disengaged & passive learner
4. Social change: societal values & 'the elephant in the room'
5. Parents: An ambivalent partnership?
6. Complex collegiality
7. Isolated and extended professionalism; tensions & retensions?
8. Searching for a public voice
9. The spirit level & horizons of hope
10. Tomorrow's teachers

Figure 8 - <u>Emerging Themes From Initial Open Coding</u>

2.7.2.　Stage two - axial coding

The next stage (axial coding), involved the analysis of linkages between some of the emerging themes. According to Charmaz (2005:517-519), this stage can happen simultaneously and subconsciously with the initial open coding. In this research study, however, I consciously tried to postpone the axial coding process (despite early hunches on likely emergent categories), until the initial emergent themes had been verified in a second phase of interviews, where *theoretical saturation* was sufficiently evident. I agree with the concerns of both Charmaz (2005:510-511) and Seaman (2008:4-5), about the dangers of premature findings and believe that looking at a reasonable number of cases "strengthens a researcher's grasp of the empirical world and helps in discerning variation in the studied phenomenon."

Therefore, a second cycle of data collection with four new participant teachers, (two of whom also had experience in a school management capacity) was pursued to interrogate these emergent themes as played out in the practice of teaching and school management. I had a hunch (based on theoretical sensitivity) that it would be useful to include a school management/leadership perspective. Principals implement official policies and are uniquely placed as gatekeepers of many stakeholders including: parents, students, teachers and official departmental agencies. They provide an overview perspective on localised perception of the collective teachers' role and facilitate an internal *triangulation* of data by also offering an educational and leadership perspective. Semi-structured interviews

(again using the interview web - *Figure 4, p.54*) were used to probe the *reliability*

resonance of previously established themes, but also to facilitate flexibility in

responding to the unplanned, as recommended by May (2001:123). I continued to

mine each of these emergent themes, using constant comparative methods

(comparing across different interview transcripts and data sets), until *theoretical*

saturation occurred, i.e. no new perspectives emerged, and the data confirmed

earlier trends (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:121). It was soon apparent that initial

emergent themes were robust and were thus validated. However some

leadership/management perspectives also emerged (e.g. challenges in

implementing school polices regarding: liaison with parents and whole school

evaluation). These perspectives will be revealed in the discussion of findings in:

Chapters 3 & 4.

A second stage of data analysis then led to the next process of 'axial' coding,

where conceptually linked sub-themes were tentatively grouped into potential

categories. During this stage of data analysis, my theoretical sensitivity

(Sarantakos, 2005:349-354), guided me through several stages of close scrutiny,

observation, reflection and analysis of the data. The subsequent integration of

related sub themes into larger, thematic categories is represented in the linked arcs

(*Figure 9*). This process was experienced as an epistemologically logical, coherent

process, but is named more loftily by Sarantakos (2005:351) as: *an analytic spiral.*

1.'Karaoke Teachers' - Instrumentalism points race & issues of teacher identity

2. Curriculum overload & centralised decision making

3.The disengaged & *passive* learner

4. Social change: societal values & 'the elephant in the room'

5. Parents: An ambivalent partnership?

6. Complex collegiality

7. Isolated and extended professionalism; tensions & retensions?

8.Searching for a public voice

9. The spirit level & horizons of hope

10. Tomorrow's teachers

Teacher's role

Figure 9 – <u>Axial Coding:Linking Themes Into Categories</u>

I experienced this process as a conscious and unconscious synthesis of perspectives, gleaned from participant findings, increasing theoretical knowledge, hunches based on tacit knowledge and cross referencing between three different data sets. *(See section 2.8. the triangulation dynamic p.72-74)*. The analysed data yielded three substantial emergent categories *(See linked arcs in figures 9 & 10)*. Russell (2007:16), recommends keeping conceptually linked categories together through exploring relationships across categories.

Using these thematic connections, three draft categories were identified *(Figure 10)* to include: *teaching and learning*, *professionalism* and *teacher motivation.*
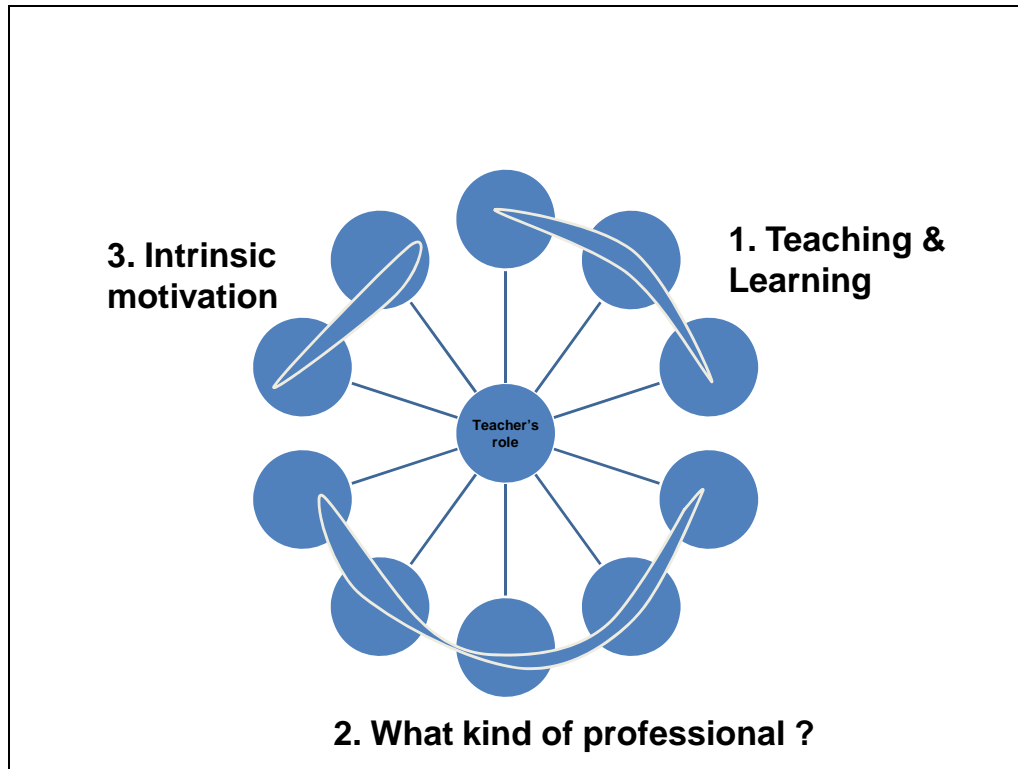
Figure 10 – <u>Development of Three Draft Categories</u>

During this stage of the data analysis process, the role of the literature and the writing of theoretical memos helped to elevate the data, so that grounded practice and theory could undergo an *analytic refraction* and inductively build theory.

2.7.3.   Stage three - theoretical investigation and analytic memos

Traditional grounded theory approaches as reviewed by Mills *et al*., (2006:1-10) resisted the use of literature before or during data collection, so as to avoid

contaminating, inhibiting or impeding the researcher's analysis of codes emergent from the data. This research stance emphasised the importance attributed to the 'groundedness' of the data and the more (unconvincing) positivist conception of researcher as *tabula rasa*. As researcher, I was however, continually aware of how my increasing familiarisation with the extant literature contributed to my emerging *theoretical sensitivity* like a secondary source of data. It stimulated research questions and was used as "supplementary validation" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:51-52) for themes that emerged from participant experience. I tried (with some difficulty) to be mindful of the *'emergent versus forcing debate'* (Boychuk, *et al.,* 2004) but was vigilant in ensuring that themes constructed from the participant data were robust in their own right *(as demonstrated in appendix 4, p.291).* While constructivist approaches (Charmaz, 2005, 2006; Mills *et al*., 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) facilitate the integration of the literature at various stages of the process, I do agree with Charmaz (2005:523) that: "theoretical knowing, must earn its way" into the emergent theory. In fact it is possibly unorthodox to declare that *thorough theoretical investigation* for each of the three constructs in the theoretical framework, took place simultaneously with the writing of first draft findings in Chapters 3, 4 & 5. This *iterative engagement* with a substantial body of relevant literature for each emergent category, becomes apparent to the (hopefully patient) reader as a discussion of findings becomes an extended part of the overall data analysis in subsequent chapters. I chose a tree to depict the organic relationship between initial raw data – rooted in teacher experience (like a tree rooted in the

earth) and the subsequent use of non-technical literature to elevate the data into constructs or to gild the research branches of the grounded theory tree *(Figure 11).*

Emerging Theoretical Framework Rooted in Practice

Pedagogy Under Pressure

Apple (2004), Ball (2008), Baker and Foote (2003), Callan (2006), Codd (2005), Dunne (2005), Granville (2004),Gleeson (2004), Goodman (2003), Johnson (2008), Looney (2001), Long (2008), O' Sullivan (2005), Smyth *et al* (2007). Sugrue (2004, 2009).

Vocationalism & Pockets of Wonderful Things!

Ballet (2001), Collins (1991 &1995) Freire (1993, 1998), Greene (2005), Hamachek (1999) Hammerness (1995, 2003), Hansen (1995), Hogan (1995) Kelchtermans (2005) Korthagen (2004, 2006), Nias (1996), Noddings (1992, 96, 2000) Parker (2007), Pring (2005) , van Den Berg (2002) van Manen (2000) Welton (1995)

Navigating between '*old'* and *'new'* professionalism

Bush (2005), Corcoran & Pellion (2004) Day (2006), Darling Hammond & Bransford (2005), Downes & Gilligan (2007), DCSF (2008), Everton (2007), Fahy *et al* (2007), Goodson (2003) , Hargreaves (1994, 2000, 2003), Mulkerrins (2007), OECD (2005) Pellion (2002) Teaching Council (2007), Sachs (2003), Sexton (2007), Share, Tovey & Corcoran (2007)

Figure 11 - <u>Emerging Theoretical Framework Rooted in Practice</u>

Haig (1995:5), summarises how *constant comparative method* and an iterative relationship with theory can yield this higher level of abstraction than the initial data descriptions. To assist with the elevation and abstraction of themes into eventual constructs, I found the analytically robust questions (McLure, 2003:82; Ryan, 2006: 99-101) of the *what*, *why, when* and *how* variety particularly useful in formulating a rationale for the development of theoretical perspectives *(See appendix 5, page 293).* On route to this higher level of analysis, analytic memos

also provided a useful 'reflective scaffolding' for the researcher's interpretations of the data.

Analytic memos

In constructivist grounded theory, writing analytic memos is recommended (Charmaz, 2005; Russell, 2007; Seaman, 2008) during data collection and analysis, as a method of documenting and interrogating the researcher's own reflexive interaction with the emerging data. I used analytic memos to document my emerging thought processes, influenced by: emerging data, tacit knowledge and increased acquaintance with the relevant literature. According to Seaman (2008:12), frequent 'memoing' helps the researcher track thoughts throughout the development of the story. As researcher, I used memos (free writing style) to record moments of: confusion, hesitation, ambiguity, inconsistencies, ruptures, moments of strong emotions and silences (*This process is captured in sample analytic memos - Appendix 6, p.294-300).* Analytic memos thus helped me to: incubate ideas, mentally draft and redraft ideas, make premature assessments that could be dismissed or developed later, raise raw data to a conceptual level, construct hypotheses about interrelationships between categories and inductively develop the mini-scaffolding for an eventual meaning framework.

2.7.4. **Stage four - emerging construct and meaning framework**

The final stage of data analysis involved the consolidation of the three constructs into an overall meaning framework. This meaning framework emerged from the

conversation between: the emergent grounded data categories and the exploration of the relevant literature for each of the constructs. I name this as *dancing the data and the literature*. Fundamentally, this stage involves a more precise naming and rigorous delineation of the key concepts for each construct as shown *(Figure 12).*
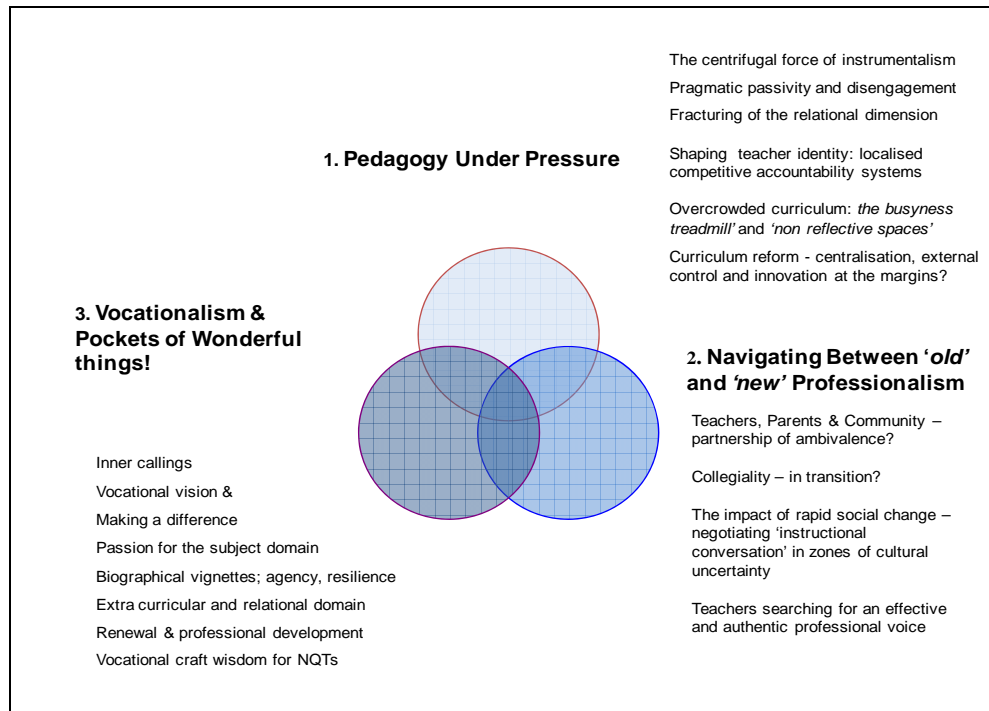
Figure 12 - <u>Emerging Construct and Meaning Framework</u>

My key concern at this stage of the process was to ensure that the grounded experience of participants was appropriately captured and explicated by a useful or insightful theoretical perspective. A brief comparison between the subthemes that emerged from raw data *(Figure 9, p.65)* and the more theoretically informed construct and meaning framework that finally emerged *(Figure 12, above)*, captures this *development of meaning* and elevation of findings towards a theory that is potentially generalizable. There are also points of intersection between each

of the three constructs within the overall meaning framework. This intersection relates to the climate of intensification implicit throughout the findings in: Chapters 3, 4 & 5. This discourse of intensification will however be explicitly summarised in Chapter 6 (final chapter) where conclusions are drawn.

2.7.5.   Location of literature in the discussion of findings chapters

To honour the inductive process of theory building in this study, each of Chapters 3, 4 & 5 is deliberately structured with a three part rhythm that moves between:

- an initial summary overview of the research findings (based on participant experience) for each construct, to

- an overview of the theoretical framework for each construct to

- a detailed discussion of findings and how they relate to the theoretical insights

This stage is actually the final stage of data analysis and in this study has created for me a new understanding regarding Grounded Theory and how data analysis is an ongoing dynamic until the discussion of findings chapters are complete. Here the ongoing conversation between findings (grounded in practice) and theoretical perspectives is integral to an: inductive, analytical, theory building process.

2.8.   Overall data analysis-the triangulation dynamic

Triangulation has been defined across generic research contexts by Gorard and Taylor (2004:43), as "the ability to enhance the trustworthiness of an analysis by a

fuller, more rounded account, reducing bias, compensating for the weakness of one method through the strength of another." Throughout this study, the use of three different data collection tools: teacher participant perspectives, policy and theoretical perspectives (from technical and non technical literature) and reflections from professional dialogue with final year teacher education students, provide the basis for a rounded account. In qualitative research however, and in constructivist approaches, the triangulation dynamic is not so much a strategy to enhance reliability, as a way of being, to capture multiple realities and enable a discussion between those realities, as outlined by Miles & Huberman (1994:267), and Gorard & Taylor (2004:43), who propose that: "triangulation is a way to get to the finding in the first place, by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources, by using different methods and by squaring the finding with others, it needs to be squared with."

It is this triangulation dynamic that enables a more textured discussion of findings beyond the mere significance of identification of themes. Bartlett & Burton (2001:54), distinguish between the positivist and post-positivist approaches to triangulation. "The positivist would use triangulation to demonstrate congruency of results but the interpretivist would use different sources of data to give greater depth to their analysis." Similarly, Seaman (2008:2), and Haig (1995:4), respectively describe the stance of the grounded theorist who seeks patterns across multiple collection points, providing 'robustness' or multiple means to establish reliability claims about phenomena *(Figure 13).*

Data Source	Sub theme: The disengaged and passive learner
Teacher Participant Interviews	*If there's one thing I hate today it's the passivity I'm dealing with every day....* *Some are like passive corpses. They are less animated... I try to wake them up...give them a broader perspective...but I feel sorry for them...* *They just attended and their needs were not being met.*
Professional Practice Dialogue: WithTeacher Education students	*This year one of my greatest challenges was convincing my cooperating teacher that using: group work, walking debate or role play were useful learning methodologies. She told me to stay with the book and not do anything fancy as the students wouldn't be able to handle it and there was a policy of keeping students quiet at all times...*
Theoretical & Professional Perspective	*Collins (2007) cultural dissonance between school culture and the lifeworld of the student-Need for individual learning plans & more localised curricula* *Prof Doug Williams NEWB Conference (Dublin, Feb 2008) on School Attendance in Ireland* *84,000 children miss over a month of school each year* *1 in 5 of school going population – issue of engagement and teacher pupil relationship?* *Share et al. (2003) – Resistance Theory* *Shor (1992) Endulment*

Figure 13 - **Multiple Perspectives and The Triangulation Dynamic**

This multiple perspective, evident in the sample sub-theme provided *(Figure 13)* will be evident throughout Chapters 3, 4 & 5, where both congruency and points of contestation are captured in the discussion of findings. This triangulation dynamic fosters a critical stance, attentive to potential layers of meanings, and discourses consistent with constructivist approaches (Charmaz, 2006; Cherryholmes, 1988; and Maclure 2003). A further feature of the triangulation dynamic linked to

constructivist approaches, is capturing the authentic voices of research participants to reflect what Tovey and Share (2003: 202-203) prioritise as the: "complexity of the social world...in the very language being used to talk about it." Therefore I use direct quotation from the *practitioner voice* throughout the discussion of findings to authenticate the practice – theory dialogue that unfolds and to facilitate a nuanced interpretation of complex localised realities.

2.9.   Ethical framework

In this study the main ethical framework was developed at the beginning of the process *(See appendix 7, p.302-304).* It included agreement regarding:

- consent

- confidentiality protocols

- providing information on how the data would be recorded, transcribed, how transcripts would be made available, how data would be stored and used and the nature of data analysis

- how the data would be reported in a thesis

- the likelihood of subsequent publication of any findings and protocols for acknowledgement of participants

- clarity about the stage at which the research becomes owned by the author for dissemination purposes

- alertness to the potentially sensitive nature of some data and protection of participant identity through the use of: codes, pseudonyms, adjusting descriptions, and editing quotes to protect third parties

- sensitvity to the professional work environments of some participants

- ensuring that participants maintained the right to withdraw from the research process at any stage

- ensuring that full transcripts and summaries of emergent findings were made available to the primary research participants

Holloway and Jefferson warn (2000:88), that the decision to consent "cannot be reduced to a conscious, cognitive process, but is a continuing emotional awareness that characterises every interaction." Similarly, May (2001:59), defines ethical decisions in research as those that distinguish between efficiency and that which is morally right or wrong, between ethical principles and expediency in the research process. At the end of the initial data analysis process, I contemplated convening a focus group discussion with the nine interviewees to explore their responses to emergent findings. Having reviewed the ethical framework, agreed at the beginning however, I realized that this would have required a renegotiation of the confidentiality assurance, initially given to each participant. Ethically, I felt this would have compromised initial assurances, regarding confidentiality and the nature of the participant involvement in the study. I compensated (to some degree) for this missed opportunity for validation, by presenting intial findings at two professional network conferences during 2008. I subsequently presented more conclusive findings at a similar conference in 2009.[1]

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[1] Educational Studies Association Of Ireland Conference, Galway, (March 7-8, 2008). Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools Annual Conference, Killarney (April 8-9, 2008) & Educational Studies Association Of Ireland, Conference, Kilkenny (April 2-4, 2009).

I also provided each participant with a copy of summary findings and invited them to comment if they so wished (as described earlier in this chapter).

Further concerns about power relations, ensuring no research participant was 'othered' or oppressed in any way (Young, 1990), all come within the normal ethical principles for research in educational settings (Blaxter *et al.,* 2001:145-149). Continual alertness, mindfulness, thoughtfulness, empathy, personal and professional sensitivity were adopted throughout. As researcher, I was committed to the ethic of *care* and the associated values of: honesty, authenticity, respect, transparency, and humility. To ensure an 'ethically mindful approach' throughout the constructivist methodology (that is not prescribed in advance), I discussed the following ethical principles with research participants in advance of the study and/or as they arose throughout the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:44-45; Etherington, 2007:614).

1. *Avoidance of research sites where informants felt uncomfortable:* At all times interview locations were chosen that suited participants.

2. *Remaining aware throughout of the potential power imbalance between researcher and research participants:* Two of the research participants worked as part of an educational network in which I held a leadership role. At the beginning of the process, when each agreed to particpate, I had a separate discussion with each participant, that addressed any possible reservations they might have had and clarified/reassured them regarding the boundaries between each role.

3. *Negotiating research decisions transparently with participants throughout and balancing one's own needs as researcher with those of participants:* During one participant interview, I noticed that the recording device began to malfunction about two thirds way through the interview. However, the conversation seemed very rich and neither of us wanted to conclude it at that point. We couldn't resolve the technical glitch, so we reached an agreement to continue the conversation on the basis that I would take notes for the remainder of the interview. The subsequent transcript noted this and specifically invited the participant to review the accuracy and authenticity of the manually recorded notes.

4. *Including in my writing and representations, information about research dilemmas that occurred, and the means by which they have been resolved:* I have provided examples of such dilemmas, but overall neither I, nor the research participants (to the best of my knowledge) encountered any significantly challenging ethical dilemmas.

5. *Honouring the 'truth' when writing up and reporting the research findings:* All of the findings can be traced directly to the raw data that emerged from the research participants as outlined in the four stage data analysis process. However, I also ensured that subsequent construction of categories and constructs honoured the rootedness of the data by using both the participant voice and theoretical sensitivity to authenticate the construction of the grounded theory. Notwithstanding this vigilant audit trail, I acknowledge my own subjectivites as researcher as outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

PEDAGOGY UNDER PRESSURE

3.0.   The unconventional literature review: A sociological perspective.

This grounded theory study epistemologically challenges the convention of beginning a research study in the field of 'education' with a 'stand alone' literature review, without firstly establishing what is happening in the *real* world of practice. From a sociological perspective in Ireland, it has been noted by Tovey & Share (2003:206) that the voices of key stakeholders in education are frequently absent in research. This study addresses this deficit by prioritising the voice of teaching practitioners throughout the central chapters but more significantly, it honours the collective *practitioner voice* in the organic emergence of the thesis structure. Therefore each of Chapters 3, 4 & 5 begins with a summary overview of the research findings as they emerged organically from the world of practice. To ensure however that the study doesn't become confined to the localised context of practice, the voices of key theorists and educationalists are invoked throughout the central chapters in a manner that seeks to illuminate and give meaning to the *real*. Therefore while "theoretical knowing, must earn its way" into the data that is rooted in practice (Charmaz, 2005:523), the integrated literature review becomes a crucial element in the inductive theory building process. The dancing of the data and the literature ensures that the micro world of localised practice is elevated and explicated to embrace the more macro theoretical perspective.

3.1. Introduction

The first cluster of findings has been organised around the construct of *'Pedagogy under Pressure.'* This exploration seeks to present and understand the 'emergent findings' in relation to the research question of: what vision is driving the practice of teaching and learning in second level schools? The five central and interconnected themes associated with this construct are represented in the shaded segments *(Figure 14).*
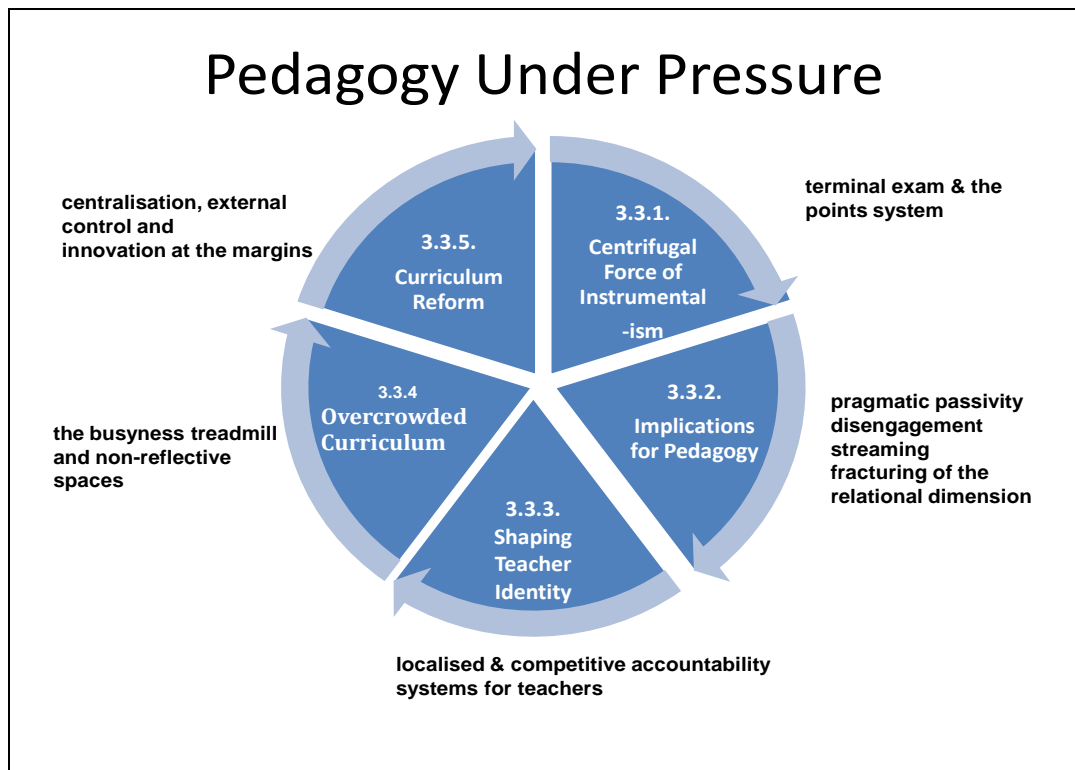
Figure 14 – <u>Construct 1- Pedagogy Under Pressure</u>

3.2. Summary findings

The overall findings for this construct can be summarised as follows:

- a discourse of 'pragmatic utilitarian engagement' has embedded itself in the practice of teaching and learning, as perceived by the research participants

- terminal examinations and the compelling force of the points system has frequently (though not always) impacted negatively on the experience of teaching and learning for the research participants and their students

- there is a perceived compromising of the relational dimension central to holistic development for teacher and student alike

- patterns of passivity and disengagement are emergent, patterns derived from a banking model of education, one of shallow learning, driven substantially by terminal assessment and patterns of 'streaming' that in some locations act as barriers to progression and equality

- 'teacher identity' is increasingly constructed through the 'measurable outcomes lens' of examination results, thus challenging and undermining more philosophically rich visions of education and the role of the educator

- new accountability systems, have emerged in local school settings, and subsequent competitive realities erode opportunities for collaboration between colleagues in the same school or across neighbouring schools

- curriculum overload is evident and new developments such as school development planning initiatives (SDPI) and whole school evaluation (WSE) have created new demands in already busy and largely non reflective school environments

- curriculum reform initiatives have been predominantly centralised and participants feel their voices have not been heard through current models of representation on curriculum reform agencies

- there is evidence of excitement around some curriculum innovations but there is recognition that these occur predominantly at the margins, where tensions between 'official validity' and what is actually valued by school communities and society are evident.

3.3. A theoretical overview

The theoretical perspectives clearly demonstrate and verify the existence of a deficit discourse, regarding current pedagogical practices at second level in Ireland (although this deficit discourse is clearly not a uniquely Irish phenomenon). Johnson (2008:20-23), in his critique of current curriculum reform challenges in England, argues that there is much evidence of teachers and students conspiring in a 'shallow learning.' "Pupils have become highly instrumental in their attitudes, expecting not to learn but to be equipped with the correct answers to pass the exam" (2008:23). From a sociological perspective, this utilitarian trend can be partially explained within the context of *rational action theory* (Share, *et al.,* 2007:213), which suggests that people make calculations about the value of education to themselves.

The powerful protocol of the terminal exam

Long (2008:123-124), in an Irish context, wrote of the dominant protocol of the exam and "the importance to student culture in Ireland of carefully weighted exam

technique and the importance of system knowledge...of how to manoeuvre oneself through examination papers." There is therefore, an emerging picture of the power assumed by 'managerial assessment' as opposed to 'assessment *for* learning.' Value is therefore placed on how to answer to the expectations of the examiner, rather than develop what Long (2008:123-124) called: 'generative inquiry' and the "rewarding of a counterfeit type of knowledge at the expense of genuine complexity." Callan (2006:23), explains how "students, as rational consumers" are more concerned with building careers than with "knowing." In this context, teachers' identities become enmeshed in their capacity to help students get on the career gateway via the points system. Similarly, parents "understand and promote such concerns and interests." Teachers, according to Callan, actually *resist* "reform efforts that interfere with these concerns." In this analysis, teachers are paradoxically constructed as willing conspirators in a pedagogical pursuit that they may also profess to seriously dislike.

Backwash effect of the points system on pedagogy

The Commission on the Points System (1998:108), while legitimating the 'brutally fair' meritocratic system of formal and terminal assessment associated with the points system, did acknowledge the "narrowing of the curriculum, arising from the tendency to teach to the examination and an undue focus on the attainment of results." Such practices encourage teachers to *instruct* and *assess* and students to *absorb* and *regurgitate* (Dunne, 2005:156-157). Similarly, Byrne (2002:20) spoke of pupil failure to assimilate content in a coherent way, much of it being

disconnected or consumed unreflectively as shallow knowledge. Knowledge is thus sacrificed to information. The *'points system'* described by Dunne (2005:149), as "the servant of the economy at its most brutal and undiscriminating" creates what Coolahan (2003:13) described as "a deleterious *'backwash'* effect on school curriculum and pedagogy, as teachers seek ways of supporting the high achievement of their pupils." Similarly Gleeson, (2004:120) and Mac Aogain (2007), both profile the increasingly utilitarian approach of students and teachers alike as they become adept at calculating the points-scoring capabilities of particular subjects and their utility in the labour market.

From a more global perspective, Maxine Greene (2005:77-78) and Cochran Smith (2006:79), also question the increasing trend of test scores, bell curves, the subsequent lack of agency for students, and the compliant submission of teachers. Cochran Smith (2006:79) warns of the dangers of teachers' minds becoming obsessed and preoccupied with test scores that limit teachers' ability to "exercise professional judgment, critique common practices that disadvantage certain groups of students, and work for social justice." The preoccupation with terminal exam assessment in Ireland, has endured howeever, despite progressive White Paper (1995:58-59) policy rhetoric of: whole school approaches to the improvement of teaching methodologies, the creation of a learning environment appropriate to each school and "principles of sharing, supporting and teamwork." Callan, (2006:9), noted how the axiological longevity of the terminal exam becomes inscribed,

through its obstinate legitimation by social and cultural systems (including the media and parents views of what is appropriate).

Barriers of resistance to constructivist pedagogy

From a macro pedagogical perspective, Moran (2008:218-219), illuminates the rationale for constructivist approaches. "Instead of programming children to deliver 'correct behaviours' on demand, in respect of prescribed content, the newer paradigm involves learners in constructing their own knowledge." The 'Vygotskian' ideal of 'social constructivism' profiles the teacher identifying the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and "providing the scaffolding to help them enter this zone, and co-construct extensions to their existing knowledge." (See also Russel's 2007 study).

This constructivist approach is likely to be a significant challenge in the context of an overcrowded curriculum, with little opportunity for reflective spaces in the daily lives of teachers and students. The OECD review of Irish education (1991:103) however, named the "reliance on didactic instruction," and the need for schools and teachers in post 2000 society, to "actively involve students in the learning process, as well as pedagogy and content that are integrated, challenging, and sensitive to differences in individual learning styles." Similarly, McGuinness (2006:8-110), spoke of schools being "bureacratic inheritances form the nineteenth century," their unsuitability for "teaching and learning in the twenty first century" and their need

to be: "liberated from the tyrannies of time, timetabling rigidities and tradition so as to become genuine learning communities."

Apple (2004:77-78), notwithstanding the progressive rhetoric of policy discourses, is suspicious however of a more sinister motive driving the embedded resistance towards constructivist pedagogy. He theorizes student passivity in the context of the preferential dominance for 'technical knowledge' (see also Habermas (1981) or Brookfield (2005) on Habermas). Apple perceives the socialisation of students into "the normative structure required by society," so as to hold "the social and intellectual world in an *acritical* fashion." In this context schools as institutions, present knowledge as neutral and unchanging and in so doing, "point to the naturalness of acceptance, institutional beneficience and a positivistic vision in which knowledge is divorced form the real human actors who created it."

Historical impediments to constructivist pedagogy in an Irish context
In a specifically Irish context, as noted in Chapter One, O'Sullivan (2005:106-128), established the significance of the 'theocentric' paradigm in Irish education, where knowledge was traditionally perceived as "fixed." This facilitated "a consensual conception of the social order" one that would "silence or impede...generative dialogue" and undermine the "functioning of interpretive frameworks in our lives." McGuinness (2006:8), acknowledged the unique and deeply rooted regard for teachers in an Irish context, arising from the monastic tradition during the 'golden age' (seventh and eight centuries-inherent with images of silence, obedience etc.)

and subsequently during penal times. Murphy also (2008:31), argued that given the ascendent position subsequently afforded the Catholic Church in education, "it was difficult to prise open a conception of the educational project that would accord such a high priority to the development of a learner's critical faculties." Lee (1989:573) also contextualised our early achievements in education within a deficit and ironic equation: "The Irish secondary school system in the early decades of independence inculcated many worthy qualities. Neither intellectual independence nor intellectual originality were normally among them."

Teacher identity and the instrumentalist imperative

The possibility in this instrumentalist climate of reification of teacher identity, through the accountable lens of 'deliverer of results' may be inevitable and has 'historical resonance' in Irish education. The 'payments by results' policy schemes during the early twentieth century and the respected longevity of terminal examinations within the Irish education system, are possibly causal factors. Today, the growth of grind schools, presents ironic refractions of 'results by payment' instead of 'payment by results,' and assumptions, that fee paying schools and grind centres, will deliver better results for aspiring middle class students. The emergence of private institutions at upper-second level is evidence of what Share, *et al.,* (2007:207), call the "incipient marketisation of Irish education." Kelly (2004:42-43), summarised some of the consequent tensions felt by teachers as one of dissonance between values of: competition, productivity, instrumentalism, value for money and other values of caring, human development, intrinsic value and

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enrichment. The former values he argued have been "almost completely absorbed by the teaching profession," and have "come to dominate not only the education debate but also educational policies and practices."

Finally, in the domain of curriculum reform, concerns have also been raised about an erosion of teachers' professional identity due to malfunctioning models of representative democracy. Sugrue & Gleeson (2004:269-313), in their interesting review of 'the signposts and silences' within the Irish curriculum experience, proposed that the model of consensus and partnership, although sold as collaborative and participative, may not be all that different from mechanisms of top down centralised reforms (2004:277). The authors argue, that this model (advocated by the OECD 1991), conflates consensus building with policy formulation. They note the paradox here, that at a time when the free market calls for creativity, autonomy and different solutions, that this centralised policy making structure, has exactly the opposite effect (2004:280). Coolahan (2003:49), in his review of international studies, concluded that where teachers experience an erosion of their discretionary, professional space to make decisions, this contributes to low morale and self perception by teachers of themselves as more like *functionaries* than professionals. In this dispirited situation, some teachers inevitably retreat into pragmatic compliance.

3.4.0   Themes From The Emergent Data

It is now time to explore the emergent findings in the context of this theoretical overview and to 'dance the data' and the literature in a constructivist tango.

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3.4.1   The centrifugal force of instrumentalism

The focus on terminal exams

> *It started with Leeson Street and the 'grind schools' which became popular when marking schemes were revealed in the 80s. It became teaching towards the exam and to a large extent now, the joy has gone out of the subject...Teachers are under pressure and no matter what, when August comes it's the results that count. Teachers want their students to get an 'A'...There's no point of getting a C or D and saying I enjoyed it...revision aids, study guides, Internet and media coverage are all geared towards exams...It's an industry!*
>
> CS

The adaptation by teachers to this instrumentalist approach and its pervasive nature

was typically professed with regret by one participant, who reflected on her own

'instrumentalist performance' mirroring Baker & Foote's (2003), powerful

metaphor of the *karaoke teacher*.

> *I think our education values are gone...out the window. We have become teachers who teach to a marking scheme...and I'll do that...Hands up! That includes me too! I can teach to a marking system...back to front, inside out and upside down!*
>
> SM

Another participant verified this compliance with the *karaoke* exam script but also

highlighted the extent to which the instrumentalist ethos pervades the school as a

'system' and has minimized richer perceptions of the educational endeavour.

> *The end goal is the results or assessment and everything works back to this from the end. This certainly influences what happens in classrooms but also what happens in school systems or in management. Education is seen as just the points system! The curriculum philosophy, what it intends and what happens...how it is presented...can be miles apart.*
>
> BC

Some participants also noted the increasing adoption of the language codes of the

points discourse and its intensity during the Celtic Tiger years, while other

participants saw the ironic contradiction within this discourse, between ample opportunity for third level places and the compulsive nature of competition, that engendered unnecessary stress for students.

> *People begin to believe it...the myth of needing high points for every course when there was never more choice, plus the Celtic Tiger vision that schools should be delivering 500 points and people work to that kind of agenda...never more stress obsessing people.*
>
> SM

This participant's awareness of the positive supply and demand equation, gave credence to Foucault's theory (1979:100-101), that discourses are also vulnerable to challenge. This participant had seen the chink in the armour of an illogical discourse and in Foucault's words, "undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it." Exposing illogicality and constructing a new logic takes time however as 'normalising or essentialising discourses' do not change overnight. The primacy of results and points as primary evidence of a successful education, persists in social discourse.

> *...but everyone does expect results to happen. There's a fear that the bubble will burst if results are not good. The points system is very unfair and it doesn't acknowledge aptitude or vocation.*
>
> CT

The metaphor of *'bubble burst'* is an interesting metaphor for the perceived fragility and unsustainable foundation, underpinning educational enterprise. Some participants however, positioned themselves as non-agentic victims of blame in the context of hegemonic forces of instrumentalism.

> *There's such a narrow focus on exams and assessment...and nail the teacher... and helplines! They (media) are doing far more damage – making kids think this is more important than anything else...* SM

This latter comment also implies a positioning of teacher as 'non-professional' technician, as opposed to autonomous professional as outlined by Hargreaves (2000), or *transformative professional* as outlined by Sachs (2003). There was also evidence of perceived alliances of conspiracy between parent and student that pressurised teachers to submit to the transparent and tangible evidence (within popular discourse), of what effective teaching is and what Reid (1999:147), also named as: "the highly difficult task of converting outside publics."

> *Increasingly the dominance of the exam system in the national system does have a very big bearing on how teaching and learning takes place. How we see our roles and our status...our effectiveness as seen by students and parents...he/she is a good teacher if she can get us an 'A1.'*
>
> BC

But there was also evidence of other internal curricular conspiracies, ones that encouraged teachers to submit to the instrumentalist philosophy. These related to the very transparent structure of examination papers and student awareness of what was required to score top grades.

> *Definitely-the exam drives everything! The new Leaving Cert Geography syllabus for example. There is a 30 mark question requiring twelve SRP's* (significant relevant points) *and that's all students want to see.*
>
> CS

While the research participants perceived themselves as victims of various shades of instrumentalism, there was however occasional evidence of acceptance, rationalising and pedagogical reliance/comfort with the terminal exam-based system.

> *On the other hand what is the alternative to the points system? It has served us well in a time of restricted places at third level. Funnily enough,*

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> *exam results are a reward but don't always reflect the enjoyment students have had over the years...you get **pockets of wonderful things...***
>
> CT

Despite much criticism of the terminal exam and associated points system of assesment at senior cycle, some of the interview participants strongly defend the maintenance of the current terminal examinations at junior cycle. This finding highlights the postmodern complexities of truth and counter truth.

> *I'm a massive supporter of the Junor Cert Exam. I would rue the day if they ever tried to water it down. It's a **target** for teachers. If it wasn't there, **productivity** would drop. It's also...good **training** for the students* (bold emphasis mine).
>
> CT

What's interesting here is the unconscious use of the language of business and economics ('target' 'productivity' and 'training'), 'the new lexicon within which education is conceived (Ball, 2008:16). Similarly, Kelly (2004:43), noted the subordination of education to the aims and practices of business and the corporate culture to such a degree that: "its agents can no longer comprehend their vocation in any other terms." Secondly, the participant's reliance on terminal exams, as the only motivational type of assessment or measurement of productivity is consistent with the business measurement model, referred to previously by Gleeson & O'Donnabhàin (2009) and described by Ball (2008:21), as the legitimation of the knowledge economy discourse, and how it constructs "a narrow instrumental approach to the economics of knowledge and to intellectual culture."

The acknowledgement of a need for change in assessment was however explicitly stated by other participants who favoured innovation.

> *There's a need for a change in assessment...The exam system is far too rigid and there is no encouragement to do something different.*
>
> SM

> *Until the exam system changes we can't do much about the way it is anyhow.*
>
> CT

For others however, there were interesting ideas about returning to pervious models of assessment that had been abandoned twenty years ago, i.e. The 'Group Certificate' examination completed in the second year of junior cycle in vocational schools.

> *I'm sorry that the Group Cert has gone...It was a fantastic course. I'm sorry we have foundation level...as I think the kids we taught back in the 80s were no more disadvantaged than today's kids. The Group Cert was great training. By osmosis, by whatever...you filled it into the cranium. By the time they got to Inter Cert they would jump through any hoops for you.*
>
> SOF

In the vocational sector, this participant championed a banking model of education and challenged the logic of waiting three years for an exam in a social culture where long term goals and delayed gratification are not the norm. Perhaps other types of assessment might address this perceived illogicality.

In conclusion, there is therefore an emergent thread of an instrumentalist discourse with imagery of terminal assessment, the lure of the points system, and the language codes of business and economics that seem embedded into perceptions of what teaching and learning entails. There was also the language of regret, anger, frustration and non-agentic compliance. There was also evidence of some contentment, with current practices, nostalgia for former assessment norms,

dependence on terminal assessment and some complex diversity of opinion regarding the perceived need for a different type of assessment.

3.4.2. The implications for pedagogy

Within the emerging instrumentalist web, many interwoven threads that impact negatively on the experience of teaching and learning are evident. These include: *pragmatic passivity* and *disengagement*, fragmentation *of the student – teacher relationship* dimension and ambiguity regarding the *practice of streaming.*

From pragmatic passivity to disengagement
Some of these threads could be collectively identified as 'pragmatic passivity' for both teacher and student. This 'pragmatic alliance of compliance' enabled teacher and student to collaborate in a game of 'examination monopoly' where exam preparation assumed a monopoly over most other educational goals. Some of the previous discussion, regarding 'karaoke teachers' playing, reciting, mimicking and performing to an exam agenda that facilitates student preoccupation with SRP (significant relevant points) has already been established. Other responses however reflect a more worrying disquiet regarding a perception of increasing passivity among students.

> *Students have definitely become more passive – it's definitely the exam and what they have to learn to get the necessary points.*
> SOF

> *If there's one thing I hate today it's the passivity I'm dealing with every day. Back then (1980s), kids were enjoying school...today's generation are like passive corpses.*
> SM

For some participants, there were perceptions of a wider malaise in generic communication skills, a passivity that may have rootedness in wider socialisation processes, such as: reliance on the externally constructed soundbite of the information age, the likelihood of non-conversational episodes in 'time poor' family environments, less frequent rituals of family meals, and the emergence of self–contained autonomous living (bedrooms with TV/video/computer) for a significant number of today's adolescents.

> *I also saw limitations in students' ability to communicate at a human level...not just socially but even about the subject matter...a lack of basic communication skills or being able to have an opinion of one's own...or able to evaluate what others said...*
>
> BC

There was also some evidence of resistance by students when teachers tried to use active and participative methodologies.

> *Sometimes when I try to be innovative, they don't react well – they think you are daft.* SM

This would also be supported by evidence from my own discussions with final year student teachers, who frequently report that they experience resistance from mentoring teachers and students alike, during teaching practice episodes in schools. For one research participant, the power of school culture to negate professional knowledge was also a factor in his non-adoption of progressive methodologies during his initial years as a newly qualified teacher.

> *We had lecturers on the H. Dip who encouraged using active teaching methodologies. However when you return to the classroom, it is very easy to fall back into the old habit...there were unwritten messages...*
>
> BC

This reaction suggests that observations from the OECD Report (1991), regarding didactic teaching and more recent evidence from a Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS Report 2009: xxi) of an enduring preference in Ireland (particularly among male teachers) for more direct transmission beliefs (relative to other comparison countries) are still valid. There was also a perception of linkage between passivity and more historically rooted phenomenon.

> *We've inherited something from our history in the education system...that people view as good...so there isn't an emphasis on questioning...it's regurgitation rather than critical thinking...*
>
> BC

This perception echoes O'Sullivan's (2005:180-223) theory of passivity derived from the conspiracy of theocentric and mercantile legacies in Irish education. The post 1966 (OECD *Investment in Education Report*) alignment of education towards economic development has been well documented by Lynch & Lodge (2002:182), under the inequality lens and the colonisation of education by economic interests established by Dunne (2002:83). The anti-intellectual trends that subsequently emerged were alluded to by Sugrue and Gleeson (2004:284). The origins of a 'pragmatic passivity' and an instrumental approach to education may have their contemporary roots in this mercantile tradition, but Gleeson (2004:103), summarises the many influences on Irish education as a complex collage of: "insularity, colonial past, catholic church control, classical humanist ideology, state examinations and the considerable influence of external agencies such as the OECD and EU." Gleeson also (2004:126) cites chief examiner reports for History and English that corroborate this banking approach. "Some candidates depend almost entirely on class-notes and potted/printed synopses" and "the system is

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producing students who are very good at learning and repeating but not so good at analysing and responding."

The sedimented history of these influences can also be detected from Sugrue's observation (1998:25), after reviewing survey studies of teachers' practice, conducted over twenty five years that: "teachers seem to endorse a child-centred rhetoric while practising a more formal pedagogical style." Teachers are not encouraged to break free from what Long (2008:124) called the "rubrics that herald success."

Disengagement

While 'pragmatic passivity of compliance' is one emerging thread in the study there are also threads of less compliant hues. These relate to students who were not motivated by the current centralised curriculum and the associated exam based outcomes, whose *raison d'être* was not points or a college place.

> *Some very much resisted what was going on there and what was being offered. They just attended and their needs were not being met...the banding system wasn't appropriate to their needs. They were passive or resistant, some of them just sat there...They were being minded for the day.*
>
> CS

Shor (1992) named this slow burning resistance as *endulment*, and Freire's concept of *ontological violence* also became evident for one participant who reflected on what was happening her own subject within the context of passive and resistant students.

> *Students are getting to hate my subject...I'm getting to hate my subject...*
>
> SM

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The structure of the day with subjects that some of them just don't like/need/want creates problems and their frustration carries from those subjects on into other classes.

<div align="right">BC</div>

The research is saying that 25% of the junior cert cohort are currently disengaged but are the other 75% actively engaged?

<div align="right">CS</div>

From a sociological perspective, resistance theory (as sprouted from rational action theory), does help to explain the rejection of schooling, as experienced by a significant minority (frequently working class and socially disadvantaged males), and according to Share, *et al.,* (2007:213) is: "a rational response to the situation in which they find themselves." Hopkins (2003), in an English context however, argued that persistence with traditional curricula is also having a seriously alienating influence on middle-class students with *cultural capital.* Research reported by Hopkins, suggested that 70% of students were bored. In this context Hargreaves (2005), makes the case for radical rethinking of school as an organisation. The following participant may have provided some useful insights to explain the disengagement for the non-third level aspirants.

Some would see greater earning power by leaving than by staying...Education is seen as just the points system and for those who don't have a culture of college, why would they engage with it?

<div align="right">BC</div>

However, the availability of the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) within the same school reflected prejudices, regarding the vocational and academic divide.

Even with LCA, these students are sometimes segregated physically from other students, so it's the opposite to integration. That was my experience

<div align="center">98</div>

> *in three different schools. I saw...a two tier system going on...and in some cases students being threatened by teachers that they would **end up** in LCA.*
>
> <div align="right">BC</div>

An official evaluation of the LCA programme is pending however (NCCA & ESRI, 2009) but meanwhile feedback from teachers and LCA students is reported by the NCCA as positive; that students grow in self esteem and that LCA contributes positively to student experience of school (NCCA, 2009:1-2).

Similarly another participant demonstrated the misfit between 'theory practice'and 'ideal and reality' of curriculum intiatives in foundation level Maths and LCA in her school.

> *We fought for years to have Foundation Maths, but it's not worth the paper it's written on and the same with LCA – not liked by some schools as it brings in the 'wrong type' of student...but it has to be there for a cohort who cannot do the conventional Leaving Cert.*
>
> <div align="right">CJ</div>

The dilemma here of devising relevant curricula that are also *valued* as opposed to just validated, does demonstrate the preoccupation with conventional and established accreditation paths, by both teachers themselves and society more generally.

Organisation of learning: streaming & inequality

Streaming is another point of contestation, i.e. the practice of organising students into similar academic ability levels across a range of subjects. The participant profile, reflected many different customs regarding the organisation of learning around ability levels. In one co-educational school, students were rigidly streamed

<div align="center">99</div>

from the very beginning based on an assessment at point of entry. Such was the competition for middle class students in the overall geographical catchment area, that this participant believed the school had no choice unless it guaranteed middle class parents, that their children would have access to all subjects at higher level, in the company of students with 'like minded' parents.

In an Irish context, the limited research evidence on streaming remains inconclusive, regarding its pedagogical benefits. Recent studies: Smyth *et al.,* (2007) and the subsequent NCCA Commentary Report (2007), point however, towards negative outcomes for weaker ability groupings with a correlation between disengagement and streaming. This contrasts with more positive motivations in mixed ability and higher ability groupings. However, other factors such as; social class, gender and the hidden curriculum of school culture, also influence outcomes. The degree to which progression or movement across streams or bands is facilitated is also an influencing factor. One participant's response reflected acquiescence with a systems-based rationale, for non mobility.

> *You would see little movement across streams. In a large school it gets messy to tinker with the structures and the lists of students.*
>
> BC

There was also a perception of streaming being applied to staff, with the implication that the teachers with the best track record for results, were rewarded with annual allocation to the top stream students.

> *Even teachers, issues like who is assigned to what stream and what band...within a community...again the unwritten message...the subtleties of*

> *perception that the best teachers are given to the best students...*
> *Management really need to look at this and realize the perception that is*
> *created.*
>
> <div align="right">BC</div>

Assuming that results are therefore (in some contexts at least), the driver for streaming of students and teachers – there are some serious implications regarding: negative competition, divisions among colleagues, and self-fulfilling prophecies for those who perceive themselves as the losers in such organisational patterns of teaching and learning (Lynch & Lodge, 2002:171-173). There was also evidence of related divisions betweeen schools – particularly where vocational and secondary schools competed in the same catchment area.

> *There is huge labelling and stigmatising going on. The staff would say*
> *there is a lot of dumping...If you are academic you go to the CBS but if*
> *you are good with your hands...or if you have learning needs you go to the*
> *vocational school.*
>
> <div align="right">SOF</div>

Thus, it would appear, that streaming of students, teachers and schools continues and is perpetuated by perceptions around instrumental outcomes such as: examination results, and competition between students, teachers and schools. Thus there is the perpetuation of a 'divisive, non collegial professionalism,' based on prejudices, fostered by a binary system, and an internalisation by teachers of differing roles, associated with the vocational and secondary divide.

Gleeson (2004:117), based on O'Reilly's (1998), findings argued that: "the segmented post-primary system generated a form of competitive conflict for key educational resources." The issue of inequalities and how some students could

access educational advantage through private grinds and tuition, was also evident in my participant sample and a contentious issue for some participants, who worked in disadvantaged school sites.

> *Some students get grinds and that can only happen if families can financially support education...but we have kids now and they have no support at home...*
>
> CS

Lynch (1989:124), argued that: "education matters most to those who get most from it, namely the middle classes, because they know the educational formula by rote and it is in their interest that it does not change." Flynn (2007:91) also argues that: "the level of disadvantage experienced, as a child moves through the education system is strongly influenced by the socio-economic status and the health and welfare of the family unit." One of the participants articulated the complex pressure points that militate against retention for disadvantaged students and challenges teachers and schools to 'hold the paradox' between vocational idealism and what is valued in society.

> *...the whole ethos in schools is 'get the difficult child out'...he/she is getting in the way of learning for others. This saddens me...but to stay and prosper with children in this environment you have to have a love for them and an understanding of where they come from. Results based teaching and a focus on exams does not always foster this love.*
>
> SOF

The focus on streamlining and the protection of majority interests is evident here, but also the challenges of empathy and mindfulness with student contexts, where there is a rejection of the status quo or what mainstream education offers. Disengagement is therefore evident to some degree, as a consequence of inappropriate curriculum offerings. There is a lack of *'valuing'* as opposed to

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'*validation*' of alternative curriculum pathways. Structures of schooling frequently remain non adaptive and practices of streaming perpetuate negative identities for some students and occasionally teachers.

The impact on the student teacher relationship

Throughout the research process, there was some evidence of perceived changes and deterioration in the relationship dimension of teaching and learning. The images were linked to the pedagogy of commodification, described by Ball (2008:21-22), as one where: "we deny the primacy of human relationships in the production of value, and thereby erase the social." One participant perceived the erosion of the relationship dimension as follows:

> *At the moment what is being lost is the person, the relationship, the pleasure...the self worth... but if they see their achievement judged only in terms of high points then that produces negativity.*
>
> CJ

The research of Beijaard (1995:288–289), cited by Day, *et al.*, (2006:607), suggests a strong link between: teacher identity and the interplay between teachers' relationships and interactions with their pupils. For some participants in this research study, the strain on the relationship dimension was deemed untenable.

> *There are a small number of us who realize that to continue in the profession and to continue having some happiness in the profession - we cannot continue...with the present situation.*
>
> SC

Other participants had observed a trend toward manufactured or structured opportunities for happiness in the extra curricular dimension, but noted the absence of happiness as an inherent process throughout the learning dynamic.

> *We will do things to make people happy. We do loads of things. There's extra curricular but it's not integrated into the overall experience. I remember fun and happiness in the process of teaching and learning.*
>
> <div align="right">SM</div>

There was also a perception that newly qualified teachers had become more reliant on discipline codes and prescriptive responses to system wide policies, rather than the nurturing of the relationship dimension.

> *I look at young teachers who are systems happy...they want to tick boxes/slips, merits and demerits...instead of building relationship.*
>
> <div align="right">SM</div>

However policy imperatives as outlined in *The School Matters Report* (2006), the legal implications of compliance with codes of discipline (Education Act 1998 and Education and Welfare Act 2000), favour accountability systems and transparency of implementation within systemwide policies.

Other participants had also perceived a trend towards less involvememt in extra curricular activity and noted the loss of this to the relationship dimension.

> *You are seeing a different side to them...when you get involved in extra curricular activity...like when we took them down to the Maths thing in Cork but the way things are going now... there is a shift away from that and there is the pity of it.*
>
> <div align="right">CJ</div>

Such perceptions of a retreating extra curricular domain among younger teachers, may represent a retrograde trend in relational nurturing, contrary to the spirit of Noddings (1992, 1999, 2003, 2006) and the centrality of care in education. The reflections of the following participant also reflect a typical concern for the erosion of the pastoral and holistic.

> *Unfortunately...I don't know...that we look anymore at the growth of the whole person at all. I would put huge value on the extra curricular and the time teachers give to it...*
>
> SOF

Hargreave's (2003:60) advice, that in such a mercantilist climate: "it is very important that teachers serve as courageous counterpoints" may be difficult to achieve, given how one participant reflected on her own perception of changing attitudes during the last fifteen years.

> *I saw sudden change...results and being outcomes driven...trappings and job aspirations became very important – students were losing humanity and the teacher was seen as an instrument to get results - a means to an end...*
>
> SM

Ball (2008:42-43), explains how in this marketised environment, insidious policy technologies are employed as "devices for changing the meaning of practice and social relationships," in educational contexts. These policy technologies he argues: "provide a new language, a new set of incentives and disciplines and a new set of roles, positions and identities within which what it means to be a teacher, student/learner."

One participant observed however how a minority of teachers:

> *...were willing to run the risk of the whole marking system and make it secondary to what was more important.*
>
> BC

However within the same school, the dominant culture portrayed a preoccupation with the 'results based end-game,' regardless of the pain threshold for student or teacher.

> *...the majority, would be the other extreme...they just wanted students to reach a certain standard no matter what pain they or their students had to go through to achieve this standard.*
>
> BC

In conclusion, Ball's claim (2008:3), that: "the ecology of education...is being changed and...so too is the learner," does have a resonance of truth in what he subsequently articulates (2008:42-43), as: "changed social relationships," the 'sidelining' of the social purposes of education and "hegemonic discourses of quiescence with market forces and education as commodity." The value placed on the quality of teacher pupil relationships in an Irish context is however affirmed by Sexton's attitudinal study (2007:79-105). The findings from *this* current study however, signal a significant concern with the challenge in practice of maintaining nurturing relationships within instrumentalist environments. It signals the emergence of: pragmatic passivity for the majority of students, disengagement for a significant minority and teacher perception of a trend towards deterioration in the teacher student relationship.

3.4.3   The implications for teacher identity - the emergence of localised and competitive accountability systems

Teacher Identity

Throughout the participant interviews, there were threads of data which suggested a strong linkage between current teacher 'self-identity' and the instrumentalist discourse. (This finding may also have interesting implications for student identity in instrumentalist teaching and learning contexts). The specific association between

'professional/personal self worth' and the achievement of successful examination results was notable across the teacher participant sample group.

> *I was well established and getting good results. I realized I could get results and still care and be human. I had a student... who got 6 As...it is an important sign of good teaching.*
>
> <div align="right">SM</div>

For this participant, there was a clear sense of correlation between being successful in one's teaching career and getting good results. There was also an inference however, that good results did not compromise the caring or pastoral domain. For another research participant however, results were the overall driver or catalyst that prescribed one's role as teacher.

> *Well that's why you go into the classroom to get results...to get the best out of a student academically.*
>
> <div align="right">CS</div>

Similarly, another participant reflected the perception that teacher identity is partially constructed from the perceptions and feedback of others based on results achieved.

> *How we see our roles and our status...our effectiveness, based on the perceptions of students and parents is that, he/she is a good teacher if he/she can get us an A1.*
>
> <div align="right">SC</div>

Presumably this belief, that parents and students equate good teaching primarily with results, becomes inbuilt and intrinsic to teacher perception of self. These perceptions may not be fully accurate and there are implicit but 'untested silences' and assumptions here regarding what parents want. The same research participant equated some of this public perception of teacher within a 'middle class' context as a service provider and deliverer of results.

> *For middle class parents there's an increasing tendency towards privatised education, and delivering results does in this context define a good teacher.*
>
> CS

Day, *et al.,* (2006:604) in his review of research findings on the identity of teachers, alludes to the vulnerability of teachers to the judgments of: colleagues, head teachers and "those outside the school gates, e.g. parents, inspectors, media," judgments which "might be based exclusively on measurable student achievements." As vulnerability increased, therefore, teachers tended towards passivity and conservatism in their teaching. In an interesting neo-liberal analyiss, Codd (2005:201), contemplates a de-professionalisation of teacher identity, associated with diminishing images of "teachers as functionaries," and a culture of "performativity in which ends are separated from means and where teachers are valued only for what they produce." Similarly, Dunne & Hogan (2004:xi), propose that "much is amiss with education in our advanced industrial societies," and that the great effort and expenditure currently invested in education may in fact "badly miscarry what should be the proper intention of education." One of the research participants felt that the intensity around this focus on the end result, and the outcome of better economic prospects is being increasingly *demanded* from teachers.

> *The intensity around it has gotten worse. We value the fact that we can send them to what we perceive are better schools and we can get more grinds...and get them into better jobs. We are demanding more and more and more ...*
>
> SOF

Callan (2006:23), however reminds us of the hegemonic forces within socio-political contexts that shape perception of the educational enterprise and role

identification within it. "It dominates the consciousness of students, the work of teachers, and shapes the expectations of parents as to what second level schooling is all about." Another particpant's response implied that there is an 'exam obsessed' biological trait in teachers!

> *It's in the teacher's blood! You want them to achieve in exams and...*
> *At the end of the day though teaching is teaching – the exams are the*
> *motivator for teachers.*
>
> <div align="right">CT</div>

Such essentialising is contrary to post-structuralist approaches. Day, *et al*., (2006:607), argue that teacher identity includes 'multiple selves' which, they suggest, are: "continually reconstructed, through the historical, cultural, sociological and psychological influences which all shape the meaning of being a teacher." This research study would suggest that teacher identity, based on examination results, is currently however a core element of that 'identity nexus' for many teachers. (A finding with potential implications for student identity also?)

Moskvina (2006:74-88), raises interesting questions regarding the possibilities of 'personality and professional' deformation specifically for teachers where teacher identities are challenged through 'spiritual fatigue' (denudation of the visionary and inspirational aspects of one's role as an educator) over a lifetime. This challenge to nurture one's professional identity has been passionately expressed by authors such as: Hansen (1995), Darling–Hammond and Bransford (2005), and Palmer (2007). Interestingly, another participant who is now part of a senior management team in a school, expressed the conflict of identity and issues of

continuity/discontinuity felt, when some teachers were promoted to middle/senior management within a school.

> *I expected them to understand all about policy and the Education Act but they felt that they should be valued for their teaching and learning more than anything else...but as Assistant Principals, I see their role as managers but they still see it as teachers.*
>
> SOF

This might suggest that the transition from teaching identity to leadership/management identity is fraught with sedimented histories of 'pedagogical habitus.' It might also pose as problematic, the assumption in current Teaching Council policy (2007), that teachers are willing participants in a postmodern construction of professionalism, which assumes teachers generally, wish to embrace leadership communities within schools. Sexton's findings in an Irish context (2007:79-105), also corroborate the *lower value* placed by teachers on policy or philosophical concerns, compared to *higher values* placed on practical concerns about classroom based practice. Day, *et al*., (2006:611), define agency as: "one's ability to pursue the goals that one values" and in relation to identity is concerned with: "the fulfillment of these identities, and their reconstruction where necessary." Agency, according to the authors is also expressed by: "the extent to which people can live with contradictions and tensions within these various identities" (2006:611).

There is certainly evidence in this research study of teacher participants struggling with what Freire (2005), explored as the dominant cultural values present in society

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and within themselves, but not necessarily in the tradition of teachers as *critical cultural workers*. There was however limited evidence of potential resistance against 'essentializing' constructions of identity, and some evidence of movement and renegotiation of identity during a teaching life.

> *I'd say initially my role was to train people into the subject...to prepare people for their exams...but that changed later.*
>
> BC

This changing perception will be discussed in the context of larger renegotiations of the teacher's role in Chapter Five. In general however, the theme of instrumentalism remains fundamental to the current nexus of teacher identity, and instrumentlaist perceptions are strongly embedded in the linguistic protocols used to describe one's professional identity in this study.

Localised and competitive accountability systems

The OECD Report (1991) highlighted the relative autonomy enjoyed by second level teachers in Ireland and this autonomy was referred to by Coolahan (2003), as 'legendary,' relative to international protocols regarding teacher accountability. The emerging evidence from this research, would suggest however, that new accountabilities are increasingly evident and that these accountabilities have their axiological roots in 'instrumentalist essentializing' of the teacher's role as deliverer of results to students and parents alike, results that are measurable and results that: enable public judgements of both teacher, student, and school to be made. This emergent accountability may also reflect wider frameworks of '*soft law mechanisms*' associated with New Public Management (NPM), as outlined by Ball

(2008), Sugrue (2009a) and Gleeson & O'Donnabháin (2009). This NPM associated with the Europeanisation of Education has provided a legitimate backdrop for the normalising of more 'localised accountability mechanisms.' Some of this new accountability was experienced by participants as psychological, sometimes quite subtle but strongly felt.

> *At the end of the day there would be an assessment of the standards these students had reached. I was answerable now also to another body out there...hard to define ..school, parents or management...I was going to be measured at the end of the day. At teacher meetings - parents usually ask first about progress in the subjects...and their progress relative to others...they want a prediction of the result their child will achieve.*
>
> BC

For other participants, the accountability was less subtle, very localised and was almost coercive within an environment that fostered 'competitive collegiality.'

> *There are staff meetings in September where national results and the school results are compared and; where the school rates in terms of national averages for each subject etc. Nothing is ever stated explicitly about you as an individual teacher...but* **you know** *(emphasis mine) where you are placed!*
>
> CT

An understanding of the second level school context will immediately register the impact of such comparisons between teachers, especially where there are only two teachers teaching a particular subject and where unspoken but internal comparison becomes powerfully manifest. Similar conventions of accountability existed in other school contexts, regarding the tracking of student destinations to third level.

> *A list is published in October/November of each Leaving Cert student showing where they have gone or progressed to what university, college or career path etc. For some students, there is nothing written down, no destination. There is a message...coming across...nothing direct or*

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> *definitive but it does add up to something significant...an accountability that you are very aware of.*
>
> BC

At a wider level there was perception of an informal but nonetheless powerful societal accountability, based on the existence of unofficial league tables inherent in popular discourse.

> *You have league tables out there and unofficial ratings. The exam system dictates what happens - schools are being ranked out there. People are looking and whether we like it or not, we have league tables...we like to think we don't have but universities now reveal the numbers...and schools of origin.*
>
> CJ

In local media (particularly in rural towns and their hinterlands), such unofficial league tables are nurtured by sometimes competitive coverage in local provincial newspapers. In some contexts, coverage can be divisive and misleading, without explanatory correlation between ability levels and results achieved. This complexity is rarely explained, because it is too sensitive and nuanced in its implications (regarding pupil profile) for school management to publicly declare. One research participant summarised it as follows:

> *Even here on the local newspaper, overall results are implied through coverage of where students go and how many points they got. Unfortunately as a vocational school, we do not feature very impressively in such accounts.*
>
> SOF

Ball (2008:37-39), explains these 'soft law mechanisms' in the context of OECD states, as those where "there are no official sanctions for those who lag behind. Rather, the method's effectiveness relies on a form of peer pressure and naming and shaming..." Codd (2005:193-206), coined the phrase 'low trust–high

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accountability' environments to describe control based *managerialism* versus *professional agency* as an increasing trend in international educational environments. Sugrue (2009a:7), in an Irish context concluded that there was clearly emerging a "dovetailing of both internal and external evaluation." In an Irish context therefore, perceptions of autonomy without accountability merit further interrogation.

Whole School Evaluation (WSE), was also a presence in the participant responses and the reality of inspection, reporting mechanisms, publication of reports for public viewing, subject planning meetings and other 'soft accountability measures' had also entered the discourse of accountability.

> *Every one of these departments have their meeting time and their schemes of work. They submit their plans to me. They now know that it is part and parcel of their job...we have had a couple of inspections.*
>
> SOF

Kelly (2004:149-154), also explores the tensions between striking a balance between *instrumental, bureaucratic models of accountability* (focusing on results obtained for the money spent and externally controlled) and *intrinsic, democratic professional* models (focusing on teacher development and internally controlled teaching and learning). Sugrue (2009a:7) also noted the challenge of keeping in play a "productive tension between a regime of control and individual and collective teacher autonomy" and Gleeson & O'Donnabháin (2009:40) call for more *responsive* and less *contractual* accountability. Kelly (2004) however, warns

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of the dangers of the management model assuming importance, and its questionable motivation in an instrumentalist climate. "It is thus difficult, if not impossible, to see any current system of teacher appraisal...as anything other than a political act whose aim is to increase external control rather than to raise internal quality" (2004:153).

While the emergent research findings from this study do not suggest a strong leaning towards explicit teacher appraisal, the study does suggest that the participants collectively perceive a complex web of 'soft accountability' mechanisms in an Irish context. Long (2008:122), also wrote of the many layers of measurement, now extant in education systems; children being "ranked, numbered, and classified, on top of which teachers can also be ranked, on top of which schools can be ranked, while the entire system can be ranked by successive OECD reports." Ball's insistence (2008:50) that: "within this culture there is a sense of being constantly judged in different ways, by different means," corroborates these research findings in an Irish context. 'Soft accountability mechanisms' are now embedded in both social and professional discourse.

3.4.4. Overcrowded curriculum - the busyness treadmill and un-reflective spaces

There were also perceptions of an overcrowded curriculum and the struggle felt by teachers to engage in reflective practice due to pressures of time and coverage of syllabi for terminal examinations.

There's no room for reflection. The system remains the most important...live your life to a bell...no one to challenge you...no one is standing back. There are just too many subjects and an overcrowded curriculum. I don't want a kid to open an exam paper and not have their topics covered.

<div align="right">SM</div>

The image of 'overload' emerged as quite consistent across participant responses and many complex sub-images were used to explain the origins and complexities of the overload experience. Firstly, there were some competitive scenarios operating between competing schools to attract first year students in junior cycle.

The school insists on offering fourteen subjects to be better than the neighbouing one that only offers ten! Our junior Certs study for eleven or twelve subjects in the Junior Cert.

<div align="right">SM</div>

The practical implications of this very wide curriculum provision in Junior Cycle, for students and teachers, included a ten lesson day, each lesson being thirty/thirty five minutes duration. In addition to this scenario, there is also the reality of a greatly expanded Junior Cert programme and the introduction of assessment in further subject areas. This expanding curriculum is however taking place without an expansion of the school day or year.

They come into second level at twelve years of age and experience this transition to thirteen subjects, all specialized and compartmentalised with different demands. Religious Education is now an exam subject... SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) which is an exam subject, and there's Computing and now talks of Physical Education as an exam subject.

<div align="right">CJ</div>

Images of: *overcrowding, overloading* and *swamping,* were consistent across the participant sample of this research endeavour and a collective frustration was typically articulated thus:

> *I think we are being...what do they say; 'when there is an itch in society the teachers scratch.' We'll be jack of all trades soon and master of none...all the time too much coming at us.*
>
> <div align="right">CJ</div>

Not everyone favours each new innovation or the reflex reaction to the latest 'itch' in society.

> *SPHE and the themes – a strange course – I teach it - I don't know why – I'm just faced with it in September. The themes include: who am I?, love or lust, and teenage pregnancies. There was no training. I'm just given the timetable - to expose people to the horrors of 2008 society - drugs/depression/alcohol abuse/anorexia and bullemia...*
>
> *Well there is a lot of dissatisfaction...some teachers are saying this is not what it is about... We're looking for more quality experience.*
>
> <div align="right">CS</div>

At senior cycle level, the issue of time was also a common concern.

> *We miss time due to extra curricular...games/shows/debates and projects. There's ten classes per day and you are lucky if you have the students for thirty minutes.*
>
> <div align="right">CT</div>

The image of *'missing time'* from what might be considered a holistic curriculum (i.e. games/shows/debates and projects), is in itself an interesting and automatic expression of how the hegemonic discourse of examination and assessment becomes *reified* and possibly *deified* by teachers and society alike. Similarly, there is an embedded acceptance among teachers, that *Physical Education* is negotiable within the senior cycle experience, where ultimate focus is predetermined by success in the Leaving Certificate examination. However, one research participant

was particularly concerned about the increasing marginalization of Physical Education as a subject within his school context and also echoed a similar concern from parents.

> *Certainly...my own experience would be that some subjects like PE and others are being cut back to facilitate other mainstream subjects. Teachers really feel this pressure of overload and I'm sure students do also...There are one in five students with obesity...some parents will take a case against the Deptartment. PE was always in schools...but I don't know what is happening with it today...*
>
> CS

There was a similar perception of school becoming more streamlined with less time for fun and enjoyment and an increasing trend toward assessment in every subject domain. It will be interesting to observe how current proposals to introduce Physical Education as an official senior cycle subject with its own formal assessment profile might address some of these concerns.

> *...students are just sucked into a streamlined system. One of the things that has gone is the enjoyable classes – classes for fun. Religious Education is now an exam subject and I'm not very comfortable about that...I don't know how I feel about that.*
>
> CJ

Similarly the NCCA Report: *Proposals For the Future Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland* (2005), propose a different more dynamic curriculum model based on a combination of: core subjects, short courses and transition units. Their more recent publications: *Leading and Supporting Change in Schools* (2009) and *Towards Learning: Listening To Schools* (2009), reflect commitment to advancing this curriculum vision and engaging with schools and teachers.

Another contentious issue for participants was the implication of an expanding curriculum for less academically able students. This was articulated by a participant in a school of social disadvantage, who expressed palpable concern, regarding the breadth of the curriculum at junior cycle level for some students.

> *Some of the kids in our school are doing a minimum of nine or ten subjects and they cannot cope...it's too much... Alot of the kids are being swamped.*
> CJ

This same participant also spoke of the lack of home supports and infrastructures of learning outside the school, thus vindicating Lynch & Lodge's (2002:182-183) claim: "It is about students from low income and welfare-dependent backgrounds being unable to access, particpate and achieve in education on equal terms with other students." Kelly's rationale for the achievement of a more balanced curriculum (2004:199-201), and: "the need to concede a good deal of freedom in curriculum matters to schools, teachers and even to individual pupils," was echoed in the following participant's response.

> *There should be space for the teacher to reflect...to discuss what is important...also at management level and it should filter down to all levels...space to review what's going on, to be challenged by others...to listen to others...to experiment in the curriculum...but you can't do that.*
> BC

Within an instrumentalist philosophy of curriculum, now strongly embedded in practice, it would seem that such calls for reflective spaces will remain largely unheard in current climates of educational cut backs, thus leaving constructivist visions espoused by Brown (2006:117), and prioritised by Moran (2008:220) as untenable. "Our role is to help and encourage learners to engage constructively

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with the virtual world, the real world, each other and ourselves, in order that they

may learn."

In conclusion, the emergent findings in this section clearly outline some of the

intensely felt anxieties and challenges associated with teaching in instrumentalist

climates. The findings find resonance with Hargreaves (2003:6), conclusion that:

Teachers in overcrowded and highly centralised educational contexts, complain

of: eroded autonomy, lost creativity, restricted flexibility; where professional

community collapses, time to reflect evaporates, and the love of learning

disappears." In an Irish second level context, the added dimension of: the points

system of assessment, the absence of a culture of reflection and possibly the absence

of a professional community in teaching, reflect more historically embedded

challenges than those positioned by Hargreaves as contemporary in nature.

3.4.5. Curriculum reform: centralized, external control and some innovation at the margins?

Centralized

The emerging construct also contained a thread that portrayed the curriculum

reform process as a highly centralised one, with teachers positioning themselves

predominantly at the margins of input. This positioning was articulated by one

participant as follows:

> *Whatever the department of Education and Science decides, it is nose-dived into us. In recent years CSPE has been made mandatory and additional classes had to be found - also for SPHE.*
>
> SOF

This perception of reform being parachuted from a top down basis and the inadequacy of "centre and periphery approaches" has been well documented (Callan, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Kelly, 2004; Looney, 2001; Sugrue & Gleeson, 2004). A sense of non-participatory powerlessness, conceptualised through the metaphor of a 'busyness conspiracy' was expressed by one participant, in a tone of self criticism and disdain for the passive, non-agentic profile of the teaching profession.

> *We've been frozen...drugged, there's an acceptance that things are going to happen and that you are powerless...to do anything...so many changes... that's fine...an acceptance...all top down rather than bottom up and busyness...doing department work, busy writing notes, busy attending meetings...writing up what the inspector might look at...no time to reflect busy giving grinds, busy...*
>
> CJ

Looney (2001:151), surmised that in this context, the curriculum has become problematic rather than an opportunity. "The curriculum has become something for teachers, students and schools to overcome, to manage to conquer. There is little empowerment associated with it." According to Johnson (2008:21), this "exacerbates the lack of ownership by teachers and the deprivation of space for innovation." Similarly the metaphor of *puppets* (consistent with the *karaoke teacher* metaphor) was used by a participant to map the perceived power and powerlessness relationship between teachers and other stakeholders. The tone was one of 'self-deprecating complicity' in the construction of an apparently unequal power relationship.

> *I think we are puppets in the system. I think everyone is running the education agenda but the people on the ground...We are best positioned to know what should be done. I wouldn't go into a surgeon's theatre and tell him how to do his job. We are allowing everyone but teachers on the*

ground run the system. We are allowing the NCCA/Media, parents to tell us what to do...so many external bodies.

<div align="right">SM</div>

This echoes the argument of Day, *et al*., (2006: 610), regarding the contemporary challenges attached to teacher agency. In an Irish context, the marginalized teacher voice (above) is ironic, given the well documented power held by Teacher Unions on syllabus committees of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (Sugrue, 2004; & Granville, 2004). Parents however, despite their constitutional rights as primary educators (Irish Constitution 1937, article 42:1), have not been perceived as a powerful lobby group in relation to curriculum development as outlined by Looney (2001:157). Therefore anomalies still persist regarding models of representative democracy.

Trying to create a new philosophy is very difficult. Teachers should be more at the centre...they are trained...the conduit for information between teachers and the department is not successful. The core body of teachers are not really involved despite the appearance of consultation and representation...

<div align="right">CB</div>

Throughout the research process, it was also interesting to observe that the NCCA was frequently referred to as if it was, a centralised bureaucratic arm of government, and some participants were not actually aware that teachers were represented on NCCA syllabus committees by subject associations and teacher unions. However, the limitations of representative partnership models, have been well documented by Gleeson (2004:18), and Granville (2004:93), particularly the limits of consensus, the limited terms of inclusion and the challenge of linking national representation and/or policy formation to local action.

External control

Other participants felt a sense of external forces in education invading their autonomy, and there was an expressed sense of frustration with the increasing need to comply with external controls. While some of these were noted previously, as localised accountability measures, there was also evidence of a more external and 'grand narrative of external control' that participants couldn't always name in a specific way.

> *The ownership of the school or of your subject isn't yours anymore. I don't know how I would express that now...outside forces invading you all the time. With the advent of whole school evaluation, emphasis on qualification...the satisfaction is going...there are alot of pressures coming in from the outside.* CJ

This perception of external control was verified also by Sexton's (2007:79-105), study, in an Irish context, which reported that over 70% of teacher participants thought that teacher autonomy was being continually eroded by outside forces: including the Department of Education and Science, parental demands, media, school management and recent legislation. Ball (2008:1), speaks of the dissemination of a 'global policyspeak' that includes: school based management, parental choice, information and accountability systems and privatisation. He claims that these terms and associated ones from public sector reform, such as quasi–markets, quality assurance and education as a business opportunity, are imported and exported around the world by policy entrepreneurs such as the World Bank, OECD and EU. Recent initiatives such as school development planning (SDPI), ironically aimed at giving teachers more localised decision making input,

and whole school evaluation (WSE), were perceived as sometimes unhelpful in the context of the overcrowded curriculum already discussed.

> *The issue of time is a big one - where whole school planning is resented by many teachers, because it eats into their time.*
>
> BC

> *Whole school planning...It drives me nuts...*
> *It's infuriating though, that if I sit down and have a meeting with my colleague, that I have to go away and write down-that I have had this meeting about what I was doing in my subject. It's a joke...*
>
> CT

The rhetoric of the White Paper (DES,1995:154), is therefore becoming a reality in some school contexts thirteen years later. The White Paper favoured the provision of opportunities for teachers (particularly those with special duty posts), "to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the managment of staff and their development, and the academic and pastoral work of the school." All of this is consistent with 'a shared leadership model' that later gave rise to the philosophy and practice of whole school planning and school development. One participant however lamented the ongoing focus on a narrow vision of professional development for teachers.

> *The content of in service when it does occur is very curriculum/content driven...there's no need to nurture the person when you are delivering on the points etc. Education is seen as training rather than educating.*
>
> BC

Fullan (1991:32-46), warned that curriculum change at the objective level involves deep change at three other levels: changes in materials, practice, and practitioners' beliefs and values. This latter domain, according to Callan (2006), remains problematic: "the project of re-culturing schools has yet to begin in earnest in our schooling system." Callan also (2006:12), refers to the rhetoric-reality gap and

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notes that: "curriculum design inhabits a different universe than curriculum implementation." Other research participants reflected on the redundancy of centralised models.

> *There is a need for local clusters and not travelling off long distance...If we go to local clusters, we meet our counterparts and we can share ideas and resources. Subject associations are there in name only.*
>
> CJ

Callan (2006:iv) summarised the challenges associated with moving from "a culture of teacher isolation and conservatism and its related curriculum and hierarchical elements to a collaborative teacher culture" as: "an enormous undertaking." The persistence of this competitive approach in the context of instrumentalist visions was aptly summarised by one participant, who noted the slow pace of change.

> *Staffrooms, and schools themselves as buildings have all stayed the same. The learning community is a long way off.*
>
> BC

Callan's work (2006) *Developing Schools, Enriching Learning: The School Curriculum Development (SCD) Experience*, was carried out within the framework of the school as a learning community in itself, but also within the context of a cluster of other school communities. Similarly, the *TL 21 Teaching and Learning For The 21st Century* project evaluation reports (2005 & 2007), and the emerging findings from the *TL 21 Transfer Initiative* (Malone & Smyth, 2009), verify the success of this cluster model, as favoured by the following research participant.

> *Most teachers would welcome local clusters...meeting someone in your own subject area...you could borrow ideas and swap ideas...but it also needs to be part of the timetable. You know because 'time time time'...is so precious. Why couldn't the four schools in town come together...but that will never happen!*
>
> CJ

However the final pessimistic comment from this participant regarding local collaboration, would also suggest that there are political and localised resistances at work. These same schools might also be competing with each other for student numbers and may not be willing to 'trade' in what could be perceived as competitive advantage. Ball (2008:45) summarised this new moral environment in schools, colleges and universities and proposed that they "are being inducted into *a culture of self-interest* survivalism..."

Innovation at the margins

Despite this conclusion regarding the mainstream curriculum, there was some evidence of excitement at the margins of curriculum innovation. There was excitement about 'partnership curriculum initiatives' such as the Leaving Cert Applied Programme (LCA), The Leaving Cert Vocational Preparation Programme (LCVP), and the cinderalla of Irish curriculum reform *Transition Year* (TY). A brief flavour of participant enthusiasm for these innovations is presented here. However this theme will be returned to more extensively in Chapter Five. Some of the participants were actively involved in curriculum development intiatives and were champions of these innovations.

> *LCA/TY/LCVP have certainly enhanced and certainly excite me - they show possibilities regarding what can happen. The excitement around TY programme – it's a great model for what could happen in senior cycle. Every child can learn if we can find the right approach.*
>
> *TY is very special...it's a stand alone year - a special year. I think it's unique in education and shows how the Irish education system could be creative.*
>
> <div align="right">CT</div>

> *The research is saying it does work and I am passionate about this...efforts by teachers that allow students to be more responsible; outside school, work placement, project based learning, multiple intelligence or being valued because you are a good musician, spatial intelligence; they can put on drama..community aspects...sports, Gaisce awards.*
>
> <div align="right">SM</div>

However these curriculum initiatives were unfortunately perceived, as residing at the margins of teaching and learning within second level schools and were typically summarised by one participant as follows:

> *We're tampering at the edges...these subjects LCA/LCVP & TY are all sideline activities. Is the big question around third level...and the points system – but we need to look at different models of assessment.*
>
> <div align="right">CJ</div>

Therefore the NCCA (2005) proposals to infuse senior cycle with some of the positive elements associated with a more localised curriculum dynamic deserve support.

3.4.6.   Concluding thoughts

The overall perception is that in mainstream curriculum, instrumentalist visions, practices and mechanisms persist and impact negatively on the pedagogical processes of what teaching and learning is all about. This mapping of a 'pedagogy under pressure' across five domains, including: terminal assessment, implications for pedagogy, teacher identity and accountability, overcrowded curriculum and centralised curriculum control, does however raise a fundamental question, regarding the orientation of our current second level system, a question that remains unresolved.

What is the purpose of education? If it is concerned with the ten stated aims of the White Paper (DES, 1995), as outlined in Chapter One, and also at an individual level with the: social, cultural, intellectual, physical, moral, and spiritual, then second level 'schooling' in Ireland is seriously inhibited from engagement with stated policy goals and implicit visions. One of the most serious challenges now facing the Irish second level *schooling system*, concerns a pedagogy that is trapped in an instrumentalist discourse, one that is now hegemonic, embedded in professional and popular discourse. What emerges is a '*practice of pragmatic, commodified, shallow learning'* far removed from the policy rhetoric of the ten noble aims of education officially espoused in Ireland. Looney's (2001:152), claim: "that the pursuit of the technical over the theoretical has infected curriculum discourse in Ireland," and Gleeson's concerns (2004:102-107), regarding the: marginal status of curriculum issues in education discourse, the rhetoric of slogans being removed form reality, the unchanging cultures of our schools and classroom practice, and the anti–intellectual mindset of successive ministers of education, who saw the *economy* as the key context for education, each holds resonance. Callan (2006:29), similarly argued that curriculum policy making was overshadowed by: "control, structures, buildings, interests, pension rights, the actual things that happen in schools" rather than any interrogation of the purpose of current pedagogy in our schools.

Collectively, the emerging construct from these findings does suggest: a *pedagogy under immense pressure,* from a wider instrumentalist vision, shaping practice at

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second level. The research participants' own positioning within this discourse varies from passive compliance to ongoing struggles for meaning and change in the teaching and learning dynamic. Notwithstanding these diversities, there was however evidence of the centrifugal force of instrumentalism across the participant sample. Its frequency, intensity and protocols of acquiescence with *'shallow learning'* were evident throughout. There were shades and hues of subtle difference regarding participant 'self–positioning,' within this discourse. Some participants perceived its illogicality, some struggled to reconcile their own philosophical values with those of their practice and others were happy to play a game of alliance with instrumentalist stakeholders. There are many tensions evident around rhetoric and practice, ideal and reality. In this context, Sugrue & Gleeson's (2004:273) claim that: "underneath the rhetoric of partnership, inclusion, continuity and surface spin, there is growing evidence of fragmentation, marginalisation and exclusion," remains un-contestable. Based on this study, there is a series of challenges facing educational policy makers and educational practitioners in Ireland.

1. How can the *tide* of instrumentalist commodification be made visible, so that there is a complete re-evaluation of the *practice* of education at second level?

2. How can we change embedded models of terminal assessment and the concomitant points system, now core obstacles in an inappropriate mosaic of pragmatic passivity?

3. What is the antidote to the backwash effect of this instrumentalism i.e. fragmented teacher student-relationships, and competitive accountability systems now shaping teacher and possibly student identity?

4. If teachers work in predominantly non reflective overcrowded curriculum contexts, how can they become agents of consciousness and change?

5. If curriculum reform continues to be highly centralised and curriculum innovation consigned to the margins of mainstream pedagogy, where will professional nurturing opportunities for teachers arise from?

Current trends in Ireland reveal that: non-completion rates of 19 per cent persist at second level, 10 per cent do not pass five subjects in the Leaving Certificate, 10 per cent fail ordinary level Maths and almost 20 per cent do not sit the Leaving Certificate exam in Irish. Evidence from the NEWB (2007) analysis of attendance data, that over 46,000 second-level students (miss more than a month of school each year) reflect a system that is not working (even at an instrumental level) for a significant minority. These trends and the emerging findings from this construct, strongly suggest that: we have a second level education system, inherently flawed from a structural and pedagogical domain - one not poised to achieve more nurturing visions of education. While current policy proposals from the NCCA deserve commendation, they also require urgent political support and financial resourcing to move them from recommendations towards implementation.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHERS NAVIGATING A PATHWAY BETWEEN OLD AND NEW PROFESSIONALISM

3. Introduction

The second emerging construct from this research study, relates to the discourse of 'teacher professionalism' and changing constructions of the teacher's increasingly complex role in a rapidly changing society. The emergent findings are framed within the context of teachers **navigating** a complex, non-linear pathway, that simultaneously vascillates between 'old' and 'new' professionalism.

Figure 15 - <u>Construct 2 - Navigating Between Old and New Professionalism</u>

4.1.   Summary research findings for this construct

Parents – an ambivalent partnership

1. In practice, teachers uphold the 'status quo' of minimal engagement with parents, an engagement limited to consultation around behaviour/progress and compliance with legal requirements for representation on boards of management or parent associations.

2. Teachers navigate with some professional ambivalence around a minority of 'problem parents' - perceived dualistically within a deficit discourse as either: those neglectful of parental responsibility or alternatively those perceived as being 'too pushy' in expectation of unachievable results.

3. Some teachers remain unconvinced (ideologically and pragmatically) of the policy rationale for developing time consuming 'partnership' initiatives with parents, despite some acknowledgement of the crucial role parents play in their childrens' education.

4. There is some evidence of teacher resistance to pro-active school management policy that promotes greater involvement with parents. This can lead to internal school conflict regarding disputed interpretations of official policy.

5. Teachers portray a limited imagining of a new professional partnership (possibly with the exception of the home school liaison scheme) that might afford parents a greater role in the overall educational process.

Collegiality in transition

6. Three types of collegiality were delineated in the study: *pedagogical*, *social/emotional* and *fractured competitive*.

7. There is some emerging evidence (though not substantial) of movement toward a new progressive professionalism in relation to teaching and learning, enhanced by initiatives such as: school development planning (SDPI) and whole school evaluation (WSE).

8. Side by side with this however is a fragemented and highly competitive (frequently contrived) collegiality, driven by new forms of accountability and competition between colleagues.

9. 'Social and supportive collegiality' remains a strong motif however and is greatly valued by teachers across different research locations.

Caring professionals navigating social change

10. Teachers continue to navigate within a substantially changed society in

Ireland, where changing values and changing constellations of family life, continue to impact starkly on the personal and professional domains of their work.

11. The most significant social change dynamic across school locations is one requiring a subtle and complex navigation, around changing family structures and the associated paradoxes of: visibility and invisibility, knowing and not knowing, and wanting to care but not knowing how. Here teachers emerge as caring professionals holding the conflict between: head and heart, personal and professional domains and between degrees of competency and incompetency.

Teachers seeking an authentic professional voice

12. Teachers are caught in the 'swamp of practice' unhappy with how their professional lives are portrayed. They are also dissatisfied with their own passivity, apparently unable to contemplate, create or re-engage with more holistic visions of their role as educators.

13. They are unimpressed with how their representative organisations have represented or advocated their professionalism and there is an emerging disconnect between union leadership and some teachers. Therefore,

participants desire a new, authentic voice to articulate the complexity of this *navigational professionalism*.

There is a substantial and contested discourse regarding teacher professionalism. The following overview provides an insightful backdrop for the grounded research findings, particularly the construct delineation as one of navigation between: *old* and *new* professionalism.

4.2.   Theoretical overview

There is a struggle (within increasingly marketised contexts), to find ontological meaning in the etymology of the word *professionalism*. This struggle is reflected in new constellations and sub-discourses that include: *postmodern professionalism* (Hargreaves, 2000), *new professionalism* (Goodson, 2003), *transformative professionalism* (Sachs, 2003), *values based professionalism* (Day *et al.,* 2006), *managed professionals* (Codd, 2005), and *managerial professionalism* associated with new public management (Ball, 2008; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009 and Sugrue, 2009a). Other authors, including: Cherubini (2008), Colley *et al.,* (2007), Everton *et al.,* (2007), Hoyle (2001), Kennedy (2007), MacBeath *et al.,* (2004), Santiago (2005), Silver (2006), Sexton (2007), Stronach *et al.,* (2002) and Whitty (2000), have also explored the changing mosaic and contested field of teacher professionalism. Historically however, there has been some broad consensus, regarding the old reliable triad of professional attributes: *knowledge, autonomy* and *responsibility*. Their durability in an Irish teaching context, is still evident in

Sexton's (2007:79-105) reworked constructs of: *knowledge attributes* (knowledge base and training), *autonomy attributes* (freedom to make decisions, based on professional judgment) and *service attributes* (altruism, responsibility and ethics). Sexton (207:81) also delineated the terms *professionalisation* (a sociological project), relating to the authority and status of the teaching profession, and *professionalism*, concerning itself with the internal quality of teaching. Hargreaves (2000:151-182), almost a decade ago mapped *four ages of professionalism* and *professional learning* in his overview of the evolution of teacher professionalism in the english speaking world. I have attempted to map and date these four stages as follows (*figure 16*).

Four Ages of Professionalism?
Adapted from the work of Hargreaves (2000)

1. Pre-professional age
1900-1960s?

2. Autonomous professional
1960s-1990?

3. Collegial professional
1990s-2000?

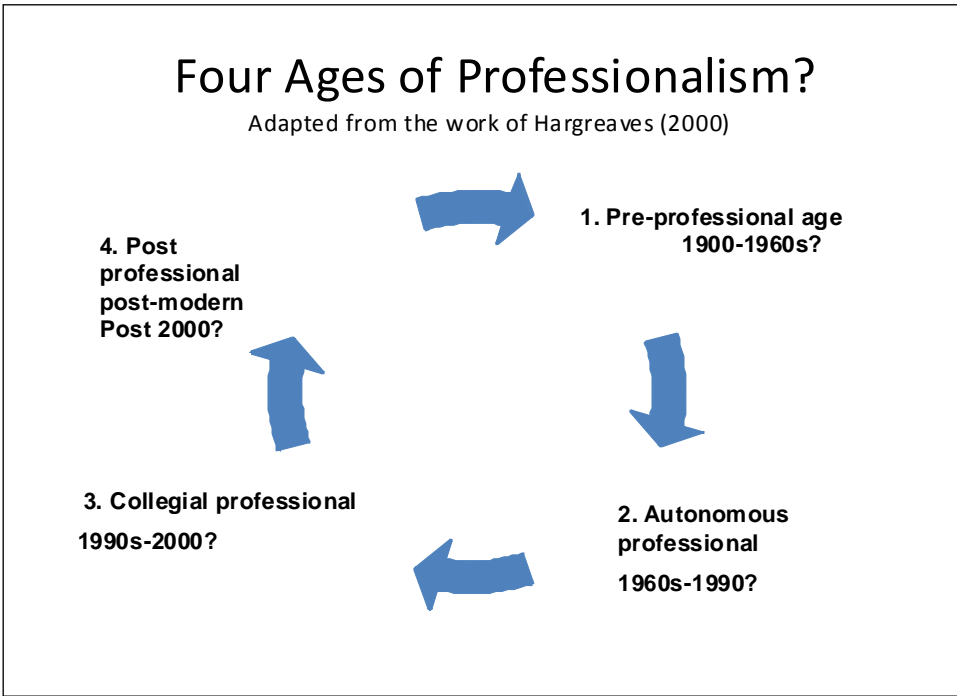4. Post professional post-modern Post 2000?

Figure 16 - <u>**The Four Ages Of Professionalism**</u>

For the purposes of this study, howewver, I would contest (in an Irish context) any neat, sequential fit, with all four stages. Hargreaves' final stage of *post professionalism* is however of particular interest to this study.

Hargreave's final stage does hold some resonance with the construct of *navigational professionalism*, which for the purposes of this study is defined as: a professionalism in transition, one imbued with paradoxes and contradictions, with frequent dissonance between the policy rhetoric of 'new professionalism' and circumstances that perpetuate the practice of 'old professionalism.' It is a professionalism in flux, regarding its ontological, pedagogical and axiological identity. Sexton (2007) in an Irish context, alluded to: "Teachers...struggling to find a new sense of identity, in keeping with their changed role and status" (2007:80). Much of this searching, according to Sexton, is focused on the collective need of teachers "to prove to themselves and to others that they are members of a proper profession." In recent years, the official policy discourse of teacher professionalism (*Teachers Matter,* OECD 2005; *Codes Of Professional Conduct,* Teaching Council 2007), is positioned within the sub discourse of *new professionalism.* Elsewhere however, the professional literature positions the discourse as one of transition, as theorised by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996), Hargreaves (2000), Sachs (2003) and also implied by Sexton (2007).

Old professionalism is generally characterised by: exclusive membership, conservative practices, self-interest, external regulation; is slow to change, is

reactive and sometimes defensive, not interested in broad social and political issues and does not provide intellectual or moral leadership. *New professionalism* however, favours progressive constructions of teacher as: reflective practitioner, of educational practice based on values and ethics, of teachers as adaptable managers of unknown situations, of teachers' knowledge as largely tacit, of teachers teaching in ways they themselves were not taught and; of teachers engaging with key clients, particularly parents in a *partnership* approach. The rationale that gave impetus to the current discourse of *new professionalism,* began to emerge over fifteen years ago and is contextualised by Hargreaves (2000) whereby:

- Isolated autonomy was no longer tenable in uncertain and rapidly changing environments of new knowledge about learning styles, multiple intelligence, computer based learning, co-operative learning and new assessment modes
- Rapid societal changes impacted on teaching; e.g. cosmopolitan family structures, multiculturalism, special needs integration, mixed ability teaching, part time work and changing family lifestyles
- There were concerns about student disengagement and school completion
- The School Effectiveness movement advocated the introduction of collaboration and collegial planning
- School based in-service was favoured and team synergies harnessed, to enable the sharing of expertise, across different knowledge bases
- Collegial cultures were thus favoured instead of autonomous, individualistic ones

- There was a need to build strong collaborative cultures that were authentic rather than merely compliant with national requirements

- There was consensus that in this changing context, teachers & educators needed to become life-long learners

Official policy constructions of the teacher's role now embrace this construction of *new professionalism.* The Irish Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct* (2007:18-20), is clearly influenced by a *values based* approach, and captures the implicit philosophy of *new professionalism,* embraced by the following thirteen values *(Figure 17).*
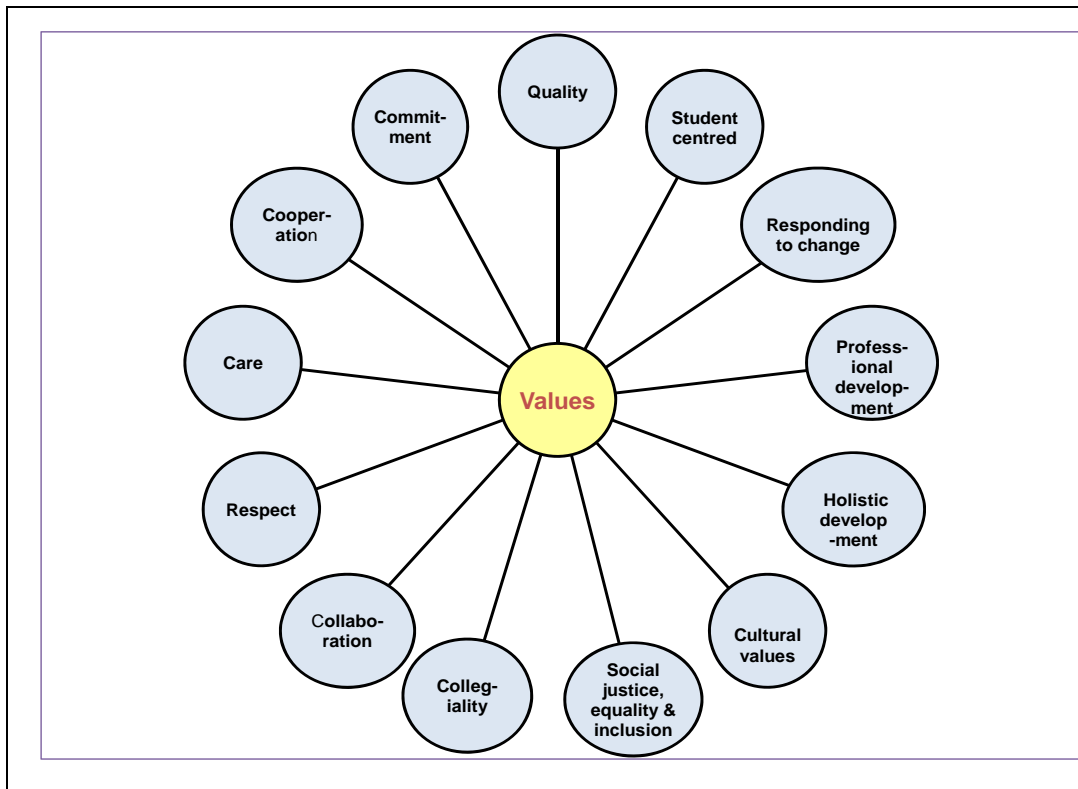

Figure 17 - <u>Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct</u>

McGuinness (2006:10) in his inaugural address at the launch of the Teaching

Council reflected this *values-based* construction of teacher professionalism as a life

long commitment to:

> improving knowledge (technical, professional and pedagogical), students and student learning, school and the school community, supporting collegiality and teamwork, change and innovation, enquiry and reflection, lifelong learning and taking responsibility for one's own professional learning.

More recently however, Ball (2008) and Sugrue (2009a), alert us to the

increasingly neo-liberal climate of relationship between professionalism and

performativity, where according to Sugrue (2009a:2), "there is the rhetoric of

autonomy frequently accompanied by the imposition of external accountability

measures," with an increasing "dovetailing of internal and external evaluation

frameworks" (2009a:7), thus creating what he calls the "twin towers of self-

evaluation and accountability" (2009a:6), or what Ball (2008) collectively named

as the new public management mainstreaming of "soft accountability" systems.

The theoretical discourse of professionalism is therefore a complex one with many

hues. Some of these are also manifest in the participant voice of teacher

practitioners which will now be explored.

Conclusion

The four emergent sub-themes (as summarised at the beginning of this chapter)

collectively suggest a construct of teacher *navigation* between and across pathways

of *old* and *new* professionalism. The metaphor of *navigation* is an important one. It

suggests many domains of *tacit knowledge* as teachers engage in a: 'nuanced'

accommodation, negotiation, resistance, and rearticulation within pathways of *old* and *new professionalism* in localised contexts. The metaphor of *navigation* has the potential to embrace the Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom or *phronesis,* as outlined by Moran (2008:209-221).

The discussion will now illuminate each of the four sub-themes that emerged within the findings for this construct of navigational professionalism. Before discussing the findings for each sub theme, I will initially outline a brief theoretical perspective.

4.3.1   Teachers and parents: an ambivalent partnership of old professionalism?

The research findings from this study would suggest that there are many complexities, anxieties and even resistances from teachers, regarding active engagement with parents in the pedagogical or policy domain at second level. The findings would substantially challenge any normative assumptions of *partnership*, evident from policy rhetoric, typically framed within ideologies of *new professionalism* (*Teachers Matter,* OECD 2005; *School Matters Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour,* DES 2006; *Codes of Professional Conduct,* Irish Teaching Council, 2007).

The research findings (of ambivalence toward closer liaison with parents) are surprising, in the context of theoretical studies (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003;

Hornby, 2000; Macmillan, 2003; Ramirez, 1999; Reay, 2001) that suggest collectively, teachers favour the importance of parental support and involvement in educational endeavour. There is indeed convincing evidence to warrant teacher support for more parental involvement from both a social and pedagogical perspective. Desforges and Abouchaar's (2003) study reported: better engagement, self esteem, improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes, for students arising from healthy home school collaboration. The DCSF Report (2008:3-4) *The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education*, is similarly unambiguous in its conclusion: "Research has consistently shown that parental involvement in children's education does make a positive difference to pupil's achievement." Hargreaves (2003:15) thus proclaims that it is in teachers' own interests to treat even imperfect parents not just as "irritants or as targets for appeasement, but as the most important allies teachers have, in serving those parents' own students, and in defending themselves against political assaults on their professionalism."

So what is preventing the development of teacher parent alliances if its benefits are so overwhelming? Reay (2001) implies that teachers are fearful of the growing consumer–oriented perspective associated with parents' rights to access information about schools and their childrens' progress. The *School Matters* Report (DES, 2006:85) cites teacher fears that: parents will be biased and unfair, have unrealistic expectations, will question pedagogical or classroom management practices. Do these fears reflect negatively on the current status of teacher professionalism and levels of teacher confidence/competence to respond?

At policy levels however, there is an interesting debate about finding a balance between parental rights and responsibilities. Interestingly, the DCSF Report (2008) found that 45 per cent of parents believed that they had equal responsibility as the school, for their children's education. Ball (2008:177), critical of New Labour policy discourses however, argues that "parents are key figures in regenerating social morality" and cites the importance of the UK Education and Inspections Act (2006), to achieving New Labour's vision of more accountability. In Ireland, the setting up of the National Education and Welfare Board (NEWB, 2002) and the amendments to legislation regarding rights of appeal in cases of suspension and expulsion from school, also points toward a search for balance between parental *rights* and parental *responsibilities*. Vincent (2000:5) however, argues that the term partnership is now "a legitimating device" used by schools to encourage parental support for school-based objectives. Sugrue (2009b:21) also alerts us to the "convenient rhetoric" of partnership that "frequently cloaks power relations."

This theme of power relations is illuminated by The *School Matters Report* (DES, 2006:84-85) and Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:88) who cite the dangers of constructing home-school relationships within typically middle class values, where the difficult issues of poverty, disadvantage, inequality, parental lack of confidence, impact of a difficult child, conflict, capacity to participate, and unequal power relationships are frequently rendered silent. Mulkerrins (2007:133-143) notes that in Ireland, the DES never consulted with marginalised parents or community groups prior to the establishment of the Home-School Community-

Liaison Scheme (HSCL) in 1990. This ensured that only middle class values filtered through on the ground. She also highlights the non-inclusion of parents or community-representatives in the 2003 review of the same scheme. More recently, the work of O'Gara (2009), suggests that parental involvement in the school planning process also falls short of espoused policy.

Therefore, despite legislative provision for parental involvement, in second level education in Ireland (Circular N27/1991 *Parents as Partners in Education*), and the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) there remains considerable ambivalence among the teaching profession regarding the meaning and enactment of this partnership. There are however some interesting synergies and paradoxes! Teachers espouse more parental participation, parents are increasingly disposed towards active involvement and government policy promotes parent/school partnership. In the world of educational practice however, there is little evidence of real partnership happening. How can we understand or explain this theory practice paradox? This analysis will now explore the emergent research findings that teachers:

1   Uphold the 'status quo' within instrumentalist constructions of education

2   Navigate professional ambivalence around 'problem parents' and are unconvinced of the rationale for 'partnership'

3   Navigate resistance to pro-active management policy and legal imperatives

4   Have limited imaginings of new professionalism

Upholding the 'status quo' within instrumentalist constructions of education

The following participant expressed the common belief that parental involvement was important.

> *Their role is essential. I have no difficulty dealing with them, there's never any conflict about the subject domain.*
>
> CT

For others however, any involvement outside this consultation around the subject domain was predominantly absent.

> *I'm going to laugh now...parents are not involved to any real degree...there is a relationship of unease...maybe it happens more at primary...*
>
> CS

> *Very little has changed here and teachers don't really engage with parents...the structure of secondary is different to primary, where I think there is more engagement due to primary school curriculum. In secondary, parents are only interested if it's to do with the Leaving Cert...Maybe in TY because it's needs driven.*
>
> MS

One participant did however question the usefulness of parent teacher meetings and felt that, they predominantly consisted of *one-way* information systems, a view with some resonance from at least one research study (Vincent, 2000:7).

> *They are not a two–way feedback loop and opportunities for information sharing are not encouraged. They are seen as places where results are discussed – they are not about discussing holistic development.*
>
> BC

There is little reference to the possibility of collaboration regarding any element of pedagogy or curriculum initiative. Teachers were not generally pro active

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regarding the invitation of parental involvement and perceive parental involvement as existing on some continuum between: 'nuisance' and 'helpful.'

> *They are both a nuisance and helpful - certain parents who are genuinely interested are a joy to converse with and most of them are not pushy.*
>
> SC

Pushy parents (clarified as those demanding improved results regardless of student ability) are however sometimes perceived as problematic.

> *I would say...some are just there to push the student to the limits and beyond the limits of their capability and others are genuinely there to talk with when required and would be interested to know that their son/daughter were happy. Some never turn up and they are the ones you really would like to see.*
>
> BC

Participants thus perceived the parental role, predominantly within the confines of limited norms of consultation. There is a dual imagery of: the pressure for results from 'pushy' parents, starkly contrasting with the 'passive' absence of others. This passivity is perceived through a deficit lens by teachers, particularly in instrumentalist contexts, where great value is placed on academic progress.

Navigating professional ambivalence around 'problem parents' and an unconvincing 'partnership' rationale

One participant, who worked with many disadvantaged families, perceived negative parental attitudes towards teachers with perceptions of cushy careers, long holidays and short working days. In some cases, this perceptual negativity, was reciprocated by teachers themselves, suggesting a mutual 'blame game,' sometimes culminating in 'communication anxiety' between teacher and parent.

Parents who had a bad experience of school - perceive teachers as having a cushy number...an easy time with three months off, finished daily at 3/4p.m. etc. Certain parents will take everything for granted and expect you to do everything...without them looking at homework or even having a parent-child relationship...kids going home and having no dinner, coming to school without breakfast.

<div align="right">CS</div>

Alot depends on what parents themselves have inherited in terms of their experience of school and their own parents' perceptions. They bring this into their own model of parenting and it just continues on.

<div align="right">BC</div>

Bourdieu's notion of *cultural capital* (1977) and Wahlberg's (1984) *Curriculum of the home*, were evident here, although perception of a cyclical, cultural inheritance, is felt by some teachers, as relatively predictable and unchangeable. Such a perception, of *sedimented* cultural capital, challenges *interactionsist* and *agentic* models of identity, from a sociological perspective. There was also evidence of teacher frustration regarding the increasing portion of time spent liaising with 'problem parents of problem children.'

It's usually parents who are problematic - who have problematic students. The student who is an attention seeker - you can see that there is a problem there. The child is off loaded to school – no homework...schools are picking up the pieces.

<div align="right">CS</div>

I spend alot of my time interviewing parents – especially those students experiencing difficulty. Mostly it's parents whose students don't have the support they need. The really good students don't need the same level of support.

<div align="right">CT</div>

In these constructions, parents are perceived through a *moralistic register* as neglectful and at fault, and there is an implication that schools and teachers suffer the consequences of fractured and un-supportive family dynamics. Thus conceived,

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parents associations are sometimes perceived by teachers, as forums of grievance, where disciplinary procedures and school policies are unfairly challenged.

> *I know of schools where parents' associations have been forums for grievance...places for complaining of teachers...I think the idea of parents being involved is a challenging one...*
>
> CJ

There was also a perception that some parents as members of parent associations remain focused only on their own child(ren) and may not understand the complexity of responding to wider 'school community' agendas.

> *You need parents to leave their own son/daughter behind and focus on the bigger picture when they come to meetings. Some are unable to do this. I'm not talking about parent teacher meetings but about parents' councils.*
>
> CJ

This view confirms the perennial challenge associated with striking a balance between: the 'particularity' of parental concerns and the 'universal concerns' of teachers (Vincent, 2000:19). There are other complex issues here linked to Vincent's observation (2000:26) that "parenting is not a class neutral concept."

Some teachers question the assumption that parents want further involvement and propose that parents lead busy lives where they entrust their children to teachers as professionals and want teachers to get on with the job of teaching and educating without ongoing consultation. Crozier (2000:29) and Vincent (2000:20), similarly challenge some policy assumptions regarding the: usefulness, viability, and desirability of parental involvement.

> *But some parents don't want to be involved. They think you are being paid to deliver a service and they expect you to deliver that. They are living busy lives with both parents working outside the home.*
>
> CJ

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This view raises interesting sociological questions regarding the role of: parent/family (which is outside the scope of this study) and the role of teacher and school. Is there evidence of a fractured alliance, influenced by sub discourses of commodfication and the positioning of teacher as deliverer of a service or product? One participant told the story of a school principal whose vision of success was to minimize liaison with parents. Therefore teacher/parent collaboration was conceptualised negatively from different stakeholder perspectives, reflecting an old professionalism that reflects self-interest motives.

Navigating resistance around pro-active management policy and legal imperatives

One research participant was a senior management team member in a school that operated an "open door" policy with parents. She reflected the prevalence of staff resistance towards such a policy.

> *There is still a great resistance about it. Teachers have a real barrier about this and think parents want to knock us...we experienced this, when one of our parents looked for clarification about our detention system - but it was interpreted as interference by teachers.*
>
> *Interestingly the NEWB guidelines would emphasize the role of parents and student councils etc. But a teacher was saying: you don't have to involve them...but I said you do...not just from a legislation point of view but also from a good practice point of view. Teachers do have a huge angst about this move...*
>
> SOF

Senior management within some schools experience a significant challenge, described as a 'psychological blockage' from teachers regarding developing the role of parents.

> *I don't know - it worries me. Teachers are quite entrenched in their view–but the 1998 Act and the NEWB (National Education and Welfare Board) all legislate for the role of parents and that's what we have to try to achieve...*
>
> <div align="right">SOF</div>

One participant possibly summarised the tension between an aspiring professionalism and the contingencies of practice.

> *Many parents require more training and information about how schools work but they don't get this. School timetables don't allow for this...Parents are brought in at the beginning and again at the end...*
>
> <div align="right">BC</div>

Another participant in whose school, an open door policy was favoured, did observe the paradox of superficial structures.

> *Structures are of little value unless people embrace the notion of partnership. We have a long way to go to get to a partnership situation with parents.*
>
> <div align="right">SOF</div>

This senior management team participant, valued the feedback loop provided by parent representation, as a quality assurance mechanism for trouble shooting and problem solving.

> *I think that's very important because if I don't know what is wrong, I can't fix it. I need to know warts and all. Let them criticize.*
>
> <div align="right">SOF</div>

Some teaching staff inevitably felt threatened by this feedback loop and were resistant to such collaboration. Reconciling this tension is a serious challenge for school leadership in bridging the gap between old and new professionalism.

Limited imaginings of new professionalism?

On a more positive note however, some participants did perceive the role of Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) as a very successful initiative, particularly if the role was facilitated by an appropriately skilled and empathetic staff member.

> *We had a wonderful HSLO (Home School Liaison Officer) – maybe it was her own personality...she brought so many parents into the school – cookery classes, parenting courses...and she had wonderful rapport with them.*
>
> CJ

The rich potential of the HSCL was established by Mulkerrins (2007:133-144), (while also acknowledging how the scheme strayed from the Freirean principles of *dialogue* which informed it). An examination of the language and tone used by the following participant however, suggests a cynical resistance, regarding the potential enactment of a more participatory role.

> *Involving them in policy making and school planning, I don't know...I think it might ...it would be a paper exercise.*

One participant did reflect a promising capacity to visualise and expand predominant perceptions of how the *status quo* might change to the benefit of all. Such perceptions were more the exception than the norm across participant responses however.

> *What is the parental role? How do we build up involvement? Newsletters...we would welcome involvement...parents council...good initiatives. How are we working with parents? But I am thinking more about the possibilites of partnerships and mentoring for work placement. We need more than guest speakers...*
>
> CS

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In conclusion, these findings would suggest that any development of the 'partnership' role remains limited to traditional notions of consultation around academic progress and to structural compliance with the need for representation on school management bodies and/or parent associations. Teachers are happy to have parents represented on parents' associations and boards of management, so long as that representation reflects the parent community at large and not just an individual parent's own agenda. There is also evidence of teacher anxiety, emanating from negative constructions of 'problem parents.' Teachers' perception of *partnership* is also situated within a sub discourse of *parental responsibility* and teachers' frustration when the threads of an already tenuous partnership are knotted in: social disadvantage, cultural dissonance and tedious legislative processes.

Evidence suggests that in the second level sector, there is a lack of clarity, a lack of understanding and a lack of commitment from teachers to partnership, or the development of its full potential. Teachers (based on this study) perceive the involvement of parents within *old professional* conceptions of consultation around academic progress and in practice, reluctantly accommodate compliance with legal requirements for representation and governance. Thus constructed, parents are positioned more as 'subordinate clients' with teacher as dominant, though anxious professional in the quasi-partnership that is effectively an *overture of appeasement* rather than a true partnership.

4.3.2. Collegiality in transition

The research findings demonstrate a complex navigation around three different landscapes of collegiality, identified as: *pedagogical, social* and *fractured*. The term *Collegiality* has become central to the discourse of new professionalism. (Bush, 2005; Chavez *et al*., 2006; Everton *et al.*, 2007; Fullan, 1999; Goodson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1994 & 2003; Hayes, 2006; Jarsabowski, 2002; OECD Report *Teachers Matter,* 2005; Stronach *et al.,* 2002; Sachs, 2003; Sexton, 2007). The etymology of the word *collegiality* is not in itself a greatly contested one and was appropriately summarised by Jarsabowski (2002:2), within teaching contexts as: "teachers involvement and cooperation with their peers at any level, including: intellectual, moral, social, political and emotional levels." Conceptually, it embraces the principles of: interdependence, reciprocity, and democratic communication as espoused by Dorsch (1998). Collegiality and its ubiquitous useage in contemporary educational discourse, has however been the subject of interesting commentary.

There is some consensus that the term *collegiality* became enshrined as a policy technology in the *school effectiveness* and *school improvement* movements of the 1980s and 1990s as summarised by Bush (2005), and is also central to Hargreaves (2000) *third age* of professionalism. However its delineation as either *contrived* or *genuine* was previously established by Hargreaves (1994). In its *contrived* format, he argued that it was: compulsory, regulated and geared to the implementation of

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mandates designed to have predictable outcomes. In its genuinely *collaborative* format, collegiality was he argued: "spontaneous, voluntary, development-orientated and pervasive across time and space" (1994:195-197). *Collaboration* is therefore a term frequently used in conjunction with collegiality, and sometimes implied as interchangeable, though its precise meaning, is not always a shared one. Sergiiovanni (1990:118), distinguishes between *conviviality* and *collegiality* and argues that both are *not* necessary for excellence, thus implying a tenable delineation between personal and professional collegiality. Some theorists (Day *et al.,* 2006; Palmer, 2007) contest this ontological delineation, on the basis that teaching and learning are *relational* processes, where personal and professional identities are interwoven.

Collegiality however, despite these nuances of meaning has become a dominant *new professionalism* motif. It is sometimes perceived as a vital bridge between school improvement, curriculum development and teacher development. It is also evident in emerging models of distributed leadership (Bush, 2005:77-80), that emphasise the authority of *expertise* and participative decision making, as distinct from more autocratic models, based on *position power*. Chavez *et al.,* (2006), also conceptualises collegiality within feminist critiques of care, community and interdependence. In an Irish context, collegiality features in the official discourse of policy documents such as: the Government White paper (1995), *Charting Our Education Future* and more recently, it is cited as one of the core values of teacher professionalism by the Irish Teaching Council (2007:17-19).

The term is frequently assumed to be a core value of the teacher's professional life. Indeed Sexton's research on teacher professionalism (2007:79-105), indicated that teachers were favourably disposed towards *interaction with colleagues*, where *respect for colleagues* and *willingness to collaborate with colleagues,* were both affirmed as highly valued 'internal attributes' by participant teachers. However, responses to attitudinal surveys are not always reliable indicators of what happens in practice, where dissonance between: idealism and pragmatism frequently unfold.

This discussion will now explore the research findings regarding participants' experience of *collegiality* in different school contexts. The data analysis yielded three distinct categories located along a richly textured continuum including: genuine and contrived, adaptive and resistant, collaborative and competitive collegiality. Three categories of collegiality were delineated:

1. *Pedagogical collegiality* (genuine, contrived & resistant)
2. *Social and emotionally supportive* (adaptive and collaborative)
3. *Fractured collegiality* (competitive)

4.4.1.   Pedagogical Collegiality

The sub themes that emerged relate to enhancers and sometimes inhibitors of collegial approaches to teaching and learning. The key findings would suggest that pedagogical collegiality is desired and valued theoretically. Despite *new* professionalism assumptions of collegial practices, many residual obstacles of *old*

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autonomous, resistant, individualized professionalism still prevail. There is also some emerging evidence however, of adaptation and navigation towards more collegial approaches. The following data samples portray teachers in transition regarding collegiality, with cultures of isolationism and competitive individualism serving as embedded inhibitors.

> *Not much sharing happens among teachers. If you have a good idea, you keep it to yourself.*
>
> SM

> *It is still predominantly an isolated profession...the locus of learning is still very traditional.*
>
> CS

> *Collegiality is a nice buzz word but how much of it really happens?*
>
> SOF

> *Why couldn't all the teachers in the town schools come together (for in-service) but that will never happen...people like to keep ideas to themselves.*
>
> CJ

> *Professional development should start among peers...we're a funny profession - a funny breed of people...where great sharing doesn't happen. There's isolated professionalism.*
>
> SM

Collectively, this data sample verifies an apparent dissonance between policy rhetoric and the resistant culture of individualism. Possible reasons for this include: the embedded culture of classroom autonomy, the division of curriculum into discrete subject specialisms, the value placed on '*on task teaching time'* as opposed to planning with colleagues or post-teaching reflection time. There was also the very strong thread of *not sharing ideas*, to maintain competitive advantage, in an era where teacher identity is increasingly constructed in terms of examination

result success. The wind of resistance is not entirely an old one therefore, and new refractions from the discourse of *instrumentalism* and commodification of education also serve as inhibitors.

A related sub theme was the rare occurence of collaborative team teaching, inhibited by teacher anxiety, resource issues, the pragmatic realities of traditional timetabling and the organisation of teaching and learning around individual 'subject silos' in second level schools.

> *No not really,* (there's little team teaching*) even when we were getting SNAs (Special Needs Assistants) there was some anxiety about working with them in the room – especially teachers of the practical subjects.*
>
> SOF

> *But teachers are afraid of team teaching...*
>
> SM

One participant summarised the reaction to an attempt to introduce team teaching in his school.

> *Some did enjoy team teaching but others also saw it as a threat and the possibility of team teaching was both attractive/unattractive. Others can be very protective about their subjects and their resources and would not want to embrace it...Timetabling and the difficulties of trying to work it was enormous, to the point where you just throw up your hands and say what's the point?*
>
> BC

This participant had however experienced 'pedagogical collegiality' as a positive process in a large school, through informal discussions, sharing of viewpoints regarding teaching and learning issues and possibly his own reflective dynamic.

This validates Hargreaves (1994, 2003) and Hayes (2006), arguments regarding the desirability of spontaneous versus contrived collegiality.

> *Working with others - a large number of teaching colleagues - learning from the teaching styles of others...their own personalities learning from them, being aware of what was happening. There was a depth of material there...a wealth of information there to draw from. Some people were very good to share.*
>
> BC

The issue of school size did emerge as possibly an influencing factor.

> *I think though it's a way forward and in bigger schools it can happen and there is probably more scope for it. In my school, I saw the benefits of it...*
>
> CS

> *In a larger school that is one advantage, a large teaching staff gives you a variety of people and if something negative takes place, it is lost in a larger crowd. I also worked in a smaller school and noticed this difference.*
>
> BC

The challenges of collaboration in smaller schools, when there was only one other subject colleague, was noted, particularly where competitive collegiality was fostered and public examination results were frequently compared.

> *Teachers like me may have been a bit of a 'one man band.' If I wrote out a resource for grinds or for class – I might not have been inclined to share. I have a conscience about that now. Yes...collegiality is probably on an improving curve.*
>
> CT

There was also some evidence to suggest that newer curriculum initiatives i.e. *Leaving Cert Applied, Leaving Cert Vocational Preparation* and *Transition Year* did provide some opportunities for more collaborative approaches. However these curriculum innovations, do exist on the margins of mainstream curriculum

experience in many schools. One participant was enthusiastic however, about the potential of curriculum innovation, as an enhancer of pedagogical collegiality.

> *LCA/TY/LCVP have certainly enhanced and certainly excite me however they show possibilities regarding what can happen. We can learn so much from each other and cross curricular work.*
>
> CS

Similarly, the relatively recent advent of school development planning initiatives (SDPI), was generally perceived as a positive collaborative process, notwithstanding the reservations of Bush (2005), or Hargreaves (1994 & 2003), regarding the use of *contrived collegiality* or indeed Ball's (2008), critique of 'soft accountability' factors being used to achieve compliance with national and centralised curriculum objectives.

> *I think the school development planning initiative is a very interesting one in trying to build collaboration – with the focus on teaching and learning, and curriculum planning...That has prompted an emphasis on sharing resources and methodologies.*
>
> CS

> *With whole school planning, the development of guidance plans will also require everyone to feed into it and pastoral care etc.*
>
> SOF

> *Most teachers would welcome that, meeting someone in your own subject area...you can borrow ideas and swap ideas...but it needs to be timetabled properly, because time is so scarce.*
>
> CJ

One participant was less positive and resisted the *soft accountability* of administrative procedures and the perceived compromising of professional autonomy.

> *It's infuriating though, that if I sit down and have a meeting with my colleague, that I have to go away and write down that I have had this meeting about what I was doing in my subject. It's a joke!*
>
> CT

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From a school leadership perspective however, one of the participants reflected the more bureaucratically motivated, but also professional *collegiality of compliance* with centralised departmental requirements.

> *In terms of curriculum planning, I wanted all of our teachers to be prepared and protected...Every one of these departments have their meeting time and their schemes of work. They submit their plans to me.*
>
> SOF

In conclusion, there are therefore many enhancers and inhibitors associated with pedagogical collegiality. Inhibitors include: cultures of individualistic autonomy associated with structures of teaching and learning, the competitive environment driven by instrumentalist visions of education, absence of team teaching and small school size. The enhancers included: newer curriculum innovations that rewarded collaborative approaches, the process of school development planning, large schools, where negative experiences could be diluted and; where informal exchanges facilitated the emergence of pedagogical collegiality. Within this sub theme – teachers navigate between and across these inhibitors and enhancers of collegiality, thus displaying a locally nuanced negotiation between *new* and *old* professionalism.

4.4.2   Social and emotionally supportive collegiality

Here the findings did corrobroate some of the research evidence regarding the positive impact of social and emotional collegiality in teaching and learning settings, as theorised by Jarzabkowski (2002). There are images of natural and

spontaneous support networks during times of personal and professional challenges

and also images of protective support networks for younger teachers.

> *We share with those we have a really good collegial relationship with but the culture is not good for this.*
>
> MS

> *When I decided that I wouldn't continue, one thing that helped me was the support of colleagues. They were really good...and if you wanted to take a student or go to someone and chat about it - it was more important than the support I had from management.*
>
> CJ
>
> *The school I've worked in has been very supportive - so I've been fortunate – colleagues are really important...there is a fundamental commitment to each other.*
>
> CS

Informal, social collegiality was not perceived by all participants, to be consistently

useful, given its potential to also fuel downward spirals of *self-fulfilling* and

consensual *collegial negativity.*

> *I also think that there is a danger...that it can produce a negative type of stereotyping...too much negativity, it can feed itself. If there is too much talking in the staffroom and the morale is low.*
>
> CJ

At the other end of the spectrum however, the potential of social collegiality to

enhance professional peer awakening was powerfully illustrated by one participant.

> *I remember a good colleague of mine and she was so hard on the kids...so tough on them. She was so hurtful with these kids. I said to her one day 'Come on, get into the car. You need to go somewhere with me...' She was resisting but she came...*
>
> *She sat in and we drove to this child's house. There wasn't a curtain in the house and this mother had eight kids. My colleague was hammering* (metaphorically speaking) *this kid for her homework. The kid's mother opened the door and said "Come on in and have a cup of tea." In the*

midst of all this chaos she was being so welcoming. I said: "We will have a cup of tea ...we will."

Now I think this changed my colleague's attitude towards this child but I don't know if it would to other children.

<div align="right">SOF</div>

This instance of a courageous social collegiality, legitimated by robust friendship, created the potential to enhance pedagogical collegiality, through a *critical friend* intervention.

In general therefore, social and emotional collegiality are typically present as positive manifestations of teacher professionalism. There is also however, the potential for social collegiality to descend into a consensual and uncritical negative spiral. Teachers as professionals however do navigate mostly within socially supportive collegial networks, based on these findings.

4.4.3.   Fractured competitive collegiality

There was also some emerging evidence of a *fractured* collegiality, based around: competition, individualism, professional rivalry, small minded jealousies and perceptions of localised hierarchies within schools and between neighbouring schools. Sometimes the fractures reflected different priorities between school leadership and subject teachers, as theorised by Brundrett *et al.,* (2003:157), regarding the potential for disequilibrium between the reality of management decision making and expectations of collegial, decision making processes.

Similarly Bush (2005:78), cites the necessity of shared interests and shared values for a collegiality, consistent with transformational leadership.

> *I was quite annoyed...at the resource distribution in the school. Other subjects in the school had a budget of 12,000 pounds and I had nothing, not even textbooks. I took the courage into my own hands. We did negotiate some resources and I overspent by 20 pounds but I remember the reaction when I came back! I said that I will pay that myself – the students are worth it!*
>
> SC

The findings would also point towards fractured collegiality across localized school catchment areas.

> *Yes there is definitely a culture of not sharing within some schools but definitely of not sharing between schools.*
>
> *CS*

> *Some of the St. H... teachers didn't want to mix with the vocational school teachers or come down through those doors. Some of the Vocational teachers who didn't have the same qualifications felt inferior...*
>
> SOF

Frequently, local and national press coverage of examination results was also perceived as divisive. The *Irish Times* (December 4, 2008), published statistics on third level progression for every second level school in Ireland (based on crude statistics from the 2008 CAO acceptance lists). There is a county by county breakdown of where each school ranks in the national, regional and local hierarchy. Ball (2000:1524-1539), offers a useful lens of how such media coverage inevitably follows the irresistible logic of the *school effectiveness* movement. This is achieved through a technology of organisational measurement and surveillance, a technology of control through the provision of neutral and apparently objective indicators and;

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the re-centring of the school - as a focus of causation, in explaining student performance. Such policy technologies inevitably produce a league table culture, a scientific basis for the possibility of blaming the school and an agenda of appraisal to identify and punish inadequate teachers.

While the above policy technology becomes embedded in public consciousness, through the lure of measurement, other complex factors such as economic, social and cultural capital are rendered silent. In the process, what Ball calls 'normalising judgements' are turned upon the whole school and each school is set in a field of comparison, so that an artificial order is laid down. In this instance, the order is essentialized as "good school = high % progression to third level and bad school = low % progression to third level." This simplistic equation highlights how marketplace values of NPM (particularly crude measurement) have encroached on the educational landscape in Ireland.

Neither was the new professional teacher as 'lifelong learner' embedded in all contexts and the metaphor of a teacher's place in the 'swamp of practice' (Schön 1988), is still lauded in some contexts as the authentic role model of *practitioner professionalism.*

> *Yes – definitely,* (when someone engaged in professional development) *it was someone getting above her station...getting uppity...I remember when I was doing my Diploma in Management – there was that statement what is she up to? She's getting up to leave.*

<div align="right">SOF</div>

Fractures exist therefore and a thread of *competitive collegiality* co exists with social and emotional collegiality, while conspiring with pedagogical collegiality, in many school settings. Teachers navigate across all three interconnected strands of collegiality, showing that there is no simple or uniform playing out of this *new professionalism* consruct.

In conclusion, the findings for this sub theme, collectively point towards a collegiality in transition; collegiality still struggling within the residual, individualistic autonomy, of *old professionalism.* There is however movement towards *new professionalism,* which seeks to harness the expertise of collegial planning and collaborative decision making. This has apparently been facilitated in some contexts by: curriculum innovation, informal collegial networks and more formally, by centralised and national initiatives, like school development planning and whole school evaluation. Collegiality is possibly also enhanced by larger school size.

The universal profiling of collegiality as an embedded *new professionalism* construct, evident in all sites of practice, is however dangerously simplistic. Adaptation in any reform process is more likely to be incremental, fragmented, and contextually influenced, rather than being systemic or pervasive. At a positive level however, this research evidence suggests that teachers are increasingly positive towards collegial cultures. Simultaneously however, their responses reveal the disequilibrium, associated with the countervailing pressures of crude competition.

This *competitive collegiality* is axiologically rooted in typical self–interest values of *old professionalism,* but paradoxically is also consistent with the thrust and spin of NPM, with its focus on measurable outcomes.

4.5.0. Teachers – caring professionals navigating social change

Pellion (2002:38), in a chapter entitled: 'Culture and State in Ireland's New Economy' alludes to "the breathtaking transformation of Ireland at the turn of the twenty-first century." Both O'Connell (2001) and Keohane & Kuhling (2004) capture succinctly the pace of societal change, the project of modernisation, the economic boom, and the significant change in cultural values in the phrases '*changed utterly'* and *'collision culture'* respectively. (See also: Corcoran & Peillon, 2002; Downes & Gilligan, 2007; Fahy, *et al.,* 2007; Inglis, 2002; Kennedy, 2001; Keohane & Chambers 2002; Kirby, *et al.,* 2002; Nolan, *et al.,* 2000; O'Connell, 2001; Ryan, 2005 and Share, *et al.,* 2007).

The impact however of societal change, on the professional and personal lives of teachers, remains largely unexamined. The task force report on behaviour in schools, *School Matters* (DES, 2006), does identify the significant societal changes that impact on schools and the teaching and learning process. These include: cultural dissonance between home and school, the culture of part–time work (reflective of students as consumers), and new cosmopolitan models of family, multiculturalism, mass media and competing value systems, increasing violence in society, alcohol and drug abuse among young people and issues around mental

health and self esteem. The most frequent and significant social change themes that emerged however, (those typically expressed as challenging and problematic), generally related to family life, changing values and changing family structures. In the context of *new* professionalism, this construct of social change requires from teachers some of the core values included by the Teaching Council (2007), in their professional code of conduct. These include: *responding to change, cultural values, care, social justice, equality and inclusion.* This discussion will now explore to what extent these values associated with *new* professionalism are manifest in participant responses. The following sub themes will be discussed.

1. *Changing values and changing patterns of family life*
2. *Changing family structures*

4.5.1. Changing values and changing patterns of family life

Some of the research participants perceived significant changes regarding student resistance to expressions of teacher authority, sometimes accompanied with a cynical awareness of student rights. Teachers were not always adaptive to these changes however.

> *When one checks a student in school – previously they usually said: 'I'm sorry, tá brón orm' but now they are on about their rights. They have a book out taking notes on what the teacher says.*
>
> CS

> *Sometimes parents when confronted get aggressive and confrontational. They are very inclined to take their child's side but without thinking there may be another side-that the teacher has a valid argument as well.*
>
> SC

Some participants however, placed these changing responses in a wider context of transition between authoritarian and democratic models of education, where the expectation of more egalitarian relationships was evident.

> *But there are challenges...the authoritarian model – the authoritarian society – that's gone! Inclusion and democracy are today's models.*
>
> CS

Other participants perceived troublesome students as victims of dysfunctional socialisation processes, where the family unit and its robustness as a supportive socialisation structure, was increasingly fractured.

> *But you will find that if you begin to probe the ones who give trouble – they don't have support at home, you only need to ask one or two questions and you know straight away.*
>
> JC

Participants also perceived the importance of community support, where fractured family systems failed.

> *It depends on whether there is support there at home or in community. I hate to say it but I think there is more support in country areas for kids.*
>
> JC

Some participants demonstrated an awareness of changing societal work patterns and attributed student behavioural problems to deficits in parental time and availability, in an economy and society, that has increasingly normalised full-time working lives for both parents.

> *There is a changing context...the children of commuting parents...the changing working lives of parents and the long commuting...the impact that this has...even on diet...Going home and having no dinner coming to school without breakfast. We set up a breakfast club and that room is full. Students need nourishment.*
>
> CS

Other participants, while perceiving these normalised work patterns of parents as potentially problematic, did acknowledge the possibility of greater independence and resourcefulness for some students, who assume responsibility for their welfare. Teachers expressed care and empathy for students and also demonstrated adaptation to changing cultural values in how they rationalised these changes.

> *The dynamic of what happens when students go home and what happens when they come back into school. There are different normalities. Many have to get themselves out in the morning and let themselves in, in the evening. Some students are brilliant to take on all that responsibility themselves. Others don't have the maturity or capability...and they are frustrated.*
>
> BC

Other participants articulated the professional and personal cost of negotiating through conflict situations, associated with *values dissonance* in the daily routine of teaching.

> *There's a price for it though - as I am no longer able to concentrate only on my teaching. I find it hard...you might just have come from a challenging meeting with a parent and you can't just block it out. It stays in your mind during the class. Equally you might have had a confrontational conversation with a student...*
>
> CT

Hence the relational domain of teaching, renders clinical compartmentalisation of emotion (associated perhaps with old professionalism and hierarchical models) as a challenge in the context of contemporary classrooms. Here boundaries between emotional states and pedagogical capacities, are less defined. O'Brien (2008:177) argued that: "If care is not a central agenda for schools...then a rationalistic model will continue to narrow students learning and impact on their wellbeing." Therefore, *pastorally infused* models of teaching are encouraged through the values of *new* professionalism but time pressurised environments deem them less tenable.

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For one participant, adaptation to a school site of significant disadvatage, was a profound challenge for the values of *new professionalism*. This participant's experience as principal (in the mid 1990s) was evidence of how intense social disadvantage, combined with fractured family life, was problematic for successful resolution in any construct of professionalism *new* or *old*.

> *My first week was the most...frightening, amazing,* (long silences and tone change) *pick what ever word you like...unreal, because the school had every problem imaginable. Within five days, the guards visited me eight times. I had four mothers beaten up by their husbands...I had a knife pulled on me by a parent. I was totally oblivious to the enormity of the issues...that a large rural town could have so many problems.*
>
> SOF

This participant subsequently rationalised the dysfunctionality through the lens of social disadvantage and positioned herself as a champion of *care* for children who experienced this level of chaos in family and community life. Her language (personal pronoun *my*) highlighted a sense of personal responsibility, thus demonstrating *care* but also other values of new professionalism: *social justice, equality and inclusion,* values evident in the Teaching Council's *Professional Code of Conduct* (2007:17-19).

> *I had to present at court in the first week to keep one of **my** kids out of jail. I would do anything to keep one of **my** kids out of jail.*
>
> SOF

The discourse of *care in education* has been marginalised according to O'Brien and Flynn (2007:71), who argue from an equality perspective that its prioritisation is particularly urgent where the gap between rich and poor continues to grow:

> ...how we relate, how teachers are prepared to understand and prioritise/subordinate care, and how the care work and resources accessed

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in the home, support and favour particular groups in society, are largely equality questions.

Similarly, Noddings (1992 & 2003) and the research of Fink (2004) also endorses the importance of *care, mindfulness* and *personalised* teaching. This research study would suggest that the majority of teachers do care at emotional, intellectual, personal and professional levels. If the official policy discourse on *care* is a muted one, marginalised in instrumentalist environments, then it is by contrast, certainly palpable in the hearts and minds of teachers in this study.

4.5.2. Changing family structures

One of the most consistent *societal change* issues to emerge from the research study was the perceived impact of changing family structures on the emotional lives of young people. These included participant perceptions of challenges associated with: single parent families under pressure, the emotional impact of parental separation and divorce on children, and the complications that arise when 'new parent partnerships' are being negotiated.

> *Family structures – the different types of family structures–that has lots of different ramifications. The emotional lives of children are very important...issues of anger management...challenges of student teacher relationship...new partners and new babies...I can think of two students now for whom this is having a big impact...*
>
> SC

Sometimes participants argued that there is a significant silence and resistance about confronting this reality in Irish schools. The challenges and yet the urgency of responding appropriately to these complex change and loss experiences for

adolescents were noted by Ryan (2000), but progress in this affective life skills
curriculum domain, remains haphazard.

> *It's not being voiced or addressed...it's still very early...the health*
> *services, social workers, gardai are aware...*
>
> CS

Others struggled to voice their own pastoral philosophy, within a very nuanced and

complex social issue in schools. The emerging data revealed a significant challenge

for teachers regarding *holding* the tension between: knowing and not knowing,

between comfort and discomfort, between confidentiality and accessing

professional support and around the competence to navigate between many

boundaries, including the personal and professional domain of one's role as a

caring professional. This finding was also echoed in the TALIS Report (2009:xx)

findings where teachers in Ireland reported a higher development need in student

counselling skills than did teachers in other comparator countries.

> *It's not – it's not something...there's an awareness...It's the skills, time,*
> *the space, place to talk...yea...awareness...we may not be equipped...we*
> *have referral and systems in place but...it's interesting...as year head I*
> *have experience and compassion but I am very aware that we are not*
> *always aware...and that there may be a choice by students not to engage*
> *...not to make us aware...but the acting out behaviour is there...*
>
> SC

Other participants were mindful of the challenges for teacher professionalism of

adapting to a rapidly changing social dynamic, within the context of fragmented

family life.

> *There's a growing number of children coming from difficult family*
> *backgrounds. The number from single parent families has gone*

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overboard...The number of children striving under difficult family circumstances, frequently without a father figure is incredible.

<div align="right">CT</div>

Other participants distinguished between the coping mechanisms and support systems in place in the home.

I certainly did experience this...in a large school...I think the nature of it depends on what is happening at home. It depends on how parents/partners are managing a separation at home...The most worrying one of all, was the student who wasn't engaging at all...whose mind and emotions were elsewhere...

<div align="right">BC</div>

However, one participant was more positive about the increasing openness about the issue, although he felt frustrated by official ethical protocols that limited his desire for more *caring* responses.

We embrace it more now. If I know...I see the student in a different light. It helps me understand their behaviour...I can make some allowances. Your heart goes out to them. You would like to be able to help them but one is restricted by protocols and you are hampered by ethics. You know you can't be with a child on your own.

<div align="right">CT</div>

This participant's experience (as a male teacher and Year Head) also validates O'Brien & Flynn's feminist critique (2007:71), relevant to the discourse of professionalism, that "we are not detached, autonomous, rational actors in the social world...we are interdependent affective beings who are vulnerable and dependent at specific times in our lives." While all the participants favoured a school policy of knowing about individual situations for students, there was also a recognition of the lack of appropriate skills within the teaching profession and sometimes within schools at large to deal adequately with situations that emerge.

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In terms of social issues we're not really empowered or trained to deal with them. We have no training in counselling. I can talk for half an hour to one kid but I have 125 of them in my year. I can't be there for them all.

<div align="right">CT</div>

A number of teachers do try to refer students on to the guidance staff...but there is an overload going on for them...and for others. It's just a question of ignoring it and leaving it be...

<div align="right">BC</div>

This lack of resources or access to support became evident when one participant explained how promises of external agency support collapsed at a time of intense need and much orgnisational investment in seeking such support.

We had organised case conferences that were to be attended by support agencies NEWB (National Educational Welfare Board) NEPS (National Educational, Psychological Service) and HSE (Health Service Executive)...those case conferences were a high priority for us but they didn't happen, they were cancelled at the last minute...The school was left to deal with the fall out.

<div align="right">CJ</div>

The unreliability of inter-agency support remains a reality in Irish education, and verifies O' Brien & Flynn's conclusion (2007:83), that the centrality of emotional wellbeing for students is still marginal to mainstream policy discourses and that: "ideologies of success and performativity that are pervasive in economic contexts, increasingly inform rationalistic consumer models of education, that have little to do with care..."

Within the discourse of professionalism therefore, the participants within this sub-theme have positioned themselves predominantly in alignment with the values of *new professionalism*; where, *responding to change, cultural values, care, social*

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justice, equality and inclusion are deemed important at both philosophical and practical levels. There is evidence that most participants reflect Nussbaum's philosophy (1995) that wellbeing is not just an individual or private matter but one that relates to our unavoidable interdependency as human beings.

However the evidence also suggests that the capacity of teachers to imbue these values in their practice is frequently compromised by lack of training and inadequate resource provision within schools. In this sub theme, teachers also display some paradoxical or dualistic *agency* attributes. Firstly, there is evidence of teachers *holding* the conflict and being able to find adequate resolution, to make ontological sense of the associated mis-match between the ideal and the real. Conversely however, some of the participants have not managed in their practice, to empower themselves professionally to deal with the emerging issues, and there is also evidence of *avoidance* and *quiet discomfort* about the *elephant in the room*.

Therefore many constellations of *navigation* exist between the ideal and the real, the heart and the head, the personal and professional, within the context of teachers as caring professionals, wishing to close the gap between ontological values of *care* and what is possible in practice. Here such navigation is desirable within *new* professionalism, where holding tensions betwen the ideal and the real, between certainty and uncertainty are normative in post modern environments, as explored by Elkind (1998:135-161), in relation to changing constellations of family, a theme more specifically explored in Irish contexts by Dunne & Kelly (2002).

4.6.0.   Teachers searching for an authentic professional voice

Fundamentally, this construct concerns itself with a perception by teachers, that their complex, '*navigational professionalism'* is substantially misunderstood by society at large. This perception precipitates the need for a new awakening of teachers, and a new professional *voice* to address the perceived void between superficial public perception and the complexity of professional practitioner reality.

Previously, Chapter Three, *Pedagogy Under Pressure* explored the sub-theme of teacher identity and its complex yet strong relationship with an instrumentalist, *results based pedagogy*. The emphasis in this previous section, was on understanding how teacher identity is forged, whereas, the current construct relates to how this identity is portrayed to the wider world. The previous discussion on teacher identity, did however help to contextualise the challenges associated with *giving voice* to a professional identity that is itself a contested one. Some of the insights that emerged from the earlier discussion, which profile the complexity of this task include:

- the vulnerability of teachers to external judgments which "might be based exclusively on measurable student achievements" (Day, *et al.*, 2006:604).
- the threat of de-professionalisation of teacher identity, associated with diminishing images of "teachers as functionaries" (Codd, 2005:201).

- the hegemonic forces of economic discourse within socio-political contexts, that shape perception of the educational enterprise and role identification of teachers within it (Callan, 2006:23).

- the possibility of 'personality and professional' deformation for teachers where their identities are challenged over a lifetime through 'spiritual fatigue' (Moskvina, 2006:74-88).

- the denudation of teacher agency; one's ability to pursue and fulfil the goals that one values, reconstruct them where necessary, and the extent to which people can live with contradictions and tensions within these various identities (Day, *et al*., 2006:611).

- the complexity of teacher identity from a post-structuralist perspective, where 'multiple selves' are dynamic and continually reconstructed, rather than remaining singular and static (Share, *et al.,* 2007:212).

- the importance of nurturing one's professional identity in the context of narrow and instrumentalist visions of what the educational enterprise is fundamentally about (Darling–Hammond & Bransford, 2005 & Palmer, 2007).

So how and why did the teacher participants in this research study identify the need for a new professional *voice* to portray the complexity of their role, and what gave rise to the emergence of this perceived need in the context of the theoretical perspectives outlined above?

The research process clarified three related sub-themes that will now be discussed.

1. Teachers in the swamp of practice, unable to contemplate the bigger vision of their role as educators.

2. The inadequacy of trade union representation as a professional voice and the perceived disconnect between union leadership and teacher participants.

3. The need to explore new possibilities for an effective professional voice.

4.6.1. Teachers in the swamp of practice unable to contemplate the bigger vision of their role as educators

> *It's puzzling, its hard to put a word on it. We are not saying **stop**...we're not taking back the thing...there are no opportunities to reflect. You can stay 40 years in the system and be quite effective. There's no room for reflection. The system remains the most important...live your life to a bell...no one to challenge you...no one is standing back.*
>
> <div align="right">SM</div>

> *We don't go up on the helicopter to take the helicopter view...we need more creative thinking...*
>
> <div align="right">CS</div>

> *In a school you beome very isolated from the big picture.*
>
> <div align="right">SM</div>

> *For those who have permanent jobs...there is no time to reflect...it's self preservation...just managing the dimensions of discipline, teaching and so many other elements. You just close the door in the evening and walk out that door saying I've survived another day. For those who do reflect... there is a frustration because it's hard to influence change...*
>
> <div align="right">BC</div>

Collectively, these representations of teacher experience, portray an *old* and restricted professionalism, that is substantially preoccupied with the micro-

management of the teaching and learning process, a finding also reached by Sexton (2007). It is a world where there is apparently little time for reflection at the level of vision, philosophy or policy discourse. It portrays a teaching profession - too busy with the pragmatic minutiae of life - lived by the bell, to be able to develop or orchestrate a successful *public voice*. Perhaps more fundamentally, it reflects a teaching profession, challenged to facilitate a *voice* within its own professional ranks, where colleagues can dialogue through professional discourse, regarding the bigger picture of what their collective role as educators is all about.

4.6.2 Inadequacy of union representation and disconnect between members and leadership

> *And we're not using unionism...we don't even go to the meetings – only those interested in a pay increase rise to the top. We don't go to meetings that deal with learning difficulties or pupil teacher ratios. We're to blame, we're paralysed!*
>
> SM

While this participant portrays a cynicism towards the motives of some teachers who engage with trade unionism, there is some acceptance of reponsibility for the self-defeating apathy regarding teacher inactivity. Other participants were less dualistic in their perceptions.

> *That word union - No I don't think they represent us very well...*
>
> SC

> *I really don't have much time for my union to be honest about it. I'm a member because I have to be...I was once very active in ASTI...subsequently I went to TUI (change in schools). It was so militant, negative and aggressive...it was appaling. In my school no one wanted the job of school rep.*
>
> SOF

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These participants clearly reject the current focus of union representation and perceive a negativity and miltancy that professionally, they feel disconnected from.

> *A lot of time is spent on individual cases...contracts/litigation...etc and a lot of energy is being sapped away on these individual cases instead of dealing with the bigger picture or the purpose of education...Unions are just representing pay and condiditons and that is sad.*
>
> BC

Clearly, some participants felt that current union style representation cannot deliver on a larger agenda within the context of new professsionalism, one that would profile the teacher's role as educator, in the context of increasingly difficult, challenging, but also exciting social change opportunities. It was clear that participants felt the need for an alternative forum, one that facilitated a different conversation regarding the teacher's role and one that enabled a more positive engagement with the public, beyond the crisis points of recessionary cut backs in education expenditure. Such a questioning and yearning is possibly reflective of the values of reflection and critical thinking, associated with *new professionalism.* It could also be constructed, as the failure of a collective, non-agentic teaching profession, to create an alternative professional voice, that reflects their status as emergent *new professionals?* There is a curious and ambivalent *navigation* here between yearning and realization.

4.6.2. Exploring new possibilities for an effective professional voice

Fundamentally, some of the teacher participants felt that the public relations battle, was being lost by teachers and this reality precipitated the need for a new

awakening, a new way of thinking about how teachers engaged with the wider public.

> *Teachers voices are not heard...they are losing their identity within society...not necessarily in terms of their status...but they are not finding their way to get the complexity of their role...the quality of what they do...and their engagement with students...that's being lost. Where is the voice of teachers? The Union? Professional Bodies? There is certainly a vacuum.*
>
> BC

> *We need a different organisation to put our voice out there. This work that you are engaged in could be extremely important.*
>
> SC

When I suggested that the Teaching Council might become that voice, different responses fluctuating between optimism, regarding its potential, and pessimism regarding early signals of it being only a *regulatory* body were evident.

> *I would hope that the Teaching Council could become a successful professional voice for us.*
>
> SC

> *The teaching council are only looking at qualifications as the first and most important thing rather than the quality of the teacher who is teaching. Once you have the qualification that's fine! This is a subtle message that qualification is most important...I'm not sure this is a good beginning for the Teaching Council.*
>
> BC

Another candidate reflected on the fact that he had never heard of the Teaching Council until he received a demand note for a membership subscription fee. There was a perception that opportunities had been missed, in the initial bureaucratic *soundings* from the Teaching Council.

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The Teaching Council (with 22 of its 37 executive membership comprised of teachers) is obliged under the Teaching Council Act, (2001:13) "to establish, publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers which shall include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence." While such a declaration of its mission could be perceived as predominantly a *regulatory* one, the Teaching Council Act also aims "to promote and represent the teaching profession" as one of its key areas of focus. However, some of its promotional literature, e.g. *Codes of Professional Conduct* (2007), its newsletter to members, and the Council's website, do promise enhanced professional representation for teachers.

My current sense of understanding would suggest that other avenues might need to be explored by teachers themselves, possibly the establishment of a grassroots organisation, using information and communication technology platforms and discussion forums. Such an organisation (if creatively and effectively constituted) could facilitate and legitimate collegial dialogue, around the teacher's role, in a society, where the teacher's role is narrowly conceived in popular discourse, possibly through the lens of instrumentalism.

The work of Sexton (2007:79-105), corroborated by some of the emergent findings from this study, would suggest that teachers view their professionalism in the main as a pragmatic, classroom based one and that teachers themselves must be more willing to engage with the bigger issues; i.e. the moral, political, social and philosophical issues that shape the wider education agenda.

The findings for this sub-theme build on Sexton's findings and conclude that teachers are positively disposed (theoretically at least), towards this fuller realization of their role as *new professionals*. The findings also suggested that when teachers have an opportunity to reflect on and discuss at some length, their role as educators, they clearly identify the 'self fulfilling risk' of becoming *negatively insulated* in pragmatic professionalism. They readily acknowledge the frustrations, associated with this restrictive articulation of their potential role.

These findings would also suggest that many obstacles remain, regarding the achievement of a more extended professionalism, and the successful communication of this *navigational* professionalism to society at large. The research does however suggest a yearning to embrace the development of a *new professional voice*. This voice could enable collegial dialogue and pro-active engagement with the wider public.

4.7. Towards a conclusion

The emergent findings elicited four sub themes that collectively profile a complex, teacher *navigation*, within the construct of *old* and *new* professionalism. The findings illuminate the frequent dissonance between the policy rhetoric of the teacher's role and that of practice itself.

In relation to: *Teachers and Parents – a minimalist partnership of ambivalence,* it is clear that teachers (despite some acknowledgement of the important role played

by parents in education) remain predominantly aligned to the values associated with the discourse of *old* professionalism, i.e. *conservative, motivated by self-interest, reactive, defensive* and *slow to change*. The findings imply an unresolved tension between: a policy rhetoric, that reflects progressive research knowledge and a lack of ownership by teachers or integration of this knowledge in the practice of teaching and learning.

Other obstacles emerged regarding tension between school management (that favours an open door policy for parents in compliance with legal requirements and best practice), and teaching staff, who remain unconvinced of the benefit to them of increased parental involvement. It could be argued that the current structure of teaching and learning in second level schools does not provide an impetus for teacher and parent engagement. It could also be argued that while the policy rhetoric of partnership prevails, little thought has been given to how a more meaningful engagement between teacher and parent could be brought about above and beyond traditional approaches to parent teacher meetings. Innovative possibilities regarding parental collaboration in the design of individualised educational plans (IEPs) for students, where values other than instrumentalist ones might be formulated remain beyond current teacher practitioner horizons.

In relation to *Collegiality in Transition*, similar patterns of tension between policy rhetoric and practice were evident. Three different classifications of collegiality helped to clarify the complex nature of a *non-linear collegiality,* that imbued both

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old and *new* constructions of professionalism. New Professionalism values were reflected by *social and emotionally supportive collegiality while* the other two classifications (pedagogical and competitive) reflected an ambiguous and at times paradoxical set of values, more reflective of *old* professionalism. The realization of *pedagogical collegiality,* was frequently hindered by the sedimented structures of teaching and learning at second level, i.e. single subject specialisation, single teacher allocation, absence of team teaching, and the instrumentalist dynamic, of teacher identity, circumscribed by state examination results. However evidence of teacher preparedness to embrace more collegial practices linked to school development planning initiatives (SDPI), was frequently perceived as a positive catlayst.

The strong presence however of a *fractured competitive collegiality,* rooted in competition for results within and between schools is inherently divisive and manifest in localised management practices regarding: teacher allocation, timetabling priorities and decisions regarding streaming and banding (as evident in Chapter Three). The third sub-theme within this construct: *Navigating through social change amid changing family values and structures* was possibly the most positive expression of the values of *new* professionalism. It is a promising finding that depite well documented busyness, teachers' desire to care, has not been seriously eroded and despite practical obstacles of time and competency, teachers still embody the vocational sense of commitment to a way of life, that is fundamentally a *caring* one.

In relation to the final sub-theme of*: teachers yearning for an authentic professional voice,* it was apparent that teachers are increasingly aware of their need to engage more with colleagues in a professional discourse, but also with the public, in an attempt to generate an understanding of the complexity of their role, as emergent *new* professionals in a rapidly changing world. There are significant challenges here however that necessitate a paradigm shift in how teachers begin the process of collaborative and strategic professionalisation that is self evaluative, outward looking, engages positively with key stakehoders including: the education research community, parents and most particularly the media.

While some of the professional literature and much of the official policy rhetoric, espouses *new professionalism* as normative and embedded in sites of practice, the findings indicate a less progressive and profoundly complex reality, where teachers continue to *navigate* pragmatically between and across constructs of *old* and *new* professionalism.

CHAPTER 5

VOCATIONALISM AND POCKETS OF WONDERFUL THINGS

5.0. Introduction

What brings joy and fulfilment to a teaching life compromised by instrumentalist imperatives, as outlined in chapter three? What brings ontological meaning to personal and professional identity, as teachers navigate between old and new professionalism (between policy agendas and the realities of practice) as outlined in Chapter Four? The data analysis for this final chapter of findings yielded seven sub-themes, which collectively illuminate this construct, regarding: intrinsic teacher motivation.

The metaphor *pockets of wonderful things*, was used by one of the research participants (cited previously in Chapter One) to describe the joys in a teaching life, compromised by instrumentalist imperatives. It is a metaphor that reflects Lakoff's (1992:8) theory, regarding 'unconscious systems of thought' and metaphors as a 'dictionary of the unconscious' that determine how we think. The metaphor captures the chance and spontaneous occurrence of happenings, which generate fulfillment for teachers. The metaphor of *pockets* has connotations of what is precious, or reserved in safe keeping for times of sustenance. An extension of the metaphor might suggest a large gown, worn by teachers, that holds within it pockets, often hidden from public view, not measurable in any whole school

evaluation, but ontologically significant throughout a teaching life. An interesting prelude worth mentioning here, relates to the more enthusiastic *participant voice* that articulates, owns and holds these pockets of wonderful things. It is a joyous narrative of: animation, enthusiasm, wistful nostalgia and sometimes defiance, a countervailing discourse to the frequently 'fraught' participant voice particularly evident in Chapter Three. It is however a narrative fraught with linguistic and semantic challenges where meanings traditionally associated with a more theological discourse, require careful examination in current educational contexts.

5.1.   The research findings and emergent themes

What intrinsically motivates the selfhood of teachers? What sustains them during times of tension, conflict or professional denudation?

Seven pockets of wonderful things?

Offerings of vocational craft wisdom to NQT's

Inner calling & influential role models

Vocational vision & making a difference

Harnessing renewal through professional development

Passion for one's subject domain

Extra – curricular and the relational domain

Biographical vignettes from novice years
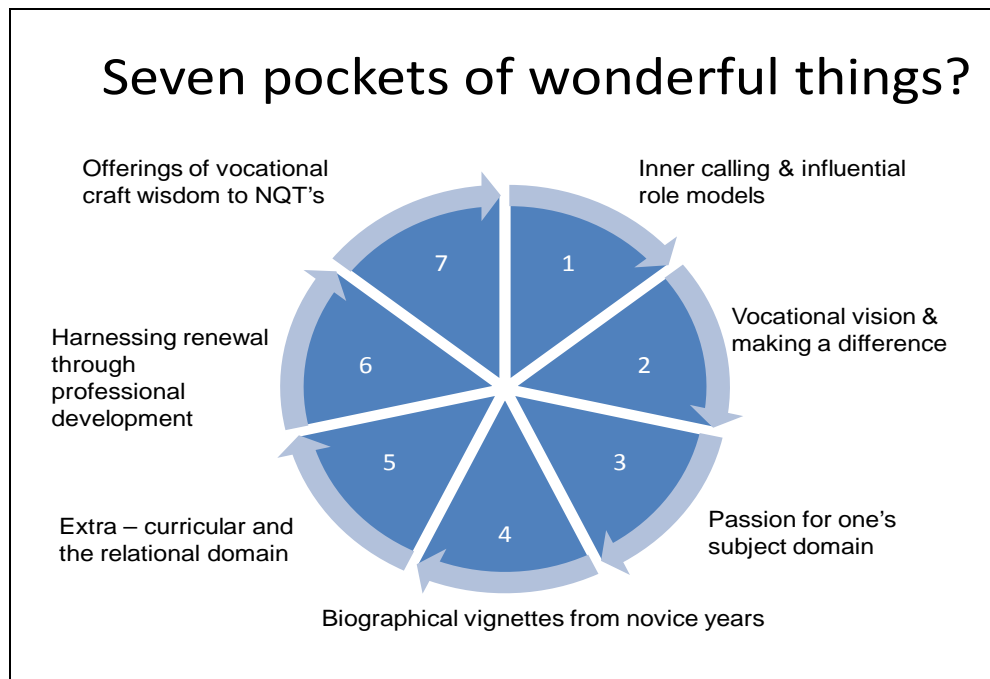
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1
2
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5
6

Figure 18 – <u>Construct 3 - Seven Pockets of Wonderful Things</u>

The overall findings for this section have yielded a vocational mosaic, which validates and affirms the importance of the vocational to intrinsic teacher motivation. The following were articulated as significant for teacher participants:

- The importance of possessing an inner vocational *calling* or instinct for a teaching life and the impact of former *teacher role models* in affirming and nurturing this instinct

- The motivation to make a difference in the lives of young people, to become a role model who can inspire and effect human development and self esteem

- Passion for the subject domain and how love of subject can sustain one's enthusiasm and become part of personal and professional teacher identity

- Biographical vignettes from novice years as important testimonies of: humour, agency, resilience and successful navigation within the emotional arenas of school culture

- Involvement in extra curricular and how it nurtures the relational domain, which improves the quality of the learning environment

- The harnessing of renewal through in-career professional development opportunities

- The enthusiastic offerings of: vocationally rich craft-wisdom for today's aspiring teachers
  This collective craft wisdom is closely aligned with the vocational dimension and this finding alone, may have considerable significance for approaches to teacher education and for policy development.

Before each of these emergent subthemes is now explored, the presentation of findings will create a theoretical context with reference to relevant professional literature on the theme of vocationalism.

5.2. Theoretical overview

Vocationalism: A problematic discourse?

The meaning of the word *Vocational* in an Irish context is etymologically trapped in a theocentric legacy imbued with its own problematic narrative. Metaphors of: *service*, *inner calling, making a difference* that emerged in the findings, carry with them the legacy of a compromised vocational era as outlined in Chapter One. If these vocational metaphors are a 'dictionary of the unconscious' (Lakoff, 1992), that determine how we think, then connotative meanings for this language code in educational contexts, deserves attention. I have struggled however, to capture the *vocational conviction* of teacher participants, free from a language code that is *historically incarcerated* in a problematic, semantic web. I have remained loyal to the voice of the participants throughout, but have struggled to find an alternative code with which to theorise the complex vocational conviction of the participants. I will return to this dilemma in the chapter's conclusion.

The following theoretical overview is designed to highlight the complex hues of the vocational domain and its contemporary status in educational discourse.

Following the relative failure of the competency and school effectiveness movements (1980s and early 90s), to spotlight the heart of what matters in teaching and learning, there has been a resurgence of interest in seeking to understand the vocational domain of teaching. A range of authors have argued for a return to valuing an engagement with the more intrinsic, but publicly muted discourse of vocationalism. In so doing, seminal authors have sometimes repositioned the discourse of vocationalism as one of alignment with a new progressive professionalism; a refracting of vocationalism towards a 'values based professionalism' (Day *et al.,* 2006; Nieto, 2003; Parker, 2007; and Woods & Jeffrey, 2002).

The work of Lynch *et al*., (2007:1-19), and Grummell *et al*., (2009:191-208), seeks to establish the centrality of *care* and *caring* in educational sites of practice, where the frequent prioritization of instrumentalist values can render silent the discourse of care. Similarly, the works of Condren (2009), and Kitching (2009), respectively explore the *personhood* and emotional domain of the teacher; the ontological importance of the *who* of the teacher in teaching and learning contexts. Almost two decades ago however, seminal authors Dilts (1990) and Hansen (1995), (challenging the values of the school effectiveness movement), reaffirmed the importance of highly personal and ontological questions such as: what is my *personal calling* as a teacher and what kind of teacher do I want to be? What is deep inside us that moves us to do what we do? Hansen (1995:1) traces the etymology of the word vocation to the latin word *vocare,* which denotes a

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summons or bidding to service; exemplified in the idea of vocation or to *profession* of commitment to a way of life.

It is here that the language code becomes problematic particularly in an Irish context. Such notions of *calling* and *bidding to service* were by no means a positive recipe for human development and emancipation in many sites of religious/educational practice. Vocationalism thus understood, has its own distinct, linguistic code etymologically linked to a theocentrically inspired *professionalism*. The langugae code of this vocationalism contrasts with a *professionalism* that focuses on: public recognition, greater autonomy, extrinsic rewards and increasingly public accountability. Blacker (2002:1-9), ironically warns that this latter discourse of professionalism alienates teachers from the vocational and "moral essentials of their calling." It could also be argued however, that the former theocentric discourse of vocationalism (subverted by religious institutions in Ireland and elsewhere) also failed to embrace professional values such as: regulation, accountability and ethical responsibility to human kind, state and citizenry.

The *authentic* return to an inner vocational core for professionals is ontologically rooted in transpersonal psychology, espoused by Scotton, Chinen & Battista (1996), and is positively motivated by interconnectednes to family, community, culture, global society and interdependence. It relates to constructions of ecological post modernism and holism (Goodman, 2003; Parker, 2007; Spretnak, 1999; as

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alluded to in Chapter Two). In its truest form, it evokes a notion of work, that is fulfilling and meaningful to the individual teacher, whose identity (personal and professional) is forged in the rendering of service.

How do teachers stay close to the passions and commitments that took them into their work, challenging themselves and their colleagues to keep faith with the profession's deepest vocational values? According to Palmer (2007:212), answering that question can mean fulfilment, frustration or betrayal, ideas undoubtedly influenced by Freire's writings (see Darder, 2003). Palmer seeks answers and reassurances from purer connotations of the word professionalism; the profession of faith in the midst of a disheartening world. He suggests (perhaps idealistically), that the term *new professional* can revive the ancient meaning of the word, to infuse a marriage of authentic professionalism and vocationalism. Such a marriage can according to Palmer (2007:213) inspire an ontological platform, "firm ground...soul ground" from which we can resist the institutional diminishment of those values; a view also shared by Hammerness (2003:55). Similarly, Hansen (1995) distinguishes between vocation and *career* (career - associated ironically with new professionalism) implying routeway or direction, without inherent assumptions of service to others or inner fulfilment.

Nieto (2003) cited by Cochran Smith (2006), also concludes that teachers stay in teaching even in the most difficult circumstances for reasons that have more to do with 'teaching's heart'. Nieto's similes of: *teaching as love, teaching as hope and*

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responsibility, teaching as anger and desperation, and *teaching as a democratic practice,* reflect these service attributes. This possibly authentic, (but at times idealistic and problematic) realignment with vocational values, must however be distinguished from questionable neo-liberal constellations of new professionalism, deemed untenable by Collins (1991), with its focus on: performativity, accountability, and the commodification of education and 'technicism' as exposed by Ball (2008). This movement towards a politically correct 'new professionalism' that seeks to cynically embrace the values of vocationalism was justifiably rejected by Collins (1991:41), who disparaged the notion of vocation as a type of 'ethical after thought' that could be "packaged and plugged into modern practice just like any other component."

Exploring a more radical vocationalism?

Vocationalism from a more radical perspective, necessitates a political consciousness and critical self reflection as outlined by Collins (1991:40-57), and exemplified by the works of Freire, as summarised by Darder (2003:497-510). Darder traces many of the vocational influences that infused Freire's pedagogies of liberation and praxis, in a chapter entitled: 'Teaching as an act of love.' For Freire, vocationalism inherently implied a commitment to changing the status quo of dehumanizing oppression, brought about by the unjust structure of capitalist society, and the validation of: courage, agency and egalitarianism required, to achieve this cause. Collins (1991:42), similarly eschewed any essentialising assumptions about vocationalism, that promote easy consensus building, and

declares that true vocationalism iincorporates: "a strong ethical dimension, emphasizing an unavoidable necessity to make judgements about what should or should not be done and a readiness to take sides on significant issues." Collins (1991:44) cites the personal responsibility on the part of the practitioner, "that cannot be abrogated by technicist prescriptions and preconceived formulations characterizing a cult of efficiency." Collins (1991:44) argues that these "plugged in components" are systematically and cynically integrated into existing frameworks to ensure that "consensus and non reflective discourse remain intact."

The complex terrain of vocationalism: from passive acceptance to authorship and agency

Similar epistemological hues of vocationalism, (in the context of teacher education and pedagogy as distinct from adult education and andragogy), have been espoused by: Hansen (1995), Hammerness, (1999, & 2003), Newman (2000), Allendar (2001), Mayes (2001), Ayers (2001), Goodson (2001), Korthagen (2004) Korthagen *et al.* (2006), Kelchtermans (2005), Mortiboys (2005), Joram (2007) and Palmer, (1998, & 2007). Here we find concepts (some problematic) such as: 'teaching from within', 'the call, the pain and the joy of teaching' 'ideals and dreams of teachers,' the importance of teaching with emotional intelligence, while also sharing some epistemological ground with more radical theorists, that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique or measurable competence. Hansen (1995:8-13), explores some of the complexities associated with vocationalism, i.e. the impossibility of separating the personal from the public (unlike professionalism

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which frequently recommends such division) and the importance of 'negative capability' or accepting uncertainty as a given. Hansen (1995:17) argued that vocation embraces a commitment to the qualities of: perseverance, courage, imagination and faith, the capacity to believe without necessarily having the evidence to support that belief.

Similarly, Freire (1998:3) though coming from a more radical school wrote: "It is impossible to teach without the courage to try a thousand times before giving up...it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented and well thought-out capacity for love." Collins (1991:44), in a more radical discourse, affirms vocational competency as the agentic and self reflective capacity, to deal with unknown situations that challenge the practitioner's powers of reflection and analysis. Competence according to Collins "is assessed from the way in which the familiar is deployed...to engage with unfamiliar dimensions at hand." Freire too (1993:98) espoused this architectural agency in education: "the capacity to always begin anew, to make, to reconstruct...to refuse to bureaucratize the mind, to understand and to live as a process...live to become..."

Hansen (1995:114), Collins (1991) and Freire (1998:3) spoke of an ethics of love, teaching that required seriousness, ethical self monitoring and discipline as well as scientific, physical and emotional preparation; a teacher always learning, who was both joyful and rigorous. Some shades of new professionalism undermine this potential for ethical self monitoring. In a policy climate that favours public

accountability (Ball, 2008; Gleeson and O'Donnabháin, 2009; and Sugrue, 2009a), there is an interesting tension here between settling for the lowest common denominator of public accountability systems, and also facilitating a more profound, intrinsic, ethical, self monitoring, based on the vocational values of critical self reflection.

Palmer (2007), seeking to promote this inner landscape of teaching, proposes three inner pathways of: the *intellectual*, *emotional* and *spiritual*. (Freire might have added another - the political). Parker speaks of the inner self that teaches, the nexus of teaching - as the intersection between the public and personal, and proclaims (2007:31) that, "the best inward side of vocation is deep gladness." Palmer (2007:34), also engages with the concept of *authorship* and argues that authority in the vocational sense, is "granted to those who *author* their own words, their own actions, their own lives, rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts." In the context of this overall research endeavour, there is ample evidence of the conflict between participant desire to author and the perceived obstacle of the instrumentalist script (as outlined in Chapter 3). Thus, the theme of *compromised agency* is ongoing.

Teacher efficacy and instrumentalist challenges

Hammerness (2003:52) establishes the importance of teacher efficacy (making a positive difference), as one of the most powerful predictors of teachers' commitment to teaching and their inherent vocationalism. Similarly, van den Berg

(2002:557-625), argues that teachers with high internal efficacy will impose higher expectations upon themselves – believing that they can influence change, irrespective of external limiting factors. Sociologically, this raises an interesting epistemological tension between: individual human agency and structuralist approaches, between the perceived limitations of existential phenomenology and the more dynamic claims of symbolic interactionism.

Blacker (2002:1-9), following the devastation of *nine/eleven* in New York, proposes teaching as a *keystone occupation* within the cultural and institutional ecology of the democratic state, like a key species (or supporting arch) in the ecosystem that provides stability, public service and moral inspiration. Ballet (2001:595-597), disputes this however and argues that teachers' vocational beliefs and values, have lost their significance, due to the *intensification* of the teaching profession and a "turbulent policy environment." Pring (2005:196), is also concerned about the severance of education from moral discourse in what he calls "a theory of effectiveness which ignores the question-effective for what?"

While teachers (based on this research study), also share these concerns, the findings would suggest that there is a competing discourse, though currently a muted one, pocketed in the inner lives and thoughts of teachers, not yet finding easy expression in an instrumentalist climate, findings consistent with Woods and Jeffrey (2002: 96).

Giddens (1996:367-368), however illuminates the influence of global processes, (particularly capitalism) to subdue competing discourses in localised contexts, so teachers are not immune from this totalising influence. Other authors also highlight the corrosive potential of the discourse of commodification, to thwart the roots of teacher commitment, through audit accountability and external measurement (Hargreaves, 2003; Korthagen, 2004; Codd, 2005; Greene, 2005; Ball, 2008; Long, 2008). This corrosive and prevailng discourse therefore suggests the need for a more radical vocationalism to counterbalance its essentialising logic.

Illuminating affectivity and schools as emotional arenas

Lynch *et al*., (2007:1-19), and Grummell *et al*., (2009:191-208) discuss what they perceive as, the increasing indifference to the affective domain in education, despite ongoing resistance to this indifference from feminist scholars. This indifference is attributed to the contemporary, hegemonic glorification of performativity, and the ongoing historical legacy of an engineered dichotomy between: fact and value, or reason and emotion in education. The authors problematise this indifference, within the context of rising neo-liberalism and today's model citizen as a rational economic actor, a calculated entrepreneurial self, being prepared for "economic, political and cultural life in the public sphere." This neo-liberal self also needs preparation for "a relational life as an interdependent, caring and other centred human being" (Lynch *et al*., 2007:3) with three distinct capacities for: love, care and solidarity (LCS) work.

Earlier findings (chapter three) affirm Lynch *et al's* contention (2007:14), that the teacher's caring role is not attributed much significance in instrumentalist environments because the teacher is largely perceived as "a midwife for delivering student performance." Lynch *et al.,* establish the importance of *nurturing capital* within educational environments and its role in the student quest for self actualisation. Nias (1996:293-306), alluded to the importance of affectivity in teacher's lives, their deep emotional attachment to their work, the importance of the relational, the investment of self, the implications for self esteem and coping with vulnerability. The centrality of inter-human relationship as a philosophy in education (Martin Buber, 1925 & 2004) has strong resonance here. Buber delineates between the importance of the *'I-Thou'* (mutual regard, openness, acceptance, holistic, dialogue) as opposed to the *'I-It'* relationship (unequal, self serving, satisfying material needs, objectification and instrumental). Buber acknowledges the pragmatic need for this complex duality of relationship in formal teaching and learning contexts but prioritises the striving for self actualisation through *'I-Thou'* patterns of exchange (See Guilherme & Morgan, (2009) on Buber's philosophy of education).

Nias (1996) argues that students (interestingly) are the most important group who impact on the socialisation of teachers, followed only in importance, by their colleagues. Wentzel also (2002:287-301), alludes to the emotional attachment teachers have with their students and explores the similarity between effective teachers and good parents. Wentzel concludes: "interpersonal relationships that

provide students with a sense of belongingness can be powerful motivators of childrens' school related interests" (2002:289). Based on findings in Chapter Three: (*Pedagogy Under Pressure*), the achievement of *'I-Thou'* mutual interpersonal relationships is undoubtedly compromised by the instrumentalist imperative.

Teachers however obtain vocational reward and higher level socialisation needs from role modeling, nurturing, placating, stimulating, disciplining and empowering young people. Hamachek (1999:209), argues: "the more teachers know about themselves - the private curriculum within - the more their personal decisions are apt to be about how to pave the way for better teaching." Freire too (1998:3), was mindful of the personhood of the teacher, and argued that we should never "dichotomize cognition and emotion" and the need for teachers to continually expand their critical and emotional capacity to create both *effective* and *affective* learning environments.

A teacher's vocational ontology, is also influenced by the culture of adaptation within schools as organisations. Hargreaves (2002:3-25), uses the metaphor of *The Emotional Geographies of Teaching* to map the relationship and vocational domain, across different pedagogical and sociological axes. Similarly Lazarus (1999:653-678), establishes the relationship between person and environment, cognition and context, the impact on values adopted; on the vocational profile of espoused values, demonstrated values, personal beliefs and intersubjective

synergies. van den Berg (2002:579), also shows teachers meanings to be very existential, highly personal, resistant to persuasion and quite evaluative. He speaks of organisatons as emotional arenas; held together by feelings of belonging, power, respect, fear and apprehension. Teachers do not therefore develop feelings and emotions in isolation from their colleagues and cultural inter-subjectivities, even if those emotions sometimes remain resistant to change.

This organic professional and vocational identity level, therefore takes on what Korthagen (2004:15), calls the form of "a gestalt; an unconscious body of needs, images, feelings, values, role models, previous experiences and behavioural tendencies, which together, create a sense of identity." This gestalt influences beliefs, competencies and behaviours, visible for public viewing, thus shaping public perception.

In conclusion, the professional literature and extant theory, has certainly established the importance of the vocational, and presents a strong case for its centrality in any understanding of the teacher's role. This brief overview has elucidated some of the: paradoxes and nuances across the sometimes problematic language code of vocationalism. It also signals the hostile, instrumentalist climate that authentic vocationalism battles with. It explores the importance of: radical vocationalism, inner landscapes of authorship, affectivity as intrinsic to the nurturing of teacher wellbeing, compromised agency and teacher efficacy within instrumentalist climates.

There is therefore a need for teachers to reclaim and re-position themselves, within this competing discourse. How can they reassert this important vocational identity and refract the socially valorised role of 'instrumentalist identity', without engaging with a new language of affectivity, that has remained typically absent from dominant policy and popular discourses of instrumentalism in second level education? The word vocational has all but vanished from teacher education policy and has it seems, been emasculated into a more politically correct discourse of *new professionalism*. Murphy (2008:29-39), using Freirean principles, speaks to the challenges of recognising 'limit situations' and how their *naming* can lead to their negation, 'limit acts' directed at negating and overcoming rather than passively accepting them. Clandinin and Connelly (1991:259), favoured "the restorying of the narrative structure of educational experience," the importance of teachers telling their story, using their values and practitioner language, the fishing out from deep *pockets* of craft knowledge the truths that sustain a teaching life. Let us now consider the 'vocational register' of the participant voice and compare it with the theoretical perspective.

5.3.1. Inner callings and influential role models

This first subtheme traces the theocentric and humanist notion of a deeply rooted, vocational calling felt by some participants. It supports a somewhat caricatured and problematic (but enduring) view of teaching as an instinct, of the 'strong image' of the 'teacher personality' (Kitching, 2009:145). It suggests a pre ordained

pathway that makes it impossible to imagine doing anything else. Teachers, who

have experienced this *calling*, did not require career guidance to direct them

towards teaching and expressed this inner *instinct* thus:

> *I always wanted to be a teacher – played those teacher games as a child when I would always be the teacher and it was sown at that stage. I didn't think too much about it after that...*
>
> SM

> *Yes absolutely I do it's already in you – you can learn things along the way but...I became a teacher because I really wanted to.*
>
> CJ

> *I never thought of doing anything else. I always wanted to be a teacher.*
>
> CS

These participants verify Parker's (2007), notion of inner pathways that include the

emotional and spiritual, responding to an inner calling or summons to service, that

does not guarantee ongoing fulfilment, but is impossible to say no to, without

feeling unfaithful to selfhood (Hansen, 1995). For others, their experience of

positive role models, had a powerful impact on their decision to become teachers,

and these role models may also have been catalysts who nurtured a latent calling

towards vocationalism. The language used here is one of inspiration and yearning

for replication.

> *Part of the influence definitely was my own experience of second level and teachers in my life that I had – particularly an Irish teacher who was very inspiring - who set a light and fused something in my imagination in 5th year.*
>
> SC

> *There was an English teacher who highly influenced me. She was highly organised...highly motivated...strict, firm disciplinarian no favourites...gave her homework consistently always corrected...didn't give out comments willy nilly...you knew the mark that she gave you was a right mark...she gave you time and put in extra time for debating & public speaking.*
>
> SOF

> *I think I was influenced probably by my my own teachers – role models both in the UK and here in the CBS.*
>
> CT

For one participant, the experience of a young progressive, egalitarian teacher, who engaged students in a constructivist pedagogy (at a time when corporal punishment and oppressive didactic models were the norm), became a seminal influence.

> *I didn't like school until third year...and we got a new teacher, who was young and he had a different approach. I related to him and I think it started then that I would like to do teaching. He didn't use corporal punishment which everyone else was using in the school...He treated us very differently. He gave us a chance to have our say and I was interested in our say and, yeah I suppose we'd say now that we were co-constructing knowledge with him.*
>
> CD

For others, Sugrue 's (1998) "cultural archetypes" within the context of what was a respected family tradition and being born into the profession prevailed.

> *I was influenced by family and a history of teaching in the family going back over the years.*
>
> BC
>
> *Neither of my parents would have had beyond middle education. They were thrilled I was becoming a teacher.*
>
> CT

For another participant however, the experience was quite different, where there was no family tradition, but teaching as a vocation was highly valued and respected.

> *I suppose when I was growing up, I mean I could have been doctor or a teacher. There were maybe half a dozen jobs that I knew about, that was*

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it. I was the oldest in the family and my parents' experience would have been very limited also. I never had anybody belonging to me who taught either, you know…but teaching was respected…

<div align="right">DC</div>

It is evident therefore, that much of the literature and professional knowledge in this regard is still relevant, and the vocational image of *a calling* (Dilts, 1990; Freire, 1998; Hansen, 1995; van Manen, 2002; and Parker, 2007), remains a real presence. The perception of 'inner callings' and the influence of teacher 'role models' had a profound resonance with participants. One participant however, wasn't sure if she would choose a teaching path again (with the wisdom of hindsight). She cited societal change and material values, as key issues that eroded some of the enjoyment experienced in earlier years. She was also uncertain, regarding the teacher's current vocational role and resisted the instrumentalist impetus that had now taken hold, therefore concurring with Ballet's (2001) analysis of the intensification of teaching, and also demonstrating the corrosive potential of the discourse of commodification, explored in the professional literature.

Therefore, initial *vocational calling* despite its strong presence was no guarantee of immunity against vocational denudation, but did foster a resilient zeal for research participants, as implied by Hammerness (2002). An inherent problem with the metaphor of *vocational calling* is its subjective, affective and abstract nature, which can include an inappropriate yearning for influence over others. Another perennial challenge is establishing a correlation between: *vocational calling* at an

affective level and competencies that can be valorised at cognitive or psychomotor levels in educational environments.

5.3.2. Vocational vision and making a difference

Many of the participants had a personal vision of making a difference and a commitment to a life of service, consistent with perspectives from professional literature. This vision was expressed with passion, displaying Hansen's (1995), linguistic code of vocationalism, which draws on the affective domain, (Nias, 1996; and van Den Berg, 2002). Within the responses, there was a visionary mapping, or outline of emancipatory possibilities. It represented humanist and enlightenment traditions, but only occasionally navigated towards emancipatory visions of societal change and/or social justice. Collectively, these visions of making a difference, being driven by vocational values, resounded through the affective tenor (and potentially agentic fibre) of participant voices.

> *And when I was young and I was in school I was sort of seriously considering the priesthood as an option. And I remember making a conscious decision...that I could do just as much good by being a teacher and still maybe have a family and this kind of thing. I certainly saw teaching as a vocation and yeah, vocation in the sense of it being something you dedicated your life to. It came out of idealism. It wasn't, I didn't do it for the holidays...or for the money...*
>
> CD

> *I had a commitment to justice, change...possibilities and opportunities that education offered...that you can make an impact...opportunities for social change...*
>
> CS
> *There is nothing as magical as seeing a child being excited...developing skills and seeing them being transfered, education... holisitic development.*
>
> SC

These utterances inherently captivate the internal teacher efficacy, spoken of by Hammerness (2003) and van den Berg (2002). Earlier discussion of findings would suggest, that high levels of internal teacher efficacy, do not always deliver on the agentic motivations implied by them. Themes of passivity and compliance have been discussed (Chapter Three) in relation to teacher identity and teacher perception of being frequently powerless to influence change. Alternatively, some of the utterances do reflect Parker's (2007), notion of the possibilities of deep joy. *"There is nothing as magical as seeing a child being excited...developing skills..."*

One of the research participants summarised the paradox of power and powerlessness at micro school levels, and the ongoing navigation within this vocational paradox. This paradox also captures Parker's notion of authorship (2007:34), where teachers can author their own values and actions rather than playing a scripted role or Freire's (1998) hopes for working through limit situations.

> *Teachers actually have a lot of power but they often feel powerless...they are up there in front of a class of 30 or whatever and in a lot of ways they have a lot of power over students and yet...they really are vulnerable themselves...I think everything is a matter of compromising what you believe with what's possible.*
>
> CD

In an interesting 'structuralist' postscript, this participant also acknowledged that teacher agency and authorship were not always encouraged by management.

> *But in fact, the management of schools don't want teachers with strong identities who wish to change the status quo.*

There are therefore points of contestation, between individual potential for agency and cultures of conformity, influenced by leadership styles and perceived management philosophy. For some participants, the seeds of this potential for agency were sown in teacher education programmes through exposure to the work of emancipatory and critical theorists.

> *I remember the influence of great lecturers and essays like 'Deschooling Society' by Ivan Illich and Freire's 'Pedagogy Of the Oppressesd' over twenty five years ago – opportunities...provided for looking at the wider role of teachers in society.*
>
> > CS

> *I became interested in the whole dynamic of what was going on in society and the impact of education.*
>
> > BC

While there is ample evidence of the lure of emancipatory ideals, there is limited evidence of this mission being fulfilled with some exceptions and possibilities for education as liberation at individual levels.

> *I got such a buzz out of it. I had a cross section of students...top class kids and disadvantaged students. I got a bigger buzz from the disadvantaged students and all that went with it...I worked really hard to get them through.*
>
> > SOF

> *Also results – twenty 'A' grades is a reward too and I can do it, but also to see some disadvantaged student being passionate about reading or some issue, can lead to a better future.*
>
> > CS

These participants echoed Freire's conviction (1998:72), that change is possible. "It's the knowledge that sees history as possibility and not as already determined." Occasionally, there was also evidence of vocational empathy with the adolescent

state and autobiographical memory of difficult adolescent years, that helped to bring a 'mindful vocational practice' to one's own teaching.

> *I think my motivation for starting teaching was to help young people to sort of grow up and get through what I had experienced as difficult years...I found it wasn't possible to do that in the classroom but if you relate it to students in a different way outside the classroom it was possible.*
>
> DC

It is clear therefore, that many teachers are driven by the humanistic and ontological imperative of making a difference. There are many challenges of navigating between: idealism and reality, power and powerlessness, agency and compliance or oppressive school cultures, but the possibility of making a difference, the belief that change is possible, still motivates and gives meaning to teachers' daily work. It would appear however, that this inherent vocational tension between idealism and reality (Hansen, 1995; Freire, 1998; Hargreaves, 2002; Palmer, 2007), the many complex emotional geographies of teaching, negative capability, (accepting uncertainty as a given), remain manifest challenges in the motivational landscape of teaching.

5.3.3. Passion for one's subject domain

This sub theme and its importance in teacher motivation, has been well documented in professional literature. Earlier in this chapter, inspirational teachers were cited as loving their subjects. In an Irish context, authors such as Hogan (1995), Dunne and Hogan (2004), and Dunne (2005) have captured this. Powerful metaphors such as 'courtship' and 'conversational pathways of instruction' have

been utilized by these authors respectively, to capture what might be described as pedagogical vocationalism.

Hogan (1995:170), suggests a pedagogical metaphor of 'cultural courtship' where the authentic 'voice' of the subject and its embodied cultural legacy, is ethically enacted by the teacher through a faithful idiom, "which addresses the sensibilities of the pupils in an inviting and challenging manner." Hogan believes that one's enthusiasm for one's subject and the belief that it has something rich and enduring to offer, enable the student "to discover something of the historian, scientist, mathematician, artist, linguist, musician in himself" (1995:70). Such an epiphany gained from a three way courtship between: teacher, subject and student is described by Hogan as an 'unearthing.' On a similar theme, Dunne (2005:155), argues that the educator should awaken desire and lure the learner, captivate him in a way that can lead to a deeply grounded self esteem across the range of subjects.

Maxine Greene (1994, 2000, 2005) and Martha Nussbaum (2002) also champion teaching as releasement or enablement and strongly affirm the role of creativity and the narrative imagination of arts based subjects, as ways of uncovering the identities and human becomings of both teacher and learner. Hanratty (2008:147-158), explores a similar theme; opening the windows of wonder, through the teaching of poetry, and in so doing, articulates the vocational joy of exploration to: "enable the soul to breathe, the spirit to be enlarged, the mind to (creatively) wander, and the heart to be enchanted." The participant responses reflect this

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intrinsic fulfillment, demonstrating a strong identity nexus between love of one's

subject and one's ontological self.

> *When it came to making a career choice, I chose the subjects I loved and the course that would enable me to be a teacher. I still* (28 years later) *get a great buzz from my subjects.*
>
> SM

> *I love French and I love teaching French. I truly love the work...What keeps me sustained is the love of doing it...I've had tremendous satisfaction over the years...*
>
> CT

> *I love my subject and I always try to get a group dynamic going...bring them on board.*
>
> SC

> *I had them for Maths...I loved teaching it...*
>
> CJ

Some participants expressed their enthusiasm towards curriculum change in their

respective subjects and were vocationally energised by these changes, enhanced

also by the use of information technology and other media in the classroom.

> *The Leaving Cert students love the new course in Geography. There's 20% for student project work with great possibilities...great programmes on TV – one on the Ganges. Today a teacher who was in Calcutta brought in slides – students were fascinated...*
>
> CS

> *We're spoilt for choice when it comes to resources; there's a data projector and computer in every room. But we can play radio or tune in to TV 5 'TV Cinq' and get up to the minute news in French. It's updated every 3/5 hours. It's just magic!*
>
> CT

During the research process, I visited some classrooms where my participants

taught. The classroom of this participant, was festooned with posters, maps and

cultural artefacts acquired from holidays in France. The displays were updated frequently and each September, new artefacts appeared. Students were also invited to display artefacts from holidays abroad, stories were exchanged and opportunities for constructivist approaches to language development availed of. It was easy to witness the metaphor of *courtship*, or *conversational pathway* inherent in how this participant infused his personal passion for French within the professional domain. One participant described an inspirational colleague who clearly loved her subject and created a stimulating, visual learning environment, for her students.

> *I have an amazing English teacher who has a 'wow' room, and who develops all her own resources. She uses displays and changes her room every so often...She spends her Summers in Greece and has all this information to share with her students. She is making such an effort to make her subject interesting.*
>
> SOF

Other participants also explored their own love for the subject and in so doing, conveyed a sense of this love being inherent in how it would be explored with students, a sense of the personal and professional identity merging into ontological and pedagogical wholeness.

> *Yes, I like History/Geog and it's interesting like placenames...Cill Mhantain and toothless story...all relevant history of settlement...Cill Chainnigh...and other places – all have an interesting story to tell...*
>
> SC

He also taught these subjects trí gaeilge, was a traditional musician and his narrative embraced the story telling tradition, associated with teaching in Ireland, captured by writers such as: Bryan McMahon, Brian Friel and Frank McCourt. Interestingly, however another participant, while also loving his subject, prioritised

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the relational domain as his source of motivation, thus echoing Wentzel's (2002), exploration of interpersonal relationships and the similarity between effective teachers and good parents.

> *I did love teaching physics but all through my career, I always found that I was teaching students rather than teaching physics and maths.*
>
> CD

The subject domain is therefore a core element of vocational identity and professional fulfillment for many teachers. It nurtures a courtship between inner affections and professional identity. It offers spaces for creativity and authorship, where teacher can become a pedagogical architect. Despite the reality of centralised curriculum and instrumentalist pressures (Chapter 3), some of the participants had created positive pedagogical spaces through: personal creativity, curriculum development opportunities and the use of information technology.

5.3.4.   Biographical vignettes from novice years

(resilience, agency, inspirational colleagues & positive school cultures)

The professional literature has established the early years of teaching as crucial, firstly in the retention of teachers (Coolahan, 2003; Darling Hammond & Bransford, 2005), but secondly, in how these early years influence subsequent personal and professional development, as recently explored by Killeavy and Moloney (2009), and Montgomery (2009). Currently, the importance placed on official induction and mentoring programmes for newly qualified teachers, (NQTs) represents an official policy response to emerging research findings. Participants recalled events to which significant importance was attributed. These biographical

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vignettes were narrated with tones of joy, nostalgia, pride and sometimes defiance. In this section, both Freire's (1993,1998) and Parker's (2007:31-34) ideas on authorship, agency and deep joy are consistently present. The responses affirmed the importance of:

- relational capacity

- internal traits of perseverance, rebelliousness and agency

- optimism and innovation associated with the development of greenfield schools

- challenging apprenticeships with resistant and relcalitrant students

- fighting 'gender battles' regarding subject choice

- inspirational colleagues who worked with disadvantaged students, and

- some humorous incidents with social, personal and health education!

One participant who started teaching in a large co-educational school in the 1980s, described the challenges of being very young and managing students with criminal backgrounds. She realized that her relational capacity, or possibly emotional intelligence as explored by Mortiboys (2005), carried her through, together with a very collegial atmosphere.

> *When I heard of one family known as Jesse James family who had done time* (been imprisoned)*...but the relationship dimension and ability to connect with students saw me through...there was also a great supportive atmosphere there...*

This participant attributed her own vocational energy (28 years later) to internal traits, like rebelliousness and inspiration gained from social and political events.

I try to fight that (complacency) all the time. I'm a rebel myself and I will go against the grain. I remember the Dunne's Stores workers and apartheid. I was a student in Galway when that happened but I was also born at the right time. I saw so much political and social change...1980s kids were rebels and not afraid to question...they knew what was going on in the world...I loved that.

<div align="right">SM</div>

Subsequently, this candidate had reflected with dismay on her perception that today's students were significantly more passive, possibly validating Ballet's findings (2001), regarding the intensification of teaching. Another participant, started his teaching career in a greenfield, coastal site, where an all – Irish, second level school was being established. He attributed his memorable experience to the cultural mission and innovative family model of education, similar to that espoused by: Joyce, Weil and Calhoun (2004).

There was a dire need for a gaelcolaiste to follow through from primary school. It was really exciting and unusual. There were just 33 kids...They called teachers out of their first names. Barriers were broken down. There was just first years...it was almost like an enlarged family with a brilliant family atmosphere...a jovial atmosphere. Those parents had taken a chance until the first results came out. It was brilliant academically. It became known as a real hub of culture, language, song and dance...It was a joy to teach those kids...There was a very good principal there.

<div align="right">CS</div>

This participant also told the story of how the school began a strong musical tradition and the innovation of the principal from an extra curricular perspective – buying a set of instruments for all students to form a school band. Similarly, another participant enjoyed the early years in a new community school, in a suburban Dublin location, and the potential it seemed to offer for innovation and promotion. This opportunity subsequently empowered this participant to remain

<div align="center">216</div>

innovative and maverick like where agency and authorship were embraced in the 1970s.

> *It was a new school. There were all kinds of new ideas being thrown about and everything was worth trying. And I did try all kinds of things and I became a year head after two years and then I had the youth club as well which is a very big thing on Friday for the whole school. Everywhere I have been, if I want to try something I just do it.*
>
> CD

Other participants did not reflect on the early days with such joy. Some endured a challenging apprenticeship, (associated with poor retention rates for newly qualified teachers in many countries) but interestingly not so in an Irish context.

> *It was 'like hell on earth' – no other way of saying it...but it probably made me what I am today...it was maternity leave – I was soley the resource teacher. I had never encountered anything like it before in my life – not alone was I not able to manage the students but the authorities were not able to manage them either. It was literally just keeping them quiet and occupied in the prefabs. I remember the students by their nicknames...One student was called 'Horse'...I can still see them and picture them...I got post cards from some of them...I still have that stuff...*
>
> CJ

The survival of these challenging experiences, displays a resilience and is subsequently recounted with great personal pride. Challenging events were sometimes rationalised with the wisdom of vocational hindsight and the subsequent mastering of the teaching and learning environment. It validates many of Hansen's (1995:8-13), and Palmer's (2007) ideas regarding negative capability, inner traits of perseverance and faith. One participant, who had experienced a difficult beginning and felt unsupported as a Religion teacher in her early years, recalled how she deliberately planned a more professionally fulfilling strategy.

> *I did make a deliberate choice from a systems point of view about finding a school where it (religion) was valued, resourced and the leadership and mission of the school did value the subject.*

<div align="right">CS</div>

This participant subsequently acknowledges the importance of collegial support, positive school leadership and remaining critical as a senior teacher in a large urban school.

> *The school I've worked in has been very supportive - so I've been fortunate – colleagues are really important...there is a fundamental committment...which I have also...Leadership needs to invest in staff and here it does happen...it's continual renewal for me. I would be very critical still.*

In more recent years, she attributes her ongoing enthusiasm to a job-sharing arrangement.

> *I'm fortunate...I have still days but not to be in a pressure situation...the job sharing ...I've never taught so well and another colleague says the same about her job sharing...*

<div align="right">CS</div>

One of the participants, who began teaching in a co-educational school as a Home Economics (and subsequently courageous SPHE) teacher, described her battle and sense of agency to have gender equity in subject choice, so that boys could be allowed choose her subject.

> *I had all girls but I fought blue blazes with my principal to expand it to boys. Eventually he agreed...Later I introduced SPHE...*
> *This is so funny...I had them sitting in circles – unheard of in those days. In he* (the principal) *walked...I was doing all the slang words for the male reproductive organ. I had them all up on the board. The kids were trying to see could they embarrass me. But in he walked and the kids nearly died for me. There wasn't a sound. There was no giggling...Now there would be...normally. Out he walked and didn't say a word. Well mother of God...*

<div align="right">SOF</div>

<div align="center">218</div>

This teacher also recalls with great admiration inspirational colleagues who worked with students of significant disadvantage and certainly imbued a life of *calling to service*.

> *I look back...it depends on the school and the teachers you have...the feel a teacher has for a child...but I remember a teacher...a resource teacher...she used to teach them learning support and back then, she used to ring those kids on the day before the Junior Cert. They never got beyond it. She'd send them all a card...she'd be touching base with them...to make sure that they would turn up. What HSL is doing now... They used go mad if we were out sick because ...we were the only constant in their lives.*

SOF

This vignette highlights again, the deficit between individual teacher's vocational mindfulness and more resistant structural issues of disadvantage, inherent in phrases such as: *they never got beyond junior cert*, thus alerting us to what Freire (1998), cited as the need to guard against fatalism, and how failure to name and address limit situations, facilitates the maintenance of the status quo.

Collectively, these biographical vignettes from the early years, give us insight into the kind of school cultures that sustain e.g. where there is innovation and freedom to create, where there are collaborative and supportive colleagues, where leadership is positive and where teachers sometimes take risks. There are also insights into the inner attributes of initial teachers which nurture and sustain during these early years e.g. resilience, perseverance, relational capacity, negative capacity and occasionally strategic thinking or personal agency and courage. These narratives also alert us to diversity across schools as micro cultures and diverse emotional arenas (van Den Berg 2002). They illustrate situated experiences where teachers

are not alienated or disconnected from the moral essentials of their calling (Blacker 2002:1-9).

5.3.5   Nurturing the relational domain through extra curricular

Another pocket of motivation that emerged was participant commitment towards the extra curricular domain. Participants attributed substantial significance to it as a vocationally rewarding part of their work, vindicating Wentzel's theory (2002), on the power of interpersonal relationships and belongingness, as key motivators of childrens' school related interests. The emerging findings also relate to the important sub discourse of care in education. Kelly (2004:42-43), cited the "values of caring, human development, intrinsic value and enrichment" that are increasingly missing from educational policy. Similarly, O'Brien (2008:177) strongly supports the seeking of balance between the academic and other capacities "in a performance driven system where talent and achievement are so narrowly defined." It also relates to Pring's ideas (2005:203) on teaching as a moral practice, and the teacher's role in fostering the identity work of young people who: "try to make sense of the world and the relationships around them and at which they find, or do not find, valuable forms of life to which they can give allegiance." It relates to the theme of happiness and joy and Fielding's (2001) assertion of the role of the playful in education, and its regretful absence in policy documents.

> *I spent a huge amount of time and effort throughout my whole teaching career on activities outside the classroom…which I found more rewarding than actual 'in class' work...We went on hostel trips and I used to even train them for basketball and football and...I used to have a social work group.*
>
> <div align="right">CD</div>

One participant worked for thirty years with students from disadvantaged backgrounds and felt this was crucial to his ongoing rapport building with students. Another participant validated the power of the extra curricular domain to enhance pedagogical progress.

> *We entered every competition and did an awful lot of extra curricular...They came one hundred fold with me. On Sundays I would bring in students for musicals etc...60-70 kids. We had fantastic fun. I would put huge value on the extra curricular...it's the extra things that a teacher does to help develop the child that counts. Building relationships is part of your personality as a teacher...*
>
> SOF

One participant spoke of hurling and its role in developing school pride. Although this participant wasn't directly involved, he spoke of the amazing '*buzz'* that was apparent across the entire school, when there was success.

> *Sometimes we miss classes due to hurling competitions, but it is an essential part of the school's culture and tradition. The dedication by some staff members is phenomenal and to see the school getting behind the teams is amazing. Last year the buzz when we got to the final was something else.*
>
> CT

Another participant spoke with great passion about his first school's involvement with traditional music and how the school principal had fostered this passion in the school with the outcome of creating a common identity or shared heritage among the students.

> *He loved traditional music and had schemes to purchase musical instruments...he bought flutes/bodhrans/fiddles and even bones from a local butcher...It was a fantastic place to be.*
>
> CS

This participant also played music himself and shared his craft with his students. The giving of something precious and permanent in the vocational sense of making a difference is palpable in how he articulates his extra curricular rationale.

> *It's a great hobby. I'd always impress this upon the students. I've taught music to so many. You leave them with so many tunes...they never forget them – They will always have them.*

He also reflects on the importance of having an extra curricular interest for his/her own escape.

> *It is really important to have an escape...I've always loved getting into a pub session and losing myself in music.*
>
> CS

There was also talk of: drama, debating, table tennis, chess, community involvement, curricular based activities like a *Geography quiz, Maths challenge* and other extra curricular pursuits. The TALIS Report (2009:xxvii) in one of its recommendations acknowledges the importance to teachers in Ireland of securing and maintaining positive student teacher relationships. During the research process, I was invited to prize-winning presentation evenings in three schools (including an all boys voluntary secondary, catering for a broad social class intake), where one of the research participants taught. The large assembly hall (complete with student jazz band) was full to capacity with parents and students. Students were receiving awards for an incredibly diverse range of activities within school (athletics, music, debating, hurling, football, basketball, creative writing, golf, voluntary work). The school had competed in three all-Ireland finals during that academic year. Research reports cannot do justice to the pride in young mens' faces, when multiple intelligences are nurtured and publicly acknowledged.

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The extra-curricular dimension therefore offers a counter balance to the fractured relational dimension established in chapter three. It is a potential antidote to Ball's fear (2008:21-22), where: "we deny the primacy of human relationships in the production of value, and thereby erase the social." However, a word of caution might also be sounded, regarding any positioning of the extra curricular domain-as a legitimate, formalised antidote for passive and instrumentalist pedagogies. The passivity associated with commodification is an undesirable presence in its own right and requires a specifically targeted response.

5.3.6 Harnessing renewal through professional development opportunities

For some participants, their currrent profile as enthusiastic and engaged educators, was influenced by their participation in ongoing professional development opportunities. The professional literature and current policy rhetoric are consistent in highlighting this correlation (Callan, 2006; Darling Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Day *et al*., 2006; Goodson, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000; Kelly, 2004; Sachs, 2003; Sexton, 2007; Sugrue and Day, 2002; OECD Report, *Teachers Matter* 2005; Teaching Council, 2007).

This sub theme is therefore an interesting reciprocal bridge between the professional and vocational domains. One participant demonstrates a new found commitment to pedagogical diversity resulting from engagement in a professional development project (i.e. Mol an Óige - a research project designed to investigate

teaching and learning for mixed ability groupings and to improve school retention

for weaker students).

> *Mol an Óige was a really significant experience for me...dealing with students from disadvantaged situations...Unitl then I didn't realize there were so many different teaching methodologies that could be used to engage the weaker learner. I learned so much. I teach differently now.*
>
> SM

Another participant when invited to reflect on what motivated her after twenty five

years of teaching declared:

> *I have been lucky to be able to do other things outside the classroom...to take time out...do curriculum development with the Curriculum Development Unit...I saw the culture of excellence and innovation. That openness was there. I was given opportunities for development. We had a weekly slot in the timetable for planning. It was wonderful.*
>
> SC

The enthusiasm of the following participant is captured in language imbued with:

vocational imagery, fulfillment and generativity.

> *Yes – I'm a dedicated teacher...I enjoy continually improving the quality of teaching. I'm lucky that I've been part of a team involved in presenting the new Junior Cert and Leaving Cert syllabi to teachers in other schools. I was recruited to promote them...it was very fruitful to visit other schools...I was also...an advising examiner and chief examiner...It gives great motivation and it's also an affirming process.*
>
> CT

For other participants, professional development also promised vocational renewal

and career enhancement.

> *I did a Diploma in Educational Management. I always need a challenge...I would get very tired and disenchanted if I didn't. After that I did the Diploma in Curriculum Studies.*
>
> SOF

This teacher/principal favoured career breaks but shared some of the concerns of another participant that:

People who leave (to engage in professional development) *frequently don't come back and I have an issue with that...*

CS

There was some evidence in Chapter Four of some ambivalence towards teaching colleagues who engaged in professional development and then left the classroom to work in curriculum initiatives. It is possible that the benefits of professional development for individual teachers therefore, don't always feed back into schools at a collegial or collective staff level. Some of this relates to micro cultures of competititve collegiality and not sharing resources as discussed in Chapter Two. There are implications therefore at policy level and also within each school, regarding 'in-career' teacher development and how to create dynamic learning organisation cultures within and across schools. An initiative such as the *TL 21 Project* (Malone & Smyth, 2009) has interesting possibilities here, regarding the development of models of best practice for school clusters and the impact of professional engagement for vocational renewal. Other participants expressed more altruistic reasons for engagement with further study.

I did the masters, I absolutely loved it. But I just felt I wanted to do something. I suppose there were more and more questions arising about my practice and you know I wanted a chance to explore them and to do something interesting for myself...I didn't really want to do it for anyone else.

CD

In conclusion, there is definitely evidence from this research, to demonstrate a correlation between professional development activities and vocational renewal. This sense of renewal is again captured in a language of vocationalism, where

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adjectives and adverbs capture the inner change and enthusiasm, i.e. '*significant experience' 'learned so much' 'teach differently now' 'luck' 'culture of excellence' 'wonderful' 'dedicated' 'enjoy' 'privileged' 'fruitful' 'affirming' 'pride' 'absolutely loved it' 'interesting for myself.'* Here the positive legacy of professional development remains clearly embedded, and is articulated through vocational code. There is therefore alignment between: the *policy speak* of professional development and vocational outcomes of: motivation, enrichment and regeneration. However, to date, such policy speak on professional development, is typically presented through the lens of lifelong learning, as opposed to teacher renewal or vocational rebirthing!

5.3.7   Offerings of vocational craft-wisdom to aspiring teachers?

During the final sequence of the unstructured and semi structured style interviews, research participants were invited to offer advice to those entering the teaching profession. This invitation sought to elicit and harness, authentic learning from the embedded craft wisdom of teacher participants. It is interesting that the pattern of response veered substantially towards the vocational domain, in terms of what was deemed most important. There was little talk of competency or the isolation of specific skills that might be associated with conventional, initial teacher education programmes. There is also evidence here of a palpable counter discourse that policy makers and teacher educators should take note of. Significant responses related to: the relational domain, mindfulness and empathy with the marginalised, knowing the inner me, commitment to vocational service, acceptance of the

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power/powerlessness dynamic and an understanding of the fluid interconnectedness between the personal and the professional. Many of these themes have emerged through the professional literature and also speak to earlier sub themes in this section. In honour of these authentic practitioner voices, however an 'analysis free narrative' that powerfully speaks its own truth will now be presented.

The importance of the relational domain

> *More than ever we need people in teaching with a range of gifts; not just academic (but of course knowledge of the subject is so important..) but people with empathy people who won't just jump into the discipline system but will take time to listen and go that extra step and find out what's wrong.*
>
> SM

> *You need to know how to deal with young people appropriately...the relational capacity. You either have this or you don't...*
>
> SC

> *For me it would be around having some kind of positive relationship...that wasn't always easy...the quality of the relationship. Some students tried to take advantage of this...but the level of engagement was better when I had this approach...*
>
> BC

> *The first year or two, my first experience of teaching was extremely difficult. I couldn't make contact with the kids, I think I was relating on an intellectual level they weren't at...*
>
> CD

> *Have a range of people skills...relationship dimension...pastoral approach to students, colleagues and parents are all essential.*
>
> SC

> *I think the whole issue of relationships is very central here. I think teachers; they spend all their time with groups of children or young people. They have to have individual relationships. They have to have a*

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group relationship and individual relationships within that...They also have relationships with colleagues.

<div align="right">CD</div>

Importance of mindfulness/empathy with marginalised students

If you respect them they will respect you. Kids understand you are there for their good. You can't look down on kids. They will suss you out very fast...but to stay and prosper with children in this environment (social disadvantage) you have to have a love for them and an understanding of where they come from...Unless you have that - don't stay there ...

<div align="right">SOF</div>

I think...a lot of students do all right in school but anyone who doesn't fit in... it's a very cruel institution for them. And for students who are not very bright...it can be very difficult...and a lot of students feel that they're failures. They sort of accept a role as being stupid you know. Students would often tell you that teachers told them they were stupid.

<div align="right">CD</div>

This is a particularly significant piece of craft knowledge, given the likelihood that teachers themselves will typically represent those who have enjoyed a relatively successful second level experience.

Issues like what calibre of person...why am I becoming a teacher are also important.

<div align="right">CS</div>

I think that...selfhood (if you could use that word) is a little more than personality. It's the person of the teacher, is very important in the act of teaching and that this needs to be recognised and supported...I am still not sure if there is support for the person of the teacher...the need to recognise what makes a good teacher...it's not all about technical stuff.

There are three characteristics of peer culture: conformity with friends, rebellion against adults and youthful idealism. As a teacher, you need to be reasonably well grounded, able to accept that...you need to be fairly solid in yourself...able to allow yourself to be rebelled against without responding and taking it personally...

<div align="right">CD</div>

<div align="center">228</div>

Having a commitment to vocational service

> *Have patience, energy and orientation towards vocationalism...don't be overly concerned with big salaries...what you put in - is what you get out... Have an interest - a desire to see that you can make an impact...Have patience...*
>
> CS

> *Yeah...teachers seem to require a lot of affirmation. And it's a job where maybe they don't get it...I think as a teacher you have to be very grounded in yourself and not depend on external affirmation.*
>
> CD

> *There is suicide, deaths from cystic fibrosis...and other illnesses...students who stood in front of you and who die. It can be very easy to be negatively orientated...exasperated at times...so guard against this.*
>
> CD

> *I have seen in recent years some wonderful young new teachers. They have a refreshing independence and a confidence about them. They won't be unduly influenced by bullys in a school staffroom which can happen.*
>
> CT

Collectively, the validity of these utterances of craft wisdom stride the vocational discourse of: hope, courage, challenge and commitment, each of which charges the dynamic flux of the teacher's ontological self. Freire (1998:85-129), in a chapter entitled: *Teaching is a human act*, captures much of this dynamic. When theorising the source of democratic authority for teachers, Freire states that it: "does not exist in the muteness of those who have been silenced, but in the stirrings of those who have been challenged, in the doubt of those who have been prodded and in the hopes of those who have been awakened" (1998:86).

These research findings have awakened and illuminated the importance of the vocational in the lives of participant teachers. It is the vocational legacy of their

craft world, that they deem as most important to bequeath to the next generation of teachers. The relational capacities for: empathy, knowing the inner self, having a strong resilience trait and being committed to vocational service rather than material rewards, are strongly recommended. Policy makers and teacher educators take note!

5.4.   Towards a conclusion

The 'seven pockets of wonderful things' when presented and analysed, portray a teaching life, that is given meaning in the intersection of the personal with the public, in the tension between the instrumental and the holistic, in the spaces between agency and apathy, ideal and reality. The vocational gives ontological and axiological meaning to teachers' work. The vocational can therefore be a source of celebration. Teacher participants, despite so many challenges (as outlined in earlier chapters) are energised, committed and connected to vocational values. These values can be identified, named and understood when opportunities for reflection are offered to teachers and when an 'inside out' approach is adopted to educational research, when the pockets are emptied out and made visible.

The findings speak in an interesting way to emerging findings elsewhere, e.g. Ethel & McMeniman (2002), Korthagen (2004), Moskvina (2006), who collectively demonstrate the importance of exploring these interesting vocational spaces with teachers, because teachers, when faced with challenging situations, revert to the

instinct of their own personalities and inner beliefs, rather than access competencies associated with professional knowledge. According to Wubbles (1992), Ethell & McMeniman (2002:216), and Parker (2007), the beliefs which teachers hold, really influence how they teach. Beliefs are the best indicators of how people behave, even when professional knowledge suggests otherwise. These complex inner beliefs need to be made visible, understood, and provided for in the development of policies for teacher education programmes.

However, valorizing the findings associated with this section does not negate the ominous findings of Chapter Three regarding: *A pedagogy under pressure* or the navigational professionalism sometimes resistant to more progressive constellations of new professionalism. The findings in this final section are pockets of wonderful things, but not the full teaching gown! The vocational domain as described undoubtedly serves as a motivational counter balance, a place of intra-personal refuge from the more oppressive regimes of instrumentalism and new accountability regimes that impact on teaching and learning.

 But (as implied in this chapter's introduction), a more worrying possibility is implicit in these findings (but a further cycle of research is required to explore its truth) i.e. that the vocational and its manifest presence for participants may facilitate or render endurable, an inner acceptance of an unsatisfactory reality. There is a possibility that *a calling* or *commitment to service* in the theocentric and traditional institutional sense, can make acceptable, points of dissonance and

oppression, and that *compliance, acceptance* and *inner resilience*, become complex obstacles to a search for change, in an occupation where busyness and preoccupation with 'the here and now' has been established (Chapter Three). Some elements of the vocational inherent in the 'seven pockets of wonderful things' may benefit from a more radical vocationalism (Brookfield, 2005; Collins, 1991; Freire, 1998; Greene, 2005; Palmer, 2007; Welton, 1995), infused with a different language of: critical self-reflection, agency, authorship, political consciousness, a refusal to bureaucratize the mind and the creation of a new lexicon for the vocational in educational endeavour.

In conclusion, there is both a challenge and an opportunity associated with rebirthing *the vocational* in educational discourses in Ireland. There is also a challenge to find some new metaphors; metaphors that are free from compromised historical connotations of *'calling'* and metaphors richer than the superficiality associated with some hues of new professionalism. The potential of metaphors and concepts such as: *instinct for teaching and learning, otherness, mutuality, interdependence, relatedness, mindfulness, connectedness, nurturing, loving and caring, being responsive, critical thinking, questioning, deconstructing and reconstructing* may have the potential to enlighten an authentic enactment of a radical vocationalism for contemporary teachers.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

6.0.   Conclusions contextualised: the climate of intensification
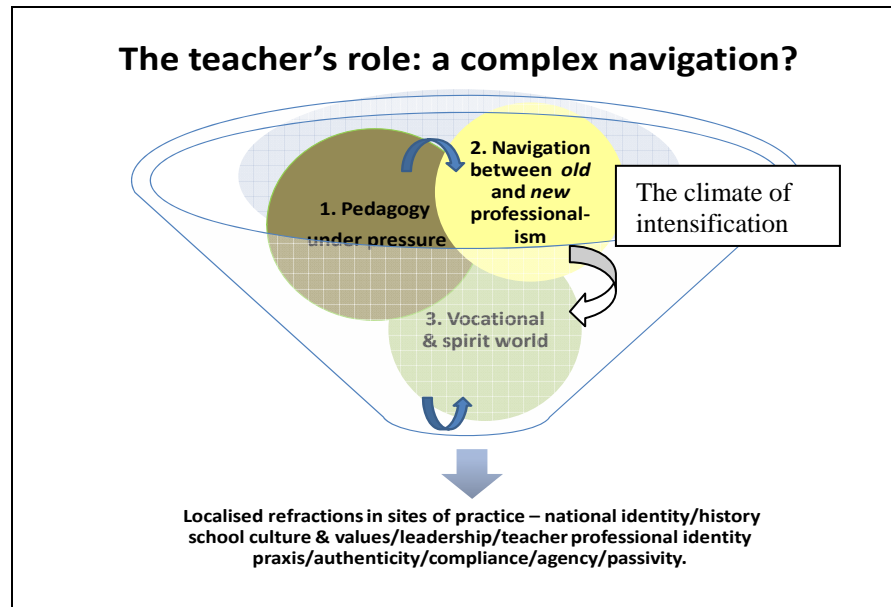

Figure 19 – <u>The Teacher's Role: A Complex Navigation?</u>

The findings as presented in the model above portray the current teacher's role as one of complex navigation within, between and across these three central constructs. The broader contextual climate that imbues this navigation is one of intensification possibly reflecting the pervasive discourse of NPM. This 'situated' unfolding of the teacher's role will reflect resonances of: unique school cultures,

leadership styles, complex hues of teacher identity, student profile, parental expectations, organisation of learning, and all the culturally embedded but dynamic patterns of *school ethos*. Despite localised contexts, creating what Kitching (2009:141) called "unsealed teacher identities," the overall findings are likely to represent a reasonably uniform slice of more globalised forces - influencing the practice of education in Ireland today. The research study strongly suggests that, each construct is influenced, interconnected and *shadowed* by an intensified climate reflecting some elements of a *new public management* discourse. This conclusion has some resonances of support in recent professional literature (Ball, 2008; Gleeson & O'Donnabháin, 2009; Morgan *et al.,* 2009 and Sugrue, 2009a). The research evidence in this study clearly identifies associated imperatives of: *performativity* and increasing *accountability*, conspiring to create a: *pedagogy under pressure*. This wearisome pedagogy characterised by: terminal exams, pragmatic passivity, significant disengagement, fracturing of the relational dimension, competitive accountability, non reflective spaces and a centralised curriculum dynamic is intensely problematic. The cloud of intensification is not however balkanised, within this core pedagogical construct.

This second construct: *Teachers navigating a pathway between old and new professionalism,* is also contingent on teacher inclination to embrace or resist what Sugrue (2009a), named as the emerging tango between accountability and autonomy, possibly the 'twin towers' of new public management. The sub theme of: a limited, ambivalent and fractious *partnership* with parents occurs at the nexus

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of a struggle between parents seeking more accountability and teachers wishing to maintain professional autonomy, which they perceive as under threat. Similarly, the emergence of a complex collegiality with increasingly *competitive hues*, within and between schools, reflects the new public management discourse of productivity and competitiveness; that contrasts sharply with much of the official policy rhetoric of a *values based* new professionalism implied in the holistic ten aims of education (DES, 1995) and in the thirteen values proposed by the Teaching Council (2007).

Teacher negotiation around significant societal change (without appropriate supports or professional training), may also represent evidence of the *silencing of complexity*, in the discourse of commodification and marketisation. Here measurable outputs are prioritised over relational processes, fundamental to the heart of teaching and learning, a conclusion also drawn by Morgan *et al.,* (2009:14). Teachers, searching for an authentic *professional voice*, also reflect a desire to counteract a popular discourse of *narrow accountability* (attractive to simplistic and sound-bite media coverage), but unreflective of the complex role of the contemporary teacher. The yearning for this professional voice may represent an optimistic finding regarding teachers' willingness to embrace the greater philosophical questions regarding their role - as educators. This interpretation challenges Sexton's assertion (2007:96), that: "Irish second level teachers...are unable or *unwilling* (italics mine) to view their professionalism in terms of wider educational or philosophical issues." The findings suggest that teachers, if given meaningful opportunities to reflect, do yearn to embrace larger ontological

questions regarding their role. Similarly, the final construct: *Vocationalism and pockets of wonderful things,* espouses many of the positive values associated with intrinsic teacher motivation and has potential to infuse a more nurturing and radical 'values based professionalism.' However, the compromised and more accountable world of an outcomes-based practice, seems to publicly negate or impede the expression of this important and sustaining vocational impetus. The noted absence from the current policy and practice domains, of a radical vocationalism or emancipatory vision, (as espoused by: Brookfield, 2005; Collins, 1991; Freire, 1998; and Welton, 1995), may also be influenced by the increasing influence of NPM. This discourse (Apple, 2004; and Foucalt, 1989), has its own anonymous categories, argumentative strategies, assertive metaphors and rules embedded in frequently unchallenged neo-liberal, socio-economic contexts. It thus renders a passive, instrumentalist and managerialist *practice* of second level education as an acceptable protocol of how education should be.

6.1.   Illuminating policy practice dissonance

In Chapter One**,** the review of contemporary policy architecture, suggested that two visions of education; *instrumentalist* and *humanist* are explicitly evident. These visions while being distinctly different (each representing unique historical anchorage), also shared an ideological symmetry, rooted in a philosophy of individualism. The research findings (Chapter Three) however would strongly suggest that the instrumentalist vision, which now prevails in *practice* has

subsumed much of the humanist discourse. Teaching participants, positioned in a busyness treadmill, feel disempowered to resist the essentializing forces of instrumentalist visions - inherent in terminal assessment and the points system.

The research evidence suggests that some of the rhetoric of the Government White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995) with its increased focus on the *policy triad* of: transparency, accountability and evaluation, has taken root in the practice of Irish second level education. It is evident that one particular aim from the official ten aims of education, i.e. *education and training for economic development* (an aim linked to managerial assessment), drives in a very explicit manner, the current practice of teaching and learning. It is interesting to note however, that the vocational domain, more aligned to the humanist vision, is where teaching participants garner their greatest satisfaction, even if such a domain is reduced or marginalised into *pockets* of influence as discussed earlier. The impetus of education thus inscribed by an instrumentalist imperative, renders it problematic for teachers to realize the conception of their role, as outlined by the Teaching Council vision (1998:6), initially presented in chapter one:

> A skilled practitioner in the science and art of teaching, one who applies professional knowledge, personal intuition, creativity, and improvisation to accomplish teaching's task; as problem solving and decision–making clinician; as curriculum maker, researcher evaluator and reflective practitioner; and finally as significant other person who exercises considerable moral influence.

Based on this research, it is evident that the practice of teaching emerges as more technical in nature with little evidence in mainstream curriculum of creativity, or of input into designing curriculum objectives, content or learning outcomes. There

is also little evidence of ongoing research, evaluation and importantly, little time for reflective practice. These findings (though not without some shades of optimism; e.g. teachers' yearning for a professional *voice*) also echo those of Sexton's (2007) attitudinal study, which concluded that Irish second level teachers were *pragmatic professionals*. The qualitative depth uncovered in this study, now helps to uncover some of the key *pressure points*, *limit situations* and *nuances of practice* that prevent teachers from moving beyond pragmatic and technicist horizons. Similarly, if we consider the national and international policy framework (initially presented in Chapter 1), we can understand the complex 'policy practice' anomalies regarding the teacher's role and the five zones below.
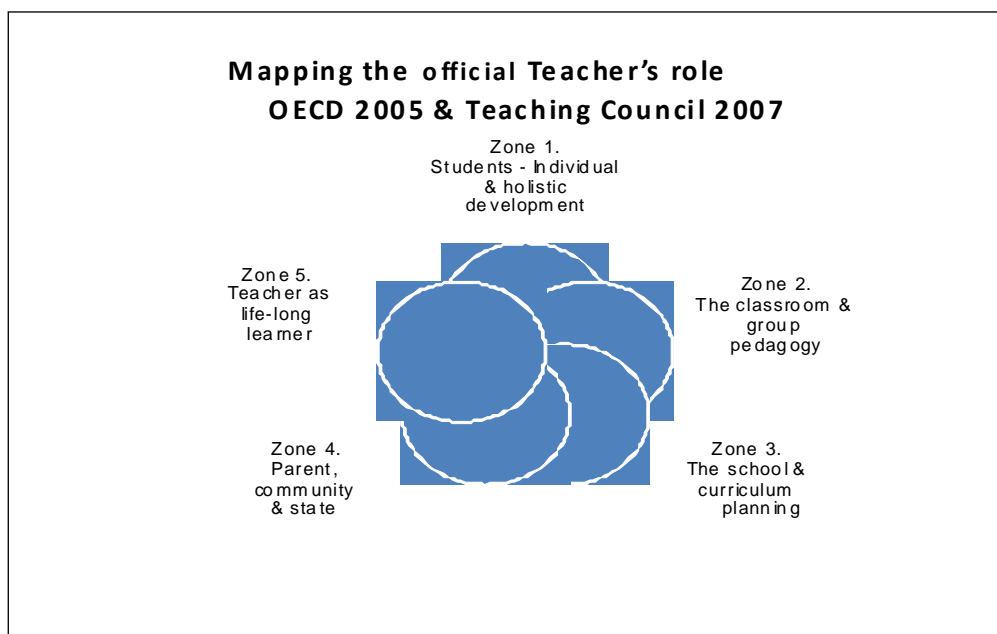

Figure 20 – <u>Mapping The Teacher's Role</u>

Firstly, there are many complex tensions evident in the policy practice domain of accomplishing individual and holistic development *(zone 1),* given the

instrumentalist imperatives already outlined. Secondly, the classroom and group pedagogy domain *(zone 2)* is still dominated by *old* professional constructs of didactic teaching styles. Thirdly, school and curriculum planning *(zone 3)* while showing some adaptation towards 'new professional' practices and greater *collegiality,* is still occurring in the context of a highly centralised curriculum. It could also be argued that SDPI is currently part of a *soft accountability* initiative rather than likely to contribute to any significant development in curriculum innovation.

The research evidence demonstrates that the development of partnership with parents or embracing wider community *(zone 4)* remains problematic. Finally, the teacher as life - long learner, while favoured by the research participants *(zone 5)* is not generally facilitated at a formalised level within the professional domain of teacher education, unless it is linked to the implementation of centralised curriculum change. Much of the policy domain is therefore aspirational and its realization remains fragmented and elusive. It could also be argued that the explicit absence of the vocational as a domain in official policy constructions (while acknowledging some inter-relationship with zone 1) is in itself problematic and also insightful regarding the instrumental orientation of current policy architecture. One could argue that the significant exception to this fragmented and limited realization of policy rhetoric is the pervasive *accountability* thread, *reified* in the 1990s policy architecture (as shown in Chapter One) and now increasingly *deified* in contemporary classrooms, where climates of intensification (pervasive in society at large) also prevail.

6.2.　　Recommendations for policy makers

1. That the DES re-visit the policy architecture of the 1995 *White Paper* and review collaboratively with teachers, teacher educators and the partners in education its current resonance in today's classrooms. If policy drives practice (a contested assumption perhaps), and if closing the '*say – do'* gap is important to the integrity of education, then the barriers to achieving the ten aims of education should be reassessed (fifteen years later) and some steps taken to respond accordingly. This study can help formulate the rationale for such a process.

2. That the DES support and expedite the implementation of the initial NCCA (2005) proposals regarding changes to the curriculum structure and assessment of senior cycle curricula to include: a range of senior cycle programmes including core subjects, short courses and transition units which would facilitate greater localisation of curriculum, more engagement with student needs and a range of assessment modes.

3. That the current reliance on terminal examinations as the primary assessment vehicle for second level, be urgently reviewed and that a range of assessment *for learning* options be introduced, to lessen the didactic pedagogy and pragmatic passivity currently evident.

4. That the second level education system be more aligned towards a holistic competency framework, suited to the needs of a knowledge society and life - long learning. This competency framework should promote generic educational goals such as the development of: collaborative investigation, self–directed learning, critical thinking, inter personal communication, creativity, group problem solving, use of information and communication technologies. Some of these competencies are similar to the vision of the NCCA (2005) proposals for senior cycle curriculum reform and the subsequent NCCA (2009) Discussion Paper: *Leadership and Supporting Change In Schools.*

5. That teachers of mainstream curriculum are encouraged to engage in an in-career development process, that facilitates innovative and participative teaching and learning methodologies. These might include: independent reading, cooperative inquiry, individual and group presentation skills, problem based learning and the creative use of information and communication technologies.

6. That in-career professional development opportunities, be provided for teachers to help them engage with the philosophical and visionary domain, regarding their role as educators. Perhaps the Teaching Council – given its designated role in the promotion of teaching as a profession, could initiate and design in collaboration with teachers such an engagement.

6.3. Recommendations and questions for the teaching profession

The findings would suggest that there are at least seven key questions that need to be addressed individually and collectively by teachers as a professional grouping. The following seven recommendations involve an invitation to the teaching profession to develop responses to each of the following:

1. How can the teaching profession illuminate for itself the *inappropriateness* of the instrumentalist heart-beat that dictates what is currently prioritised in sites of practice?

2. How can the teaching profession help illuminate for society at large the hegemonic compliance with protocols of education as a commodity, serving the needs of the economy but possibly neglecting the explicit fulfilment of the remaining nine aims of education - aimed at: personal wellbeing, identity, culture, creativity, citizenship, equality, initiative, innovation and political awareness, (White Paper: *Charting Our Education Future* DES, 1995)? It must be acknowledged here that some of these aims may be implicitly achieved through the hidden and extra-curricular domains – but participants' perception would suggest that these outcomes, if achieved within school based learning, are likely to be more incidental than planned.

3. How will teachers and schools as organisations create spaces of dialogue for teacher reflection that will help them contemplate and engage with their holistic role as educators within the busy and pragmatic world of current school life? Can schools become cradles of regenerative change? If so – how?

4. How can teaching professionals nurture a greater sense of agency (reflective of a positive new professionalism) and foster a commitment to shaping educational policy instead of merely implementing it?

5. How will teachers create an authentic professional voice that facilitates an honest dialogue within the profession - regarding the complex role of the teacher but also engage with the public, including alliance building with parents, teenagers and the wider community, to create a supportive partnership that is beneficial to all stakeholders in the process of education?

6. How might teachers, parents and pupils become involved in the working out of an appropriate accountability protocol (accounting to the needs of civil society and economy) that enriches and supports the work of teachers, while also satisfying parents as *real* partners in the education process?

7. How will teachers engage with a mass media (increasingly preoccupied with the economy as opposed to society), in a useful and investigative discourse around the purpose of education and the role of the teacher in today's society?

This research study would suggest that teacher adaptation towards a healthy radical *new professionalism,* requires a new agenda to be set around the resolution of the above seven challenges. Unless these challenges are addressed, the *swamp of practice* may continue to deliver only a haphazard *technicist professionalism*, where tenuous connections exist between the policy rhetoric of *new* professionalism, and the limitations of a compliant instrumentalist practice, ensnared and compromised in a climate of intensification.

6.4. Challenges for initial teacher education – the author's field of practice

The findings would suggest that initial teacher education programmes might review their current curriculum themes to respond to the challenges posed by: *a passive pedagogy, a navigational professionalism* (slow to migrate from sedimented practices) and *a vocationalism* seeking a more radical regeneration. In an Irish context, it might also explore how the creative synergy within this triad is currently impaired by the climate of intensification. It would appear that these three constructs and their manifest subthemes, resonate with the *real challenges* of a teaching life, in contemporary Ireland. A study of the dynamics within this triad and the climate of intensification within, would help prepare teachers for the challenge of firstly understanding the *policy practice dissonance* that currently exists. Such recognition would also create the *real* context, in which individual teachers, could begin to: address their professional identity and vision, in the

spaces of negotiation between policy and practice. The key challenges now identified include developing appropriate responses to the following key questions.

1. How can initial teacher educators sow effective seeds of formation that nurture a pedagogy not exclusively inscribed by terminal examination pressure?

2. Is such a goal impossible or simply difficult in the context of current terminal assessment practices and the almost inevitable induction of newly qualified teachers into pragmatic school cultures driven by the lure of the points system?

3. How can initial teacher education programmes engage students to help them take ownership of a new professionalism dynamic that is self developing and enriching throughout a teaching life?

4. Can initial teacher education programmes nurture a radical vocationalism; an agentic spirit world dynamic for teachers, to help them be resilient against the pragmatic passivity evident in this research study? Could such a positive resilience if nurtured, bring about creative pockets of interruption in sites of practice?

6.5. Recommendations for initial teacher education

Cochran Smith (2006:83), in a substantial review of research on Initial Teacher Education, concludes that: "the strongest teacher education programmes are those based on coherent conceptual frameworks, guided by current theory and research, and infused with the wisdom of practice." In the context of the four challenges

previously outlined, my tacit knowledge leads me towards two recommendations for initial teacher education, based on two emerging frameworks. The first is an adaptation of David Korthagen's (2004), integrated model and the second is my own draft and emergent visionary framework for agentic vocationalism.

6.5.1. Adopting an integrated vocational and competency model

An integrated model for Teacher Education?
(adapted from Korthagen 2004)

Environment

Behaviour

Competencies

Beliefs
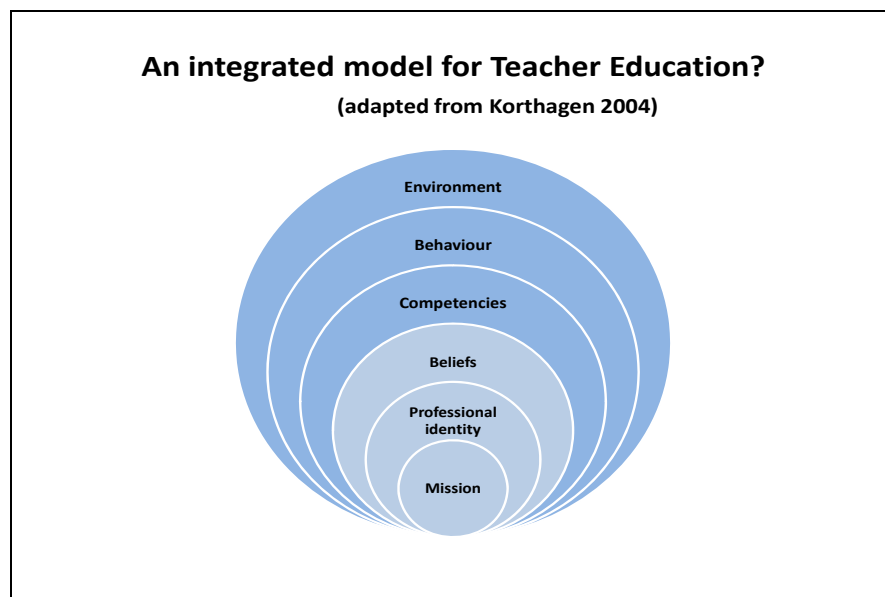
Professional identity

Mission

Figure 21 – <u>An Integrated Model For Teacher Education</u>

The work of Korthagen (2004:77-97), adapted and modified in this model provides a conceptual framework with potential to facilitate an integrated approach to develop the vocational and competency domains within teacher education.

This integrative model draws attention in a holistic way to the inner zone of: *mission, professional identity* and *beliefs* and the outer zone of: *competencies, behaviours* and *environment,* each zone being crucial to initial teacher education.

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The three inner layers have emerged in this research study as the home of vocational *pockets* we need to valorise and make visible. Korthagen believes that teachers should continually engage in evolving a philosophy that sustains their personal and professional development as educators; a philosophy also evident from many authors (Carr, 2005; Dunne & Hogan, 2004; Greene, 2005; Hargreaves, 2003; Joram, 2007; Morgan *et.al.,* 2009, Romano, 2006; Thomas, 2005; Parker, 2007 and Sachs, 2003). It is by focusing on these inner layers, that teachers can hopefully develop strong personal visions that embrace critical thinking and visions of education that can challenge 'instrumentalist' imperatives.

The skills domain of the outside layers (competency, behaviour, and environment) are more easily observed and assessed because they have an external dimension; and frequently absorb more attention in initial teacher education programmes (driven by the pressing needs of school placement). The competency approach (traditionally associated with instrumentalism) has potential to be reframed to valorise an integration of the *cognitive*, *emotional* and *social* domains of learning. (Illeris, 2004). Competence thus valorised, embraces personal qualities and the ability to function in unknown and unpredictable environments. Illeris (2004:68), also advocates the development of *resistancy* as a competence. Resistance is the will and ability not to be carried along by the status quo but to have a critical and independent view. This competency (in light of these research findings) could be proritised in initial teacher education programmes as an antidote to more uncritical constructions of the competency domain.

In Korthagen's model, the promising dynamic is that competencies are not separate to, or distinct from the other layers, because the competency to respond to a given situation in a constructive manner, is influenced by personal beliefs and mission, which become the moral compass guiding the execution of the competency. Thus conceptualised, the professional skills domain and the personal mission (identity/beliefs), vocational domain, become fused into an iterative model for the integrated development of the visionary and skills domain; suffused with awakeness and criticality.

For teacher educators, there is a challenge to nurture these inner layers and keep them present, alive and active for teachers throughout a teaching life. If these *reflective*, *questioning critical* pockets were appropriately nurtured within: a *questioning vision of education,* illuminated in *constructivist settings* by teacher educators, embraced by policy makers*, made visible* to teachers themselves and; understood by society at large, then such pockets could ameliorate the denudation of creativity and critical capacities, associated with instrumentalist teaching and learning environments.

In my work with final year teacher education students, (influenced by reflections during this research process), I have begun to pilot some initiatives based on an adaptation of Korthagen's integrative model. These initiatives focus on creating a

reflective critical anchor to help student teachers explore their personal and professional mission as teacher. The initiatives include:

- The development of a unique and formative field-trip to a hedge school site. Inspired by Greene's (2005) critical awakening using 'spaces of the imagination,' I have developed a visionary script for an '*on site enactment* of a hedge school drama. It serves as a historical hook of connection regarding the teacher's changing role in Ireland. The script draws on secondary historical sources, locally recorded knowledge and the integration of a relevant dramatic vignette from Brian Friel's play *Translations. (See appendix 8, p.305-319).*

- The use of a reflective portfolio journal throughout year four, that facilitates an ongoing critical reflection on personal mission and professional identity as teacher, influenced by the field trip experience, assigned readings, personal reflection and a critique of school based practice *(See appendix 8, p.318-319).*

- Facilitating the sharing of significant student reflections throughout the year (prompted by these initiatives) and assigned readings around the theme of: my emerging identity as a nearly qualified teacher

These initiatives seem to have significant positive potential but require more rigorous research to validate any provisional claims. The initiatives (as piloted) have met with favourable reaction from: students, external examiners and a recent

programmatic review panel. These initiatives may have the potential to realize the vision of Standish (2005:236). "Education at its best...must be suggestive of the good life and of the compelling and absolute obligation that this imposes on us. Its vision must be such as to expose the limitations of performativity..." This engagement with vocational vision can also become an antidote to what Pring (2005:201), called "the language of education which has asked us to think in business terms of inputs and outputs...performance indicators and audits..."

6.5.2.   Exploring a visionary framework for agentic vocationalism

Throughout this investigation, the paradox of: *pragmatic passivity* in the practice of second level education has been evident. If as teacher educators, we wish to address this instrumentalist imperative, and engage with the broad policy aims of the White Paper, particularly: *identity, culture, equality, spirit of inquiry, creativity, emotional health and wellbeing,* and *political awareness*, then we need to identify some theoretical allies whose visions have a resonance with the achievement of these broader policy aims.
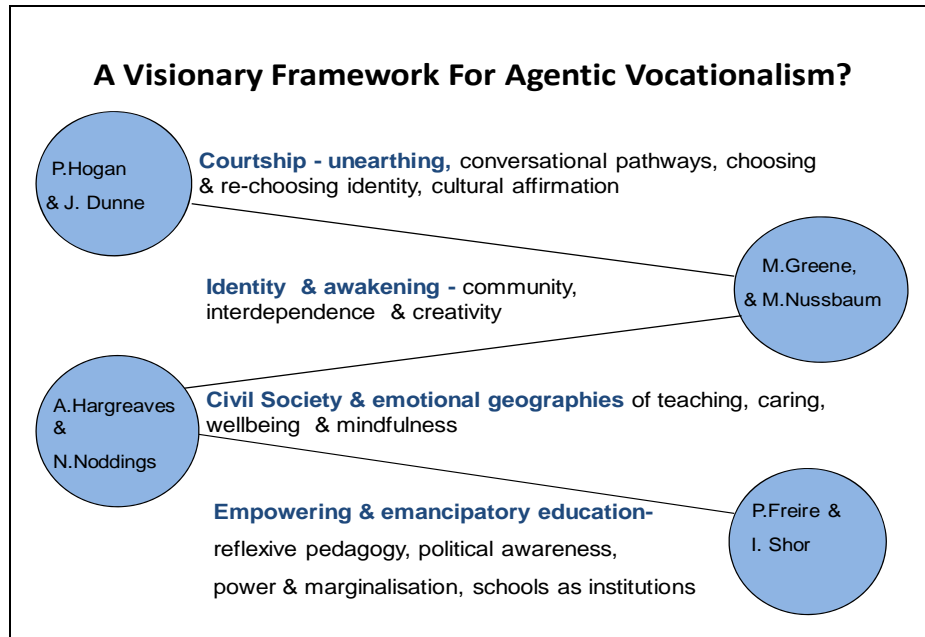
A Visionary Framework For Agentic Vocationalism?

P.Hogan & J. Dunne

Courtship - unearthing, conversational pathways, choosing & re-choosing identity, cultural affirmation

M.Greene, & M.Nussbaum

Identity & awakening - community, interdependence & creativity

A.Hargreaves & N.Noddings

Civil Society & emotional geographies of teaching, caring, wellbeing & mindfulness

Empowering & emancipatory education- reflexive pedagogy, political awareness, power & marginalisation, schools as institutions

P.Freire & I. Shor

Figure 22 – <u>A Visionary Framework For Agentic Vocationalism</u>

Some of these authors have already been cited in this research study. However a more explicit evocation of their *voices* may provide initial teacher education programmes and student teachers with a philosophical framework that is aligned epistemologically and ontologically, to the achievement of more empowering educational aims. The provisional framework has potential to anchor teacher educators and their student teachers in a reflexive exploration of their respective roles as educators. Cochran Smith (2006:103-104), positions the nexus of teaching as a triad of positive influence and formation i.e. *teaching as caring*, *teaching as learning* and *teaching to change the world*. In envisioning this framework for *agentic vocationalism*, I have also prioritised the importance of teachers' engagement with the following nexus of teaching and learning.

- *pedagogical identity* (a teaching and learning of: awakening, constructivist conversation, unearthing, reflexive teaching and collaborative learning)

- *ontological identity* (affective, relational, interdependent, cultural, agency and choosing)

- *political identity* (political awareness of: power and powerlessness, access to resources, schools as institutions, marginalisation and professional agency)

This proposed visionary framework moves in a non-linear fashion. It embraces individual empowerment and agency (located in the roots of enlightenment) to an empowerment that embraces identity, community, civil society, democracy and social change. The 'theoretical bricolage' of theorists chosen, represents *contested* pedagogical and andragogical visions for the pursuit of empowerment and agency. However, given what Cochran Smith (2006:73), called the "unforgivingly complex" world of Teacher Education, perhaps we must look beyond the 'compatible' and 'consistent' to embrace the ruptured spaces between andragogy and pedagogy. Authors such as Freire and Shor represent a discourse more aligned to adult education – but it would be interesting to push the boundaries of possibility and explore the implications of their andragogical principles for student teachers (who are adults) and to explore how some of these andragogical principles might be of value in constructing a critically infused pedagogy for adolescents.

(See appendix 9, p.320-331 for a more detailed outline of this visionary mapping).

6.6. Current challenges and opportunities for re-birthing the discourse of a radical vocationalism in Irish contexts

In an Irish context however there exists a complex, residual theocentric legacy (O'Sullivan, 2005), of religious influence in Irish education. This confusion between 'education as a means of moral growth' and 'education as an instrument of religious instruction' (Sexton, 2007:94), is one that has "its origins...in the unique environment of Irish education over the last hundred years." It possibly has longer and more longtitudinal resonances (land of 'saints and scholars' in the early middle ages, resistance during the penal laws, establishment of Religious Orders in the 18th century and the subsequent privileged position held in the official state education system and control of schools). This theocentric legacy is deserving of insightful and thorough *critique,* subsequent to the recent publication of *The Ryan Report* (2009).

The research findings however, regarding the enduring importance of *the vocational domain* and the not infrequent seed of resistance to climates of intensification may provide some optimism for the refracting of the vocational, into a more radical dynamic that is not maligned by association with a morally bankrupt model of institutional power. However there is little evidence to date from the teaching profession of a potentially radical collective voice. The possibility of a more radical agenda is not helped by the reality of schools as: relatively unchanging organisations (historically speaking) where a centralised curriculum and traditional practices of formal assessment in mainstream curriculum, have not

encouraged a collective agency in teacher professionalism. This raises fundamental questions about the role of *school based* education and the role of teachers in maintaining tradition or in teaching people how to remake traditions.

More recently, the ongoing demise of the economic boom, enjoyed during the *celtic tiger* era, may provide a new context, with which to begin a new discourse around values other than the material and economic. Teachers representing a *keystone vocational occupation* within society, may have a crucial role as moral agents for cultural regeneration, assuming new opportunities around a reworked vocationalism can be created. To begin this exciting process, teachers will initially need to *name*, *claim* and *aim* their own values domain, in a society and economy, that has in recent decades, moved away from the ideal climate for this engagement, lured as it was, by an obsessively mercantile and unsustainable culture of consumerism.

6.7.   Concluding Reflections

At a more significant life-long professional level, it is hoped that: both of the frameworks just outlined, the overall construct analysis at the beginning of the chapter, the questions posed throughout the chapter and the various recommendations made, may assist teacher educators and student teachers to embrace the *activism* and *public intellectualism* favoured by some theorists (Apple, 2004; Cochran Smith, 2006; Freire, 2005; Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Sachs,

2003; Thomas, 2005). Cochran Smith (2006:226-227), calls for each of us as teacher educators "to be 'public intellectuals' using our expertise, our evidence and our freedom to challenge policies and practices..." that do not serve the best interests of education. She also insists that we "lead the way in other directions that are more productive and more democratic..." while also working: "both against and within the system."

In this research endeavour, my professional positioning as *teacher educator* and *researcher* favours such a mission. Hopefully, the research findings have uncovered and *interrupted* the dominant discourse of instrumentalism that is integral to the current *practice* of education at second level in Ireland. This interruption may have made the *'familiar strange and the strange familiar'* so that teachers, frequently positioned within their practice as *pragmatic professionals* – may begin to reflect on how their latent yearning for a more agentic vocationalism can be achieved.

Both Sachs (2003) and Thomas (2005), agree that the *reconstruction* of teaching as an *activist profession*, requires teachers at all levels, to engage with their professional identity and to review collectively how they define themselves, both in schools and in the wider community. *Activism* was defined by Yeaman (1998:33) as "a publicly declared 'commitment, statement of vision, declaration of values and offerings of strategic action' that is oriented to any aspect of the policy process." It is clear however that such activism is currently impeded by many external and internal forces in teacher education in Ireland. Thomas (2005:58) favours Sachs's

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(2003) characterization of the activist teaching professional as being: "responsive and responsible, strategic and tactical, creating an environment of trust and mutual support as they engage in collective and collaborative action."

This research study would suggest that the time for acceptance of this invitation is imminent. Some of the questions and recommendations in this final chapter can inform teaching professionals, their representative organizations and the Teaching Council, of the advantages of accepting such an invitation. But to encourage this outcome, there is an overwhelming need for an imaginative awakening of consciousness. In a country known for its creative impulse, can we as educators find a way to give meaning to the words of Maxine Greene (2005:80)?

> To embrace the remarkable possibility of awakening, of overcoming the 'anaesthetic' said to be the opposite of the 'aesthetic'... the new educator must be awake, critical, open to the world. It is an honor and a responsibility to be a teacher in such dark times - and to imagine, and to act on what we imagine, what we believe ought at last to be.

6.8. Potential limitation of the study

The study has focused primarily on teacher accounts of their practice and their perceptions of their role in relation to this practice. The study did not engage with students who currently experience this education process in the *round of curriculum experience* (formal and explicit, informal, implicit and hidden, extra curricular domain etc). Neither did the study engage with the larger philosophical question regarding the conservative nature of *schooling* as education. There were

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occasions however during the research process (referred to previously) when I visited schools as a guest speaker at 'presentation of awards' ceremonies. On these occasions, there was an embodied sense of a strong antidote to the instrumentalist agenda. It is difficult (and outside the scope of this study) to formulate a judgment on the power of the implicit, hidden and extracurricular domains, to provide some counter balance to instrumentalist imperatives. Despite this limitation, the study has yielded convincing evidence of a compromised vision, currently driving the practice of teaching and learning. There is however, an absent perspective; i.e. an insight into the collective student experience of *schooling* and what remains as embodied educational legacy. For those who argue that "education is what is left when the exams are over," the research findings could be interpreted differently.

6.9.   Contribution to knowledge in the field of teacher education

In the introductory chapter, it was proposed that the study had the potential to illuminate the complex internalities of a teaching life in contemporary Ireland and to provide a *data-rich analytical framework* through which this life could be understood. I think the study has fulfilled this aim and provides a further development to the work of previous attitudinal studies, particularly that of Sexton (2007). It also represents a new lens and potential model (Figure 19, p. 234) with which to conceptualise the teacher's role in addition to the current policy constructions being used by the OECD (2005) and the Teaching Council (2007). The study through its qualitative depth has also generated a layered understanding

of the *policy practice gap,* and the contingencies or limit factors that explain it. The overall findings have: (based on feedback received from research participants, professional networks and conference presentations) *resonance, credibility, originality* and *usefulness* for the education community.

The constructivist grounded theory methodology adopted can further the knowledge base of constructivist grounded theory approaches where the *conversational positioning* of: researcher and participants, facilitated a reflective engagement appropriate to the research question. *The four–stage framework* for data analysis that emerged *(figure 5, p.60)* can provide useful insights (and rigour), for educational researchers, regarding the processing of substantial volumes of qualitative data. The ongoing conversation between emerging data (grounded in participant experience) and theoretical insight may also have pushed the boundaries of traditional approaches to using literature in research studies. The construction of a theoretical meaning framework and attempts at visual modelling throughout may also provide some original methodological insights for future researchers. The findings hopefully represent a slice of truthfulness at an interesting time and place within the practice of post-primary education in Ireland. Throughout the study, I hopefully embraced Palmer's (2007:106) maxim that: "Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter conducted with passion and discipline."

Postscript

It is time to return for yet another walk in the Slievefelim hills. It is early autumn three years hence and there are no clouds on Mathar Clé or Slieve Ciamalta. I walk the hills a little surer now, regarding three unsealed domains of the teacher's current role in Ireland. I understand better how each domain, becomes woven into the nexus of a complex teacher identity; an emerging constellation, influenced by the prevailing climate of intensification. As teacher educator, I remain concerned and anxious regarding this cloud. I will now bring to future discussions with teacher education students and to the wider education community, a more informed and critical awareness of 'limit situations' which challenge us all as educators. I must now consider how best to respond to Maxine Greene's challenge for the *new educator* in *dark times*: "to be awake, critical...to imagine..." and above all "to act on what we imagine, what we believe ought at last to be..."

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1 - Research Participant Sample

Interview	Current School Type	Teacher profile
1	voluntary secondary all girls – predominantly middle & upper class student profile (day & boarding)	Female language teacher with over 30 years experience in two school types (all girls and co.ed)
2	co-educational – (vocational) working class and disadvantaged profile	Female Maths and Irish teacher with 30 years experience in two different co-educational schools
3	co-educational - working class and disadvantaged profile (vocational) and lán gaeilge	Male teacher of humanities subjects with 12 years experience in co-educational and lán gaeilge
4	voluntary secondary all girls mixed social class	Female teacher Religion/CSPE & TY coordinator with over 30 years experience in three schools all girls and all boys schools – Ireland and Denmark.
5	voluntary secondary all boys - mixed social class	Male language teacher with over 35 years teaching experience in two different all boys schools
6	co-educational - working class and disadvantaged profile	Female Home Economics & Business teacher with over 35 years experience (both teaching and management) in four different schools predominantly co-educational
7	Co-educational middle class (community school)	Male teacher of History & Humanities with 4 years teaching experience in a large co-educational school
8	Co-educational–working class	Male teacher of Physics & Maths with over 35 years teaching & management experience in three different schools
9	Co-educational–mixed social class (community school)	Male teacher of Humanities with 17 years teaching & middle management experience.

APPENDIX 2

Summary of key research findings for interview participants

Pedagogy under pressure

1. There is clear evidence of a *pragmatic passivity* infusing teaching and learning practices within busy, terminal assessment driven classrooms, where teachers report: an overloaded, centralised curriculum, characrterised by unreflective, didactic pedagogy.

2. There is evidence of a significant gap between the policy rhetoric of a 'child centered pedagogy' and sedimented institutionalised practices in the organisation of teaching and learning. These practices (streaming/banding, didactic teaching styles, teachers working on their own), remain dominant features of mainstream curriculum. There is however more positive evidence of innovation, collaboration and localised adaptations at the margins, for programmes such as: TY, LCA and LCVP.

3. Participants, who were aware of the theory-practice dissonance, felt compelled by the imperative of terminal assessment, to maintain the status quo in 'time pressured' teaching environments, asociated with mainstream curricula.

4. State examination results are now perceived as part of a new regime of soft accountability measures, used in schools to evaluate annual school performance. These are linked to other initiatives such as: whole school evaluation and school development planning initiatives. Teachers report an

intensified since of pressure to deliver results and be favourably accountable to students, parents, their colleagues and school leadership. Within schools, individual subject results are increasingly compared to national trends at annual staff and board of management meetings.

5. Increasingly, teachers equate their sense of professional identity with their performance as deliverers of results in terminal examinations. This perception by teachers is substantially driven by the inexorable lure of the points system and the public positioninig of a teacher's role as: deliverer of measurable results.

6. The instrumentalist imperative and the seamless, imperceptible logic associated with the hegemonic discourse of new public management, is seriously compromising the realization of more nurturing visions of education; i.e. the ten policy aims espoused in the White Paper (1995).

Navigating a pathway between old and new professionalism

7. Teachers navigate pragmatically across the sub-discourses of old and new professionalism. Some engagement with new professionalism is evident around: collegiality (social and pedagogical), adapting to social change, and a philosophy of caring, There are however points of tension and ambivalence. These include: competitive collegiality between peers and anxiety around professional inadequacy to deal with the impact of emotionally vulnerable students (frequently related to changing constellations of family).

8. Some teachers are pragmatically disengaged from progressive policy agendas regarding: partnership with parents and collaborative teaching and learning cultures. There would also appear to be a lack of professional knowledge regarding the benefits of harnessing parental collaboration. This is compounded by negative experiences with a minority of 'problem parents' – those described in dualistic terms as either *too pushy* or *uncaring*. There is also evidence of pragmatic acquiesence with a legally compliant, minimalist partnership.

9. Teacher participants are currently unhappy with how their professionalism is externally represented. They frequently feel disconnected from teacher representative bodies (particularly teacher unions), while simultaneously acknowledging the success of teacher unions in negotiating favourable pay and conditions.

10. Teacher participants yearn for a new professional voice that might facilitate: internal professional dialogue and also external communication with the public domain, including parents and media. There is a complex duality here of wanting to present a more professional image to parents, while simultaneously being resistant to more professional collaboration with them as partners in education.

The spirit world vocationalism, and pockets of wonderful things

11. The sub-discourse of vocationalism is central to intrinsic teacher motivation but has possibly been forced to retreat (by the protocols of a prevailing

instrumentalsit discourse) into invisible pockets. These pockets need to be valorized and made visible again.

12. The positive vocational dynamic of: inner callings, influential role models, personal vision/making a difference, subject passion, resilience during the novice years, extra-curricular/relationship domain, and professional renewal, do however provide significant ontological fulfilment for teachers.

13. There is a complex duality associated with the discourse of vocationalism. Some participants (enabled to adopt a reflective stance in the conversational interview process), articulated a view that: there is need for a more radical vocationalism, or critical awakening regarding the pursuit of a more visionary, holistic and perhaps emancipatory teaching practice. The sub-discourse of education for transformation is however a substantially absent or muted discourse in official policy rhetoric in an Irish context.

14. There are therefore potential seeds of resistance to the instrumentalist agenda. This potential emerged predominantly in the spaces of reflection offered to participants as they engaged with their: personal vision, role and practice dynamic. This would suggest that teachers have not lost the capacity to reflect, but are unaccustomed to it as a professional norm. Such a finding may have significance for policy makers and those who facilitate teacher education at either initial, induction or perhaps more importantly in–career level.

APPENDIX 3 – Sample of Initial Open Coding

Provisional Codes	*Participant Voice*
Instrumentalism & impact on student-teacher relationship	*I saw sudden change ...results and being outcomes driven... trappings and job very important – students losing humanity and teacher seen as an instrument to get reults – a means to an end and that was damaging to the teacher student relationship.*
Curriculum Overload & impact on teaching & learning	*There's no room for reflection. The system remains the most important....live your life to a bell..no one to challenge you...no one is standing back. There are just too many subjects ..and an overcrowded curriculum...(I love TY where I can do it my way) but with exam classes there is not enough time to teach the list of topics that are on the course for the exam. I don't want a kid to open an exam paper and not have their topics covered. I don't teach as effectively as I could, due to lack of time.*
Parents – an ambivalent attitude?	*Parents – very little has changed here and teachers don't really engage with parents..the structure of secondary is different to primary, where I think there is more engagement due to primary school curriculum.*
Collegiality (emotional and supportive?)	*When I decided that I wouldn't continue but one thing that helped me was the support of colleagues they were really really good....and If you wanted to take a student or go to someone and chat about it it was there. That support was really important ..that support was more important than the support I had from management*
Collegiality (yearning?)	*But there is still the autonomy and the isolation. As an optimist - I would be hopeful..but time restrainsts...the isolation has to go. We can learn so much from each other.*
Social change (family structures)	*I've observed huge changes here-the biggest thing is the whole breakdown in family..too much for children to deal with...it's becoming more and more prevalent it's too much for some children to cope with..it's the biggest single issue. We're much more ready to cope with multiculturalism than we are with*

	marital breakdown.
Motivation & intrinsic reward	*Patience/energy/orientation towards vocationalism..not to be overly concerned with big salaries....what you put in - is what you get out..for the same reason as I went into it. Have an interest - a desire to see that you can make an impact in academic and personal development of young people*

APPENDIX 4 – Consolidation of Thematic Code Across Participant Sample

Instrumentalism, Points Race and Issues of Teacher Identity

We are driven by economic outcomes. There's such a narrow focus on exams and assessment..and nail the teacher.. and helplines! They are doing far more damage – making kids think this is more important than anything else (participant 1)

I think our education values are gone..out the window. We have become teachers who teach to a marking scheme...and I'll do that ...Hands up! That includes me too! I can teach to a marking system.... back to front, inside out and upside down!

Well that's why you go into the classroom to get reuslts....to get the best out of a student academically. With weaker students it is equally rewarding and also with the top marks- I had a student ... who got 6 A's...it is. They are a very important aspect of teaching (participant 2)

Yes it started with Leeson St and the Grind schools – when marking schemes were revealed in the 80s, it became teaching towards exam and to a large extent now the joy has gone out of the subject... Teachers are under pressure and no matter what - when August comes it's the results that count. Teachers want their students to get an A..there's no point of getting a C or D and saying I enjoyed it.....revision aids, study guides, Internet media all geared towards exams..It's an industry (participant.3)

Increasingly the dominance of the exam in the system does have a very big bearing on how teaching and learning takes place. How we see our roles and our status..our effectiveness ....students and parents ..he/she is a good teacher if she can get us an A1......now but in terms of the quality of what happens; there is ongoing tension between the quality of learning and what is effective (participant.4)

There's a fear that the bubble will burst if results are not good.....It's in the teacher's blood you want them to achieve in exams. (participant.5)

I think we do see success as results..parents see succcess as results so does society..whether we like it or not we have league tables....we like to think we don't have but universities reveal the numbers....even here on the local newspaper overall results are implied where you are graded based on where students go and how many points they got. (participant.6)

Unfortunately (tone change.quiet and reflective) I don't know... that we look at the growth of the whole person at all. (participant.7)

> *Huge labelling, stigmatising...The staff would say there is a lot of dumping ..I suppose it would be freely said in the primary schools here....(participant.8)*

APPENDIX 5 Questions - Interrogating data: From themes to categories

- What is going on and why?

- What is going on behind the scenes/between the lines here?

- What tentative conclusions are you coming to?

- What categories are coming from you (arising from your reading and earlier theorising).What categories are new…arising from the facts of the data?

- What tentative conclusions are influenced by the values, attitudes or meaning repertoires of the person/people who produced the data?

- What makes you focus on some particulars of the data and not others?

- What assumptions are directing the way people (including oneself) are acting?

- What positions do people take up in the accounts they give or write? How do they position others?

- How do some kinds of knowledge come to dominate, and others be muted?

- What is the central premise of the category discourse, meaning framework or construct?

- What conditions facilitate its operation?

- What discourses does it complement and what discourses does it oppose?

- Who is being privileged?

- What is left out: what is ignored? What is unspoken? Why?

APPENDIX 6 – Sample Theoretical Memos

Theoretical Memo 1 - The passive/disengaged learner

Notes /Thoughts after one particular interview and a supervision visit to a disadvantaged school

Culture clash – disadvantage and disengagement side by side with motivation and
     support.

Students who are not capable and typically from disadvantaged/non supportive
     backgrounds..left behind..no motivation..disengagement

Fatalism/predictability/replication of cycle and culture...(Bourdieu and schools as
     sites/agents of social reproduction....)

Interview participant response - 'Hell on earth' – teaching the disengaged...out of
     control....from aggressive resistance to passivity.....minding ..socialisation
     role.....playing card games to develop relationship..challenges here of establishing
     rapport

How negativity can feed itself and the importance of resisting teacher
     stereotyping....teachers who succeed with these groups
     ....envied/jealousy...(interesting re collegiality)

Very little home support- leaving school at 16

Sense of disappointment and failure for those who don't achieve..discontent in their
     hearts..

Consequences for society in the future – future cycles of disadvantage

Teachers role with Mol and Oige project- exposure to disadvantage- understanding its
     dynamic and the importance of the relationship dimension

No public acknowledgement /recognition for working with these children..exam results
     public and media ..not focused here...

Curriculum choices – SPHE/CSPE but so little PE (bigger issue of constraint and
     inability to make localised decisions)

PE ..a disgrace ..would be more positive to invest in this ..no gym, no facilities...no
     exercise at home..

1 in 5 with obsesity ..someone will take a case against the govt...will we have to make it
     an exam subject to be taken seriously?

Points system and exams- delayed gratification – a very middle class approach..not in the
     lexicon

of the disengaged..

All of the above is captured in the video recorded in my mind when I visited a certain school in the south east ....body language 8 students –7 male one female....room/tones/apathy
sighs/boredom/fatalism..etc..

There is some teacher anguish regarding the above and the issues raised in the interviews.There is also however a curious sense of *the inevitability of it* and the insistence that it must be this way. The thinking is perhaps restricted by the bounded thinking ....within existing structures.....the very thinking required to address the issues requires a new beginning - a new model of what education is all about ....new structures/localised curricula/localised decision making/capacity to be creative and reflexive/professionalism and harnessing team synergies.....family models of teaching.....etc..

Collins 2007, Times Tuesday May 15th. (He discusses the challenge for meaning- and what happens when there is cultural dissonance between school culture and the lifeworld of the student- **when the search for shared meaning is not successful**.....) Need for school of the future to reposition itself around learner centered processes.....including ILP's for each student..constructed collaboratively (child/year head/parent/guidance counsellor) and would include learning in and outside of school – throughout the calendar year...(youth organisations, sporting bodies, community groups, employers)
Students would be rewarded for group and cooperative activities as well as for individualized and competitive ones....student discovers knowledge....best learning is done unconsciously....assessment for learning rather than of learning...

(I should visualise a school/learning environment in which this would happen..)

NEWB Conf Feb 2008 – School Attendance-addressed by Prof Doug Williams – Canada
84,000 children are estimated to miss over a month of school each year
1 in 5 of school going population
Williams recommended that the issue goes beyond attendance and relates to engagement – relationship between teachers and students....
Importance of having a sense of belonging to school – connection/community etc (complexity of factors associated with absenteeism)
 Feb 28th.- NALA Report 2008- that one third of the workforce left school after junior cert. A quarter of Irish adults have problems with basic literacy and numeracy tasks –such as reading instruction on foodstuffs or medicine.

Worries raised by the **National Skills Strategy**- this will prove detrimental to Ireland's attempts to remain economically viable
Conf – Towards Knowledge Based Economy: Basic skills in the workplace (Feb 28th)

National Skills Strategy – planning to upskill 330,000 workers to Leaving Certificate by 2020.
 Interesting that the entire focus is on economic activity and the country's competitiveness. There is such little discussion about people's capacity to participate in society and lead a fully enriched life where they can access information, services, read to enjoy or develop their own capacity to be lifelong readers......etc.

Theoretical memo 2- Family structures

It's difficult to put words on the affective dimension of this issue on teachers. During the interviews, there is a palpable sense of disquiet, disbelief, helplessness, being overwhelmed, students being overwhelmed, too much to cope with for them. Issues of teachers *knowing* and *not knowing*. Intuitively some teachers know in their hearts but cannot make the knowing explicit ....there's an interesting dynamic here about knowing and not knowing...where teachers feel helpless when they know and yet uncomfortable with not knowing. There's the knowing that students do not declare what might need to be declared and there's the concern that even if it is declared that students may not get the kind of support required. There's a conspiracy of uncomfortable and unhelpful silence....

There's the fear for student's future and for society in general. There's the frustration for some of teachers who want to show care and affection and support but feel limited by protocols, ethics and by lack of skills.

When teachers are asked about changes in the society – this issue is most prevalent and interestingly perceived by some as much more challenging than issues of integration for different cultures.

Children as silent sufferers
Lack of father figures....
Support services in crisis themselves – where interagency support is required
Differences in support (from family and wider community) perceived as greater in rural areas??
60% in a class can be from single parent families
More acknowledgement of multicultural issue (issues of visibility)
Society still not accepting/recognising
Garda/social workers/health workers and teachers – aware but there is little public debate
Society in transition.....issues of doubt and moral authority re impact on society of the future....

Collins –TI Ceiliuradh 2007 – inevitability of this trend

See references in *Spirituality For Our Times* (p.169)

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Iona Institute (2007) *Marriage Breakdown and family structure in Ireland* (based on census data – marrigage breakdown (divorce, separation and remarriage) had increased by 500% in the last 20 years. (1986 – 40,000 separatged people and by census 2006 it was just under 200,000) increasing currently by 5,000 per year according to census data.
 Census 2006-Now one in 8 of marriages breaking down/Limerick 1 in 5.(huge regional variation Ballymun ration is 1:2)

One in 3 births outside marriage & one in 5 or 21% being brought up by lone parents.
One in 4 children is now being raised in a non family unit –a figure that has doubled since 1986.

Theoretical Memo 3 Teachers seeking a professional voice

Teachers do not have an effective public voice..isolated in schools..living in an exam based cocoon
*Disenfranchisement from union....*non attendance at meetings and ...paralysed...teachers to blame for not finding voice....no opportunities to reflect...40 years effective within the school but no extended professionalism for many..living life to a bell and no one to challenge you..

Teachers not engaging enough with the bigger picture...

Little by way of voice of resistance..comfort factor of exam and known and tested system..but there is a lot of dissatisfaction..teachers beginning to hate their subject..slow burner for some kind of revolution..looking for more relaxed ..quality of engagement with students and the education process

Teachers ..declining status..Ireland has become so materialistic ...but majority are still respected..Teachers not looked after ..treated poorly and left to their own devices..

Teachers and passivity ..not confronting challenges ..you need to be a very strong person...(pain in voice..)
"We've been frozen, drugged....acceptance that you are powerless..top down changes and the busyness...writing notes..attending meetings..preparing for inspection..no time to reflect...

Teacher Voice ....
There's a vaccum..professional bodies ..limited success of the Teaching Unions in the PR work....early .retirement, arbitration, negotiations ..but we need more imagination and creative thinking...too grounded in classroom ..need to take a helicopter view ..role of the new teaching council perhaps

Finding the Teacher Voice

A sense in the interviews that teachers don't feel that they are being professionally represented.....Issues of professional concern avbout education that are not being aired because of the nature of teaching itself and being trapped in the minutaine of practice...busyness.....lack of a PR culture and absence of a language of professionalism to engage with the media.

Limited capacity of the Teacher Union – caught up in actual conditions like pay, redundancy, redeployment.....
Bigger issues about the purpose of education rarely finding a public airing...
Cynicism towards the union and issues of finding a steward in one case ..no one attending brach meetings....

(See Clancy 2005- Irish Education and split in Union as context here)
Teachers as passive- dumped on – external agencies..
(VEC..in this case...protocols for everything...writing down ..meetings reports..)

Significant pain/anger – sense of self loathing..we're to blame.......we've been frozen drugged....top down...(also imagery of being controlled/manipulated/dumped on)

Hiding behind exam and routine..comfort zone.....conservative ..not wanting to resist....

Strong sense though of wanting change – if given time to reflect and think about the current system of education

Unsure here if finding voice is the correct category.....probably is.....

Are teachers voices silenced? Rembember my question at end of position paper..where are the voices of resistance? Are teachers willing conspirators in the instrumentalism?
Possibly not – but just not up in the helicopter enough/perspective is on the ground at the expense of the bigger picture...

Something that has struck me throughout the interview is how little teachers actually reflect and how there were moments during the interviews of teachers surprising themselves with what they said......

Seems like there's an open goal for the Teaching Council if they can get at this in a creative way and engage teachers in a discussion about their role in today's society

Memo 4 - on motivation/vocationalism

Throughout the interviews thare are little seeds of hope depsite the bleakness associated with instrumentalism. I'm only becoming aware of these as I read and re read the data. Have I been missing something or is the instrumentalist theme just so pervasive? Need to keep thinking about this and its implications for the data analysis.....

Vocationalism- seeds always there
Role Models
Family model assoc with early years in a scoil lan gaeilge
Idealsim & philosophy of Dewey and Illich in 1980s
Personal Reputation/Making a difference
Passion for subject/how it translates to students
Relational dimension and how young keep you young..
New technologies/new resources
LCAP/TY great models of what can happen
Civic Society
Multiple Intelligence and child centred approaches
More democratic system and refreshing presence of young and confident teachers who are not intimidated by older bully teachers
Multiculturalism & Integration
New RE Syllabus and how it has revitalized the subject....the huge opportunity in a multicultural setting
Whole school planning and collaboration.....
Other pockets of wonderful things – filtering through depite the instrumentalism...

Huge energy, care, genuineness, integrity – all palpable in the non verbal dimension of participants so far.
Second level teacher and role model - who fused imagination & lit a a light
..idealism and how you could change people's lives....justice....issues

Dewey/Ilich – Deschooling Society 25 years ago...

"I think I was influenced probably by my my own teachers – role models both in the UK and here in the CBS. I loved the two subjects I had chosen."
"I had never entertained anything else...."
"One of my friends in school was doing law but it never crossed my mind... the thought of it never crossed my mind...we had no career guidance then and if it were now it might be different ...neither of my parents would have had beyond middle education. They were thrilled I was becoming a teacher."

Relational dimension

Pride in results and self assessment

Reputation outside of school...aware of it..what is fed back on the grapevine

Holistic education...ocasional light that filters through..

Love of subject ..new syllabus and opportunities afforded for research/integration of new technologies
The possibility that I make a difference

(See Dlits, Hansen, Parker, *etal* to theorize this)....

APPENDIX 7 – Ethical Framework

1. Letter of Introduction
2. Background Information on the Study
3. Dtailed points for Ethical Framework

1. Letter of introduction to potential participants

Date

Dear (Name of Participant)

I am currently participating in a doctoral research programme and my research theme relates to an investigation into the role of the second level teacher in contemporary Ireland. (See background information attached).

I am interviewing a cross section of second level teachers and educators with second level experience. I am delighted that you are interested in facilitating this request for an interview. June 20th at 11a.m sounds like a suitable date for both of us. I will confirm by phone the exact room location before then.

I enclose some background information regarding the study and themes which we might explore during the interview which is typically about one hour & fifteen minutes in duration. Should you require any further clarification in advance don't hesitate to ask.

I will also discuss and clarify any questions you might have including: the ethical issues of confidentiality and how the data collected will be used in the research process. See list of ethical issues in background information provided.

Once again, sincerest thanks for your enthusiastic interest in the research study and I look forward to meeting you on Thursday June 20th.

Yours sincerely

_____
Michael Ryan (Programme Specialist)
Education & Human Development
Tipperary Institute

2. Background Information On the Study

Exploring the role of the second level teacher in contemporary Ireland

The increasingly complex role of the second level teacher, has been the subject of interesting commentary, in official reports and various national and international policy documents, during the last fifteen years (The 1991 OECD Review of Irish Education, The 1995 Government White Paper; *Charting Our Education Future*, The 1998 Report on the establishment of a Teaching Council, The 2005 OECD report; *Teachers Matter* and the more recent Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct 2007).

Current literature and policy documents imply that the teacher's role is an increasingly complex one of 'extended professionalism,' reflecting the many changes in Irish society. According to the Teaching Council (2007), the second level teacher's role is a five dimensional one, that embraces; *student, parent, curriculum, teacher as learner* and; teacher in the context of *state, community and school*. The fulfillment of this role is embraced in the context of thirteen espoused values. These are: *committment, quality, student centered learning, responding to change, professional development, holistic development of students, cultural values, social justice, equality and inclusion, collegiality, collaboration, respect, care and cooperation.*

The Teaching Council's vision of the role of the Irish second level teacher is consistent with the complexity outlined in the OECD (2005) *Teachers Matter* report, which conceptualises the teacher's role internationally as one that must embrace; multiculturalism, gender issues, social cohesion, disadvantage, learning and behavioural difficulties, new technologies, rapidly developing fields of knowledge and new approaches to student assessment.

The voice of second level teachers in the policy discourse is however a 'muted one'. This research process seeks to give voice to and illuminate how teachers experience and articulate their professional role in the negotiated environments of practice. I would therefore be delighted to explore with you:

- Your perception of your current role as a second level teacher in a contemporary Ireland
- Your sense of how this role may have changed
- Your lived experience as a teacher and an exploration of the issues that concern you or bring you personal/professional satisfaction

3. Ethical Framework

(following receipt of the introductory letter-attached & background information)

1. **Consent: exploration of the overall process and dealing with potential participant concerns**
   Potential participants will be initially contacted by phone to introduce the study. If potential participants are interested, they will then receive a formal letter and an information sheet on the background to the chosen study. If the participant then agrees to participate, the ethical dimension will be fully explored at an initial meeting before each interview is conducted. Each participant will be informed of the conversational style interviews – lasting 1 hour & 15 minutes approx.
   Participants will be shown a copy of the interview web and the broad themes for exploration.

2. **Confidentiality protocols**
   Discussion & agreement around anonymity or identification
   Everything recorded will be transcribed and returned to the participant in hard copy for review. No participant will be identified in the use of the data and different identification initials will be assigned to each participant for the researcher's convenience. No schools will be named or geographical locations identified. If participants feel any information proffered is very sensitive – they reserve the right to amend or withdraw it when they recveive the hard copy transcript.
   Participants will not be identified to other participants and will be interviewed on their own at a location that suits them and the researcher.

3. **Guidelines on the nature of the data collection** - tape recorded interview using a small voice recorder that can be subsequently uploaded to computer/production of transcript by researcher within three weeks for reading by participants.

4. **How the data will be stored**
   The data will be uploaded to the researcher's computer as a voice file. This file will be password protected. When the voice file is transcribed into hard copy transcript, this word file will be saved on the researcher's home computer and also password protected.
   The data files will be stored on the researcher's home computer with back up copy on a designated memory stick. These files will be kept until the completion of the research process i.e. acceptance of final submission and granting of award. One year subsequently the files will be deleted.

5. **Publication of any findings & protocols for acknowledgment**
   The intention is that some of the raw interview data will be used within the thesis
   – sometimes including direct quotes but with assigned initials that are not those of
   the participants. Similar quotation of direct speech may also be used in academic
   papers/subsequent publications/and appear on powerpoint slides at conferences if
   participants agree to this.
   Participants will be acknowedged and thanked in the collective as teacher
   participants at the beginning of the thesis but will not be identified.

6. **Research participants right to withdraw from the research process**
   Participants reserve the right to withdraw participation or the use of data
   generated directly from their interview after receiving hard copy of the interview
   transcript. Should participants wish to withdraw their involvement at a subsequent
   stage – this request will be considered and where possible accommodated

7. **Opportunity to discuss/clarify any other concerns**

8. **Decision to proceed? - confirmation of Interview arrangements and
   expression of gratitude for participation, time and interest**

9. **Reassurance – generation of rapport /positive affect**

10. **Actual Interview**

Hedge School Fieldtrip and Dramatic Visualisation

Field trip to Curreeny Heritage Hedge School
Thursday October 2nd, 2008.

My mission as a teacher: A historical journey - connecting with the past to be inspired for the future.

3. Heritage Hedge School Site & Teacher Education

Re-enactment – drama in education

Introduction –

Students arrive on the hedge school site after a 15 minute walk. The walk from the bus is down a long winding country lane. The site is spectacular in its physical orientation – surrounded by hills and overlooking a valley. The site has been restored as part of a community project and there are some wall plaques, inscriptions and a bust of a hedge school teacher. Close to the site there is a disused primary school – which we also visit as part of the field trip. After about ten minutes on the hedge school site (where students just observe and find their bearings) we gather around the little stone ruin that marks out the exact perimeter of the one room hut.

We then welcome the group to this site and ask them to sit around and watch the following little dramatic vignette that has been prepared by a small number of the students. The purpose of this vignette is to provide an introductory context and to draw the group into the Hedge school world of the 18th century.

Part 1

Music-traditional slow air – played on CD player...slowly fades out......
(from a collection of traditional Irish tunes by Tim McSherry & Guests)

Extract from the play *Translations* by Brian Friel

We join the action in the first act when the students at the Ballybeg Hedge school await the arrival of their master Hugh. Before he arrives the students (Doalty, Bridget, Manus, Maire, Margaret, Sarah and Jimmy) have been talking about the official school system and their ongoing boycott of it. There are exchanges about whether the official schooling system will take or not and the fact that all education in them is through English.

Doalty   I'll tell you something nobody's going to go near them-they're not
            going to take on-law or no law

Bridget And everything's free in them. You pay for nothing except the books you use;
            that's what our Seamus says

Doalty Our Seamus- Sure your Seamus wouldn't pay anyhow. She's making this all up

Bridget Isn't that right Manus?

Manus I think so

Bridget And from the very first day you go, you will not hear one word of Irish spoken.

You'll be taught to speak English and everyone will end up as cute as the Buncrana people

There is a warning from Sarah (a grunt) that the master is coming. The atmosphere changes..sudden business ..the heads are down

Doalty He's here boys . Cripes he'll make yella meal out of me for those bloody tables.

Bridget- Have you any extra chalk Manus?

Maire- And the atlas for me

(Doalty goes to Maire who is sitting on a stool at the back)
Doalty – Swap you seats

Maire - Why?

Doalty- There's an empty one beside the infant prodigy

Maire- I'm fine here

Doalty –Please Maire I want to jouk in the back here (Maire rises)
    God Love you...anyone got a bloody table book..Cripes I'm wrecked
    (Sarah gives him one)
    God I'm dying about you...
In his haste to go to the back seat Doalty bumps into Bridget who is writing on a slate while kneeling on the ground

Bridget- Watch where you are going Doalty

Doalty gooses Bridget. She squeals. Now the quiet hum of work: Jimmy reading Homer in a low voice; Bridget copying her headline; Maire studying the atlas; Doalty his eyes shut tight, mouthing his tables; Sarah doing sums. After a few seconds..

Bridget- Isn't this 'G' right, Manus. How do you put a tail on it?

Doalty – Will you shut up I can't concentrate!

After a few more seconds of work...

    False alarm boys. The bugger's not coming at all. Sure the buggers hardly fit to walk.

Immediately Hugh enters..a large man ..with residual dignity..shabbily dressed, carrying a stick. He has as always a large quantity of drink taken..but he is by no means drunk. He is in his early sixties.

Hugh-Adsum, Doalty, adsum. Perhaps not in sobrietate perfecta but adequately
      sobrius to overhear your quip. Vesperal salutations to you all.
      (Various responses)
(Hugh then apologises for his late arrival – telling them that he was celebrating the baptism of a local child Nellie Ruadh's baby ..he goes on to explore with his greek students the derivation of the word baptism..baptiserium –the cold bath)

Hugh- Doalty seven time nine?

Doalty –seven time ...seven times...seven times nine..seven times nine are ..cripes,
 it's on the tip of my tongue, Master I knew it for sure this morning –funny that's the only one that foxes me

Bridget –promt –it's sixty three

Doalty –sure what's wrong with me seven nines are fifty three Master.

Hugh- Sophocles from Colonus would agree with Doalty Dan. Doalty from Tulach Alainn:
      To know nothing is the sweetest life. Where's Sean Beag?

Manus – He's at the salmon.

Hugh – And Nora Dan?

Maire- She says she's not coming back any more.
      And the Donneely twins?
      (Brief pause. Then..)

Bridget – They're probably at the turf.(She goes to Hugh)
      There's the one and eight I owe you for last quarter's arithmetic and there's my one and
      six for this quarter's writing.
      End of Vignette .....

Music (from a collection of traditional Irish tunes by Tim McSherry & Guests)

Part 2

We stand today in the midst of the Slieve Felim Hills, near the slopes of Mathair Clé or mother mountain in Curreeny (near Kilcommon) in mid west Tipperary.

The site we stand on is an immensely historical one. Almost 300 years ago, this site during penal times became the venue for an underground education system and was also used as a centre of religious devotion where mass was said (despite this practice being forbidden). Hundreds of students attended this hedge school over a number of years, most likely after 1702 and possibly until 1782 (when the penal laws were repealed). On wet days the students crouched in a makeshift cabin made of stones and roofed in thatch. During good weather they got their instruction in the open air.

The reason for these underground schools was that a law was introduced that forbade education or religion within the catholic tradition. Catholics were forbidden to teach or to set up school. Protestant schools were set up in some towns and villages but effectively these schools were boycotted in many places because they were seen as a direct method of forcing Protestantism and its traditions on the majority Irish Catholic people. The law stated that;

"No person of the popish religion shall publicly or in private houses teach school, or instruct youth in learning within this realm."

Despite these laws, and even the threat of transportation to another colony, death by hanging, imprisonment or a large fine, many people including parents and hedge school teachers took great risks to ensure their children had an education and religious instruction in their own faith. These teachers and parents were waging what was later called: "a kind of guerrilla war in education" (from P.J.Dowling, 1932 – The Hedge Schools Of Ireland)

Today, 300 years later as young teachers in our final year of preparation, we will attempt to recall through drama that important historical era in Irish education, by trying to recreate and reconnect with the voices of those hedge school teachers who may have helped establish the special respect attributed to becoming a teacher in Ireland.

We will listen to these voices in this isolated mountain place and hopefully from them be inspired to create a new vision for ourselves, a vision of commitment, professionalism and of service to those in our care as teachers of the future.

Music

Part 3

The following script has been written using evidence from historical accounts of hedge schools in Tipperary (researched through newspaper archive in the Tipperary Studies section of the County Library). Local sir names have also been

used in the script – based on local knowledge of this townsland and neighbouring ones - so as to lend some authenticity to the drama.
Students have been allocated a piece of the script in advance – but without seeing any other piece. Today, for the first time the students dramatise the script as a collective group. Following the dramatisation there will be a discussion and conversation about the significance of this experience for them as nearly qualified teachers.

1. My name is Seán Kinnane and today was my first day teaching in the hedge school. I had 15 pupils ranged in age from 7-15. I spent the last three weeks going from house to house in these hills-telling them about the kind of instruction I could give and encouraging them to send their children here. Most of the parents were afraid that they could not afford to pay me. Some could pay one shilling a month for reading, writing and arithmetic. Others who could not pay money, offered me potatoes and some eggs as payment.

2. Today a parent, whom I had not met, a Mrs. Connell came, and she was very anxious that she could not afford for her son Tom to learn Irish. She pays large tithes to the landlord Lord Dunalley, and she has little money. She could pay me to teach her son English she said, as then she would be able to read the king's language and that was the language of the future she said. I objected to her request and said all of my students would learn Irish but we agreed that I would not charge her son anything for teaching it.

3. Two of my students got weak today as neither of them had a breakfast. I brought them out for fresh air and sent them down to the well for a drink of spring water.

4. Today I had three new students - they had already been to a hedge school across the hills but told me that master there was drinking too much poitín and falling asleep most of the time. There are some people claiming to be scholars of literature and arithmetic who have set up schools but they are bogus and usually last just a few months and then leave without trace.

5. I like these parts and find the pupils very willing to learn. Foe some, the ability to read and write is their only hope and I try to give each one a slate to practise their letters and sums at home. Some of them have very little English and gaelic is their spoken word. Here they speak it with a beautiful blás and they are great story tellers.

6. Last week, we got word that a king's agent was riding through the hills and was searching for us. I cancelled school for 3 days and asked a neighbour to put two goats into the cabin, so that there would be no suspicion on us. When we returned to school, there was a bit of cleaning up to do but many of the students are well used to smells of cattle and fowl. One girl told me that her mother keeps the chickens and hens in the house at night so that the fox can't get them. Food is scarce round here for many families.

7. Today, I was asked by Mary Butler to call home to her father's house as her father wanted some land measured up and was trying to get a title for his holding. This was good news as I would be sure to get a fletch of bacon as payment.

8. I brought my fiddle to school today and found that 5 of the students could play a tune. Some play the concertina also and there is a great tradition of dance and song in these parts. One girl Nancy Hayes sings like a thrush and her mother has given her some fine old songs. There was great happiness in the school today as young Danny Slattery had caught some salmon and his mother sent in a piece for everyone.

9. Yesterday, I walked to Nenagh to get ink and some chalk. A 6 hour journey through the valley. I met Master Boland in Nenagh. His hedge school down in Dolla has over 40 pupils and he has to run two schools on the same day. He is also teaching the classics; Latin and some Greek. We both learned from the same Brehon Master in Nenagh. We exchanged ideas for teaching Irish history. We have to be careful about this. If we tell the full truth about what is happening and the unfairness of the penal laws, some of the students and their families are capable of doing dangerous things to protestant families or to agents who collect tithes.

10. Nora McLoughney's mother died last week. She had 11 children and was only 42. The oldest girl is 16 and will now have to become a mother to them all. I was invited to the wake and was introduced to everyone as *Master Kinnane* of the Hedge School. In the last 5 months I have been to about 20 wakes.

11. Today father O' Brien called. He told all the students about the mass that would be celebrated on the school site at dawn on Sunday. Each pupil was asked to spread the word to a neighbour and to ensure every household in the area was covered.

12. We will break for school in early Summer as many of my students will be needed at home to sow the crops, potatoes and oats. They will also go to the bogs to cut turf. The older ones who are over 12 will work for other farmers too and some may even earn a shilling to pay some fees to me next year.

13. During the summer I will work as a farm labourer in these parts and maybe write a few more poems. I have been given free lodgings in Scanlons in lieu of my work. I also have to translate some ancient gaelic manuscripts for a scholarly priest in Thurles. We have had a long wet winter and my students were drenched many days and had to learn while steaming wet. The small fire in the cabin caused so much smoke that at times it was unbearable.

Music

Part 4
Let us now move on in time ….to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when the Relief Acts of 1782, 1792 and 1793 removed many of the penal laws against catholic education. There followed a significant period of religious foundations being established whose mission include; educating the masses particularly the poorer classes in towns and cities throughout Ireland.

14. A Cork woman from Mallow called Nano Nagle founded the Ursuline sisters in 1771 and the Presentation sisters in 1782. The Irish Christian Brothers was founded by Ignatius Rice (Callan, Co. Kilkenny) in 1802. Later the Loreto nuns were founded and in 1822 and a Dublin woman called Catherine McCauley(Baggot St.) founded the Mercy Sisters in 1827.

15. The 1830s saw the setting up of an official primary school system that was acceptable to the vast majority of Irish catholics. We will now go and visit one of these small country primary schools………

   (In the old and very small disused national school (now infrequently used as a small community meeting place) – we sit down –and imagine a time when over 70 students sat here in this tiny space...and then there is a reciting of....)

Village Schoolmaster – by William Goldsmith

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule
The village master taught his little school

A man severe he was and stern to view
I knew him well as every truant knew:
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face.

Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he:
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.

Yet he was kind or if severe in aught
The love he bore to learning was at fault.
The village all declared how much he knew:
Twas certain he could write and cipher too:

Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage
And even the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing too, the person owned his skill,

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For eventhough vanquished he could argue still

While words of learned length and thund'ring sound
Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around:
And still they gazed and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.

But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumph'd is forgot

Music

Discussion of Images in Poem

Part 5

22. We remember also the teachers, religious and non religious, throughout many generations who gave so generously of their efforts with little financial remuneration. These also include the teachers in the many trade and vocational schools set up after 1930, who frequently provided an innovative curriculum in the country's technical schools.

23. We also remember the harsh and sometimes brutal regimes that involved corporal punishment. We recall those students who were sometimes abused and ridiculed by teachers. We think of the power that teachers have to *create* or *destroy* and we reflect on the consequences for students and teachers of how this power is used positively or abused

24. We celebrate the ongoing developments in education; the improvements in schools, curriculum and in learning conditions everywhere. We celebrate the ongoing investment in education and the commitment to removing inequality in the system

25. We also reflect on our individual responsibility to help nurture the growth and development of every child in our care - not just those who are obedient and enthusiastic learners.

26. We celebrate the teachers; primary and secondary each of whom has had an influence in some way on thousands of people. We remember those teachers who encouraged us and in some way or other helped us in valuing education. We celebrate those positive teachers who always had the *good word* and remained positive and optimistic even when progress was slow.

27. The torch or flame of learning is now being passed on to us and now it is time for us to consider what our role is as teachers in the 21st century. How can we continue

the work that began hundreds of years ago and honour the mostly legacy of education and the honour that still goes with being a teacher.

28. In this material world it is sometimes hard to understand that part of our payment is not the money or salary that we will receive but is about the knowing that we can be a force for good that we can sow seeds of self esteem and confidence that will grow within each student and will be passed on to the next generation.

29. As teachers – we also have a political dimension. We can (like some of the hedge school teachers) resist forces of oppression and always be mindful of eliminating injustice in our own classrooms, schools and in society. We need to be critically reflective of what is happening around us and awake to practices in education that do not serve the needs of all students

30. Every age must have its good teachers. Teachers who have a mission and a clear set of values about life's most important riches. It is not just about knowing our subject well, or helping students achieve good grades.

31. The teacher's role is substantially more important than this. It is about leaving young people with a legacy of inner worth: a legacy of confidence as lifelong learners and problem solvers, a legacy of optimism about life, a legacy that enables people to trust themselves as good honest citizens, who care for family, and are active in making community life a better one for all.

32. Let us always remember the teachers who risked their lives in Ireland's hedge schools over 300 years ago and the passion that drove them to ensure that Irish men and women received an education that reflected their own traditions and culture. But each age has its battles that need to be fought…..

33. As a final year student teacher, you are now invited to reflect on your mission as a teacher and what you think is worth fighting for throughout your teaching life. What are the values that you hold dear? What kind of professional will you become? What images of teaching will you bring with you from today and how will you keep these images active in your teaching life? How will you build on these images by adding your own unique philosophy and identity to your teaching life?

34. "It is a sacred privilege and an awesome responsibility to be an educator."
     (Thomas Groome)

End of script....Music

Followed by short break – then discussions/reflections .....

Cross section of student reflections after the on – site enactment 2008

1. **The physical site** -The remoteness and wilderness of the place- the shelter from the prevailing winds and south facing aspect and wide open valleys to spot the 'Kings agent'/the rugged beauty/simplicity. The conditions and what was endured by students and master alike….

2. **Group Re-enactment of history** 37 of us mirroring an image and sharing an experience from three centuries ago/everyone connected and gave something to the day/….hard to describe the impact of this..but it was different to anything else we had done as a group…had a new meaning….

3. **The academic and classical knowledge** of the old masters - their love for learning/the linkage across subjects and the integrated approach. The poem –the Village Schoolmaster was great; "…*The love he bore to learning was at fault."*

4. **What we complain about today** - how we should not take for granted what we have today/today we don't have to teach in fear for our own safety

5. **Changed my outlook** /we made a connection with our teaching past/what I had taken for granted/it has changed my outlook on becoming a teacher/I will try to remember the passion and sacrifice and the old notion of professionalism..*to commit to a way of life in education*

6. **The values of the hedge school masters and families** – they stood up for something important and were prepared to risk persecution and oppression-inspires one as a teacher and the values we should pass on today/to fight for what you were told you could not have/ …"

7. **Has made me feel lucky and privileged** – made me more determined to be an inspiring teacher/Has made me reflect on the kind of teacher I want to become/it was a reality check for me….

8. **Heritage and passing something on** - Until now I have only taught about my own education and what is was like for me but this has created a new awareness of ancestors/heritage and what has been passed on from very different times

9. **The image of the flame** was really powerful for me – lit at the top of the hill ... but carried on as a metaphor for the day. It brought us through the historical journey/passing on the torch/what will our grandchildren/great grandchildren

reflect on in years to come about our legacy? The flame was lit again at the end of the day and passed among us.

10. **The intimate and crowded environment of the national school** - little national school and the visualisation of two packed classrooms with very large class sizes/No special needs assistants or technological resources available

11. **Changing role of teacher** the discussion we had about the teacher's role was great and how it has changed and in some ways also remains the same….
(walking for 6 hours to get resources/finding a balance between telling the truth of history but not inciting hatred/not charging for the teaching of Irish/issue of emancipation and political role….

12. **Power of music, words, images, drama and landscape** can take us back so powerfully in time/the power of learning on historical sites…/will remember that day in the future when things get tough in my classroom.

13. **Ownership of our own verse in the drama script -** Each person's verse in the drama script and how it was *owned* by each person- amazing coincidences….here like something 'strange and powerful' was happening.

14. **Fun and the dancing in the old school** was great – so spontaneous and honoured the legacy of fun and laughter that there was in the hedge schools and the masters who played the fiddle or other instruments…

15. **Class spirit and cohesion** – including the integration of new members/made me feel close to the group in a different way/bonding and realization that this is our last year and we are NQT's (Nearly Qualified Teachers). We are all part of one great group …..

Follow through in Professional & Personal Development module

In the next class – students have an opportunity to de-brief from the field trip and an opportunity to discuss any of their subsequent thoughts/reflections.

The Reflective Portfolio Journal Assignment is then introduced

Module - Professional and Personal Development
Reflective Journal Assignment (20% of marks)

Title - My Vision and Mission as a Teacher

1.   To help each student document and reflect on key learning moments throughout the final year of the journey towards becoming a teacher
2.   To encourage and harness a continuous reflective capacity that enables final year students to *witness, explore, ponder on, synthesise, evaluate and analyse* the key learning moments/events/insights/personal vision which are significant

Journal Design

The journal will be a substantial document (min3,500 - 5,000 words) that will hopefully capture moments of insight and learning for each student. It cannot therefore be prescriptive, as different people will have different experiences and learning moments. The following are potential areas that might guide your approach.

1.   An introduction section that might use the field trip experience as a beginning place for year 4
2.   A section on reflections on and about theories covered in class - how they relate to you as a final year student (have an entry following each weekly session after each topic)
3.   A section that includes some reflections on your readings-some of the books/articles on your list for this module
4.   A section during & following assignment completion & feedback process (peer teaching/special needs/school based practice) that reflects on teaching skills and the challenges of the practice domain
5.   A section that is just about you as a final year student teacher hopefully inspired/puzzled/angered/ by many different possibilities throughout the year
6.   An overall conclusion that articulates your current understanding of your role as a second level teacher. How has this changed since year 1? What were the critical incidents along the way? What is the vision guiding your role for the career ahead? What has the overall experience been like? How will you ensure that you remain a reflective life-long learner throughout your teaching career?

Presentation Format

The main text should be typed but it can be accompanied by pictures/graphics and diagrams or visuals, and presented in an overall book type format or A4 size journal.
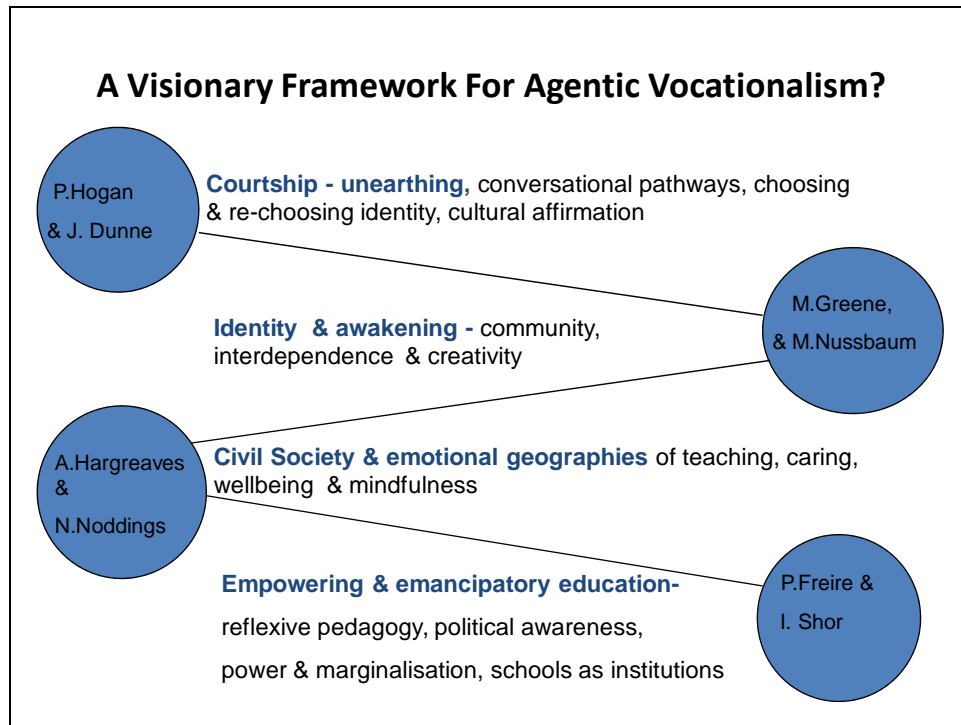
The following criteria will guide the awarding of marks

Year 4 Reflective Journal Assignment (20%) (5,000 words)

Criteria	Marks Awarded
Quality of engagement & reflection throughout (depth, breadth, clarity) Literacy and Structure	**15 marks**
Authenticity/truthfulness; capturing the moment as it happened and the reflection on it subsequently. Identification of challenges experienced and how you struggled with them/negotiated around them/learnings from them	**20 marks**
Evidence of ongoing reflection and not just something written at the end of the year. Evidence of engagement with teacher's role/your vision of that role and/the concept of professionalism	**20 marks**
How insights gained from theory, readings, and school based practice helped you develop as a final year student teacher	**30 marks**
Originality of the overall approach & sense of this journal being about *you*	**15 marks**
Overall comments	**Total marks**

Signature _____ Date_____

A Visionary Framework For Agentic Vocationalism?

P.Hogan & J. Dunne

Courtship - unearthing, conversational pathways, choosing & re-choosing identity, cultural affirmation

Identity & awakening - community, interdependence & creativity

M.Greene, & M.Nussbaum

A.Hargreaves & N.Noddings

Civil Society & emotional geographies of teaching, caring, wellbeing & mindfulness

Empowering & emancipatory education- reflexive pedagogy, political awareness, power & marginalisation, schools as institutions

P.Freire & I. Shor

Courtship, unearthing, intrinsic good and conversational pathways

There is little reference to the role of the playful in official education policy documents, as noted by Fielding (2001). It is refreshing then to read Hogan (1995:164), invoking the resolve of the German philosopher, Gadamer; "The first thing we must make clear to ourselves is that play is so elementary a function of human life that culture is quite inconceivable without this element." Hogan (1995:164-168), dismisses the potentially frivolous misunderstanding of the concept of the playful in a post 'Dewyian analysis' and cleverly explores it in the context of how teacher and student continually engage in a cognitive and emotional

search for identity, where learning is conceptualised as *a courtship of sensibility* or

a joint activity;

> ...an unfolding interplay between the ever emergent abilities and sensibilities of pupils on the one hand, and, on the other, the voices which address these through the presentations and enactments of the teacher.
>
> (1995:168)

Such a prospect suggests the fun of exploration, mediation and ongoing renegotiation in a constructivist classroom where there is time to *meander* as proposed by Quinn, (2006). Hogan (1995:170), proposes quite a rich reconceptualisation of the pedagogical process. In essence it suggests a 'cultural courtship' where the authentic 'voice' of the subject and its embodied cultural legacy, is ethically enacted by the teacher through a faithful idiom; "which addresses the sensibilities of the pupils in an inviting and challenging manner."

There is an interesting shift in focus here from the merely relational dimension of the wooing or courtship, to the rich prize embedded within the subject area. Hogan's belief that one's enthusiasm for one's subject and the belief that it has something rich and enduring to offer, is a refreshing antidote to the shallow learning of pragmatic instrumentalism and exam based learning. The relational dimension between student and teacher is therefore embodied through the subject as prize, until hopefully the student is "enabled to discover something of the historian, scientist, mathematician, artist, linguist, musician in himself" (1995:170). Such an epiphany is described by Hogan as an *'unearthing'*. This unearthing marks

an event of emancipation, or releasement of the pupil, from a previously constraining state. Such a proposal has the potential for deep learning with teacher as mediator, in a three way reciprocal courtship of conversation between subject, teacher and student.

On a similar theme, Joseph Dunne (2005) emphasises the intrinsic 'good' within the 'practice' of education and why it should not be compromised by the more extrinsic reward offered by the points system. He argues that the educator should *awaken desire* and *lure* the learner, *captivate* him in a way that can lead to a deeply grounded self esteem across the range of subjects. In a convincing argument he proposes that engagement in music and craft subjects such as woodwork or engineering can release students from;

> a vacant present, through partnership in tradition, that is richly alive in the present, stretches back into the past and; partially through them, can be extended forward into the future; the achievement of competencies which are ones of the whole person.
>
> (2005:155)

This apparent philosophy of 'connectedness and continuity' is indeed laudable, in subjects that are traditionally perceived as skill based, but have a coherent moral educative dimension, because they entail what Dunne calls the learning-not only of skills but also of virtues, aligned with qualities of appreciation and receptivity.

According to Dunne (2005:156-157), The challenge for teaching is to discover what he calls *conversational pathways* to instruction. Pathways that perhaps bridge the gap between student experience; their own lifeworlds and the official

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knowledge of the school. For both Hogan (1995:172), and Dunne, the 'virtues' concern themseleves ultimately with the motive of teaching as; "releasement or enablement, the venture of uncovering the tenor and scope of the pupil's ownmost promise." This occurs in the reciprocal dynamic of student also as teacher; and teacher also as learner.

Fostering identity, community and inclusiveness, through the creative arts

Maxine Greene (1990, 1994 & 2005) and Martha Nussbaum (2002) both champion teaching as releasement or enablement but strongly affirm the role of the arts, creativity and the narrative imagination as ways of uncovering the identities and human becomings of both teacher and learner. In an article entitled *Carpe Diem: The Arts and School Restructuring* (1994:494-504), Greene speaks of the potential of art and aesthetic education in the process of critical questioning, storytelling and authentic assessment; as ways of challenging the passivity and rigidity of schooling. She asserts the transformative dimension of the imagination to break through what she calls the "the crusts of conformity."

> No encounters can release information in the way engagement with words of art or aesthetic enactments can release it. Imagination, as is well known, is the capacity that enables us to move through the barriers of the taken for granted and summon up alternative possibilities for living, for being in the world.
>
> (1994:494)

In an attractive evocation of the power of poetry to reawaken, Greene (2005:80) proposes that; "to enter into a poem may be to come in touch with a lost landscape, a landscape of colour and smell and sound brought into a kind of rebirth by an act of imagination." Collective appreciation can encourage what Greene calls "a

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community of distinctive people, each entering from his or her own location, against his or her own lived experience" (1994: 495).

The potential of the arts to nurture sensitivity to multiculturalism; "to train the muscles of the imagination" as proposed by Nussbaum (2002:300) and to provide lenses of understanding to the heterogeneity of voices in contemporary classrooms, is a laudable goal. A goal that ensures the stranger is not invisible or 'othered' in increasingly diverse multicultural settings. Nussbaum also advocates the need to confront students with the experience of minority groups in their own society and of people in distant nations and to educate students to see complex humanity in places they are most accustomed to deny it.

Similarly Nussbaum (2002: 289-303) advocates the Socratic ability to criticize one's own traditions and to be able to reason logically so that no belief assumes authoritative truth based on traditional inheritance alone. She also advocates the ability to think as a citizen of the whole world, with ties of recognition and concern and; not just with the insular eye of the local, in a globalised world.

Greene (2000:277) also recognises the egalitarian potential of creativity in giving voice to all traditions. Thus Greene proposes an authentic, egalitarian dialogue that can serve as an antidote to Bourdieu's theory of reproduction of social structure (1986:13), and also as a possible alternative to Freire's concerns (1998:71),

regarding "the strong tendency that pushes us (teachers) to state that what is different is inferior."

Perhaps Greene's contention (2000:273) that schools and teachers themselves should play a significant part in the creation and fostering of community is an interesting response to what she perceives as one of the most essential undertakings in the school of the future where cyberspace communications rarely leads to "face to face relationships that enable persons to be open to one another.."

Empowering and Emancipatory Education (Freire & Shor)

Darder, Baltadona and Torres (2003:11) argue that; "critical pedagogy is committed to the development of a culture of schooling that supports the empowerment of culturally marginalised and economically disenfranchised students." The authors also outline the reproductive nature of schools in replicating within 'asymmetrical power relations' the values, privileges and culture of the dominant classes. It is therefore within this context that teachers are challenged "to recognise their responsibility to critique and transform those classroom conditions tied to hegemonic processes that perpetuate the economic and cultural marginalisation of subordinate groups" (2003:13).

Similarly, Shor, (1992) in *Empowering Education; Critical Thinking For Social Change* speaks passionately of the need for a high quality of education that

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empowers students as thinkers, communicators and citizens. Like Freire, Shor (1992:12), argues convincingly for a politically dynamic education, that infuses students with the capacity to ask 'why' in a curriculum that can never be politically neutral because; it either enables or inhibits the questioning habits of students.

> A curriculum that does not challenge the standard syllabus and conditions in society - informs students that knowledge and the world are fixed and are fine the way they are, with no role for students to play in transforming them.

Shor's committment to a critical democratic pedagogy has the potential to prevent *'endullment'* (the lethargic outcome of a passive, teacher authority curriculum) or *'performance strike'* (1992:20), that demoralises students and teachers in a sullen slow burning resistance, typical of the disenfranchised in some formal education settings.

Shor, influenced by the work of Freire, advocates a pedagogy that integrates cognitive and affective learning, to ensure that students' themes, languages, conditions and diverse cultures are given voice in a horizontal (not hierarchical) dialogical approach. Such an approach has the potential to prevent an anti intellectualism and future alienation from civic life. One of the challenges facing teacher education and curriculum reform generally is what Giroux (1983) called the deconstructing of the 'sedimented histories' of teachers' own experiences as students in traditional classrooms, where passive, competitive and authoritarian methods prevailed.

Freire's Critical Consciousness Model (1987) as outlined by Shor (1992, 127:128) also has the potential to help teachers explore; their own position with regard to knowledge and power within society, their position of power within schools and how it can be used to reproduce or transform the status quo. In the overall context, however, such a questioning and critical approach to education would guard against and help to ameliorate the climate of consensus and soundbite that frequently prevails in the information society. For Freire, vocationalism inherently implied a commitment to changing the status quo of dehumanizing oppression, brought about by the unjust structure of capitalist society, and the validation of: courage, agency and egalitarianism required, to achieve this cause.

Harnessing the emotional geographies of teaching for civil society

Hargreaves (2002) champions the affective dimension of teaching and learning and the importance of emotional intelligence in how teachers relate to both students and parents. Noddings (1999, 2003 & 2006) espouses the intrinsic importance of *relational care* in teaching and learning environments.

She distinguishes between caring in a pratgmatic sense about student achievement and the more relationally embedded motivations of caring that embrace: *attentiveness, mindfulness, engrossment, other centred motivational energy, interdependence, reciprocity, confirmation and affirmation*. For Noddings the aim of education is about producing competent, caring, loving and lovable people but the emphasis on academic achievement and testing often compromises this aim.

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Hargreaves also (2002:3) protests that; "often, emotions are excluded from professional standards' frameworks, teacher evaluation schemes, student learning targets and even from the basic idea of 'reflective practice' in teaching." Hargreaves emphasises the concept of emotional 'infection' as promoted by Denzin, (1984:89). This acknowledges the spreading of our own moods of optimism, enthusiasm or pessimism or apathy to others. Hargreaves conceptualises a map of the *Emotional Geographies* of human interaction in teaching that help us conceptualise the teacher's relationship with others. These are particularly relevant in an Irish context because of the expanding and changing role of the teacher in an era of multiculturalism, special needs integration, and community partnerships. The typography of this geography reflects cross cultural variations (2002:10-23) but may enable teachers to reflect on a framework that complements the aspirations of Noddings. Hargreaves framework includes:

Sociocultural distance; relates to the capacities and adaptabilities of typically middle class teachers (very relevant in an Irish context) to engage with and care for working class students and their home cultures or to embrace multiculturalism or special needs education. Does the teacher conspire to reproduce the social structure as feared by Bourdieu (1986:17), or to challenge it; as proposed by Habermas, (2001: 215)?

Moral distance; relates to teachers positioning their own sense of purpose in relation to that of students or parents. Can teachers relax the impulse to control as espoused by Noddings? Is there consonance or dissonance; negative or positive feedback? How do teachers elicit the feedback and approval they so yearn from parents if they are more inclined to maintain a distance from them? This zone of moral distance has interesting possibilities for teachers in the emerging society of Ireland, where there is 'a cosmopolitan values-dynamic' and possibly dissonance between; traditional, authoritarian and religious school environments and more liberal home environments.

Professional distance; concerns the relational dynamic. An intimate *family* model of caring is currently favoured over a more traditional *bureaucratized* 'classic professionalism' model of distance and autonomy. How do school cultures impact on this and; can newly qualified teachers adopt a non conformist approach and be encouraged to assert their own preference within the context of overall school ethos?

Political distance; this reflects how teachers experience power and powerlessness in their relationship with educational stakeholders; parents, school managers, department of education and science, colleagues, students, or other agencies. This is interesting also in the context of the increased participation now expected of teachers in whole school planning, middle management, and leadership roles.

Physical distance; the school policy of professional distance may actually be played out in spatial terms embracing the 'proxemics' of classroom design including; traditional autocratic 'teacher at top' or more 'community of learning' horseshoe shapes. It may also be evident within the overall school and how public space is designed for student, parent or community meetings.

This framework provides a very practical lens, through which teachers can formulate and interrogate their vision of education, one that Hargreaves conceptualises as a social mission (2003:54), one that should "embrace the creation of social capital within the community and within civil society. Without social capital, there is no civil society and without civil society there is no democracy." Similar to Noddings (2003), Hargreaves argues, that teachers also need to address other human values and educational purposes in addition to those that make a profit, "purposes concerned with character, community, democracy and cosmopolitan identity" (2003:57). Collectively, this bricolage of theorists (briefly explored and representing diverse philosophical perspectives), offers teachers a particularly emancipatory perspective; that honours the 'human agency' potential of education; to become, to improve and to transform at individual and societal level. The theorists provide a colourful lens to conceptualise the practice of emancipatory teaching and encourage resistance, within the context of an increasingly instrumentalist society. Hargreaves also provides a framework with which to ensure that the emotional compass of teachers points towards egalitarianism.

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