

A Small Number of Student Teachers Reflect on the Role of Religion in Schooling

Marino Institute of Education

Name: Sara Reilly

Word Count: 10,851

Supervisor: Dr. Rory McDaid

Submitted to Marino Institute of Education on 10th May 2018

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme leading to the award of the degree of Professional Master of Education, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. I further declare that this dissertation has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this Institute and any other Institution or University. I agree that the Marino Institute of Education library may lend or copy the thesis, in hard or soft copy, upon request.

Signature: _____

Sara Reilly

Date: 10th May 2018

Abstract

This research project explores the reflections of a small cohort of postgraduate student teachers on the role of religion in schooling in Ireland. All participants are postgraduate students at Marino Institute of Education, and are due to graduate in the autumn of 2018. Participants were purposively targeted to achieve a balance between those who had and had not undertaken a school placement in an Educate Together National School (ETNS). Using a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews to gather data, and an anti-positivist paradigm of analysis, several key themes emerged. These included teacher integrity and authenticity, faith formation, initial teacher education, and knowledge of the primary education sector.

The omnipresent nature of religious ethos in primary schools was found to constitute an obstacle to teacher authenticity and integrity. Faith formation was found to be extremely time consuming, with a prevailing view that parents should play a more active role in their children's faith formation. Experiences of the shared ITE experience were extremely rich and varied. Despite generally positive dispositions towards alternative school patrons such as Educate Together (ET), widespread uncertainty of what teaching in such a context would entail prevailed. Although not prevalent, negative and vicarious experiences were cited as the root of reservations at the prospect of teaching in ET settings.

Acronyms

Central Statistics Office (**CSO**)

Certificate in Religious Studies (**CRS**)

Community National School (**CNS**)

Continuing Professional Development (**CPD**)

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (**DEIS**)

Educate Together (**ET**)

Educate Together National School (**ETNS**)

Initial Teacher Education (**ITE**)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual (**LGBT**)

Marino Ethics in Research Committee (**MERC**)

Marino Institute of Education (**MIE**)

Newly Qualified Teacher (**NQT**)

Professional Master of Education (**PME**)

Religious Education (**RE**)

White, Hetrosexual, Irish, Settled, Catholic (**WHISC**)

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Rory McDaid for all his guidance and encouragement; without his help, this research project would not have been possible.

I am also greatly indebted to all the participants whose interviews made the conducting of this research so enjoyable and rewarding.

Finally, I wish to thank Paul, Ger, Brian, Finn and, last but not least, Graham for the infinite love and support they continue to show me.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	1
Abstract.....	2
Acronyms.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Table of Contents.....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	6
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	11
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	26
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion.....	35
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	50
Reference List.....	53
Appendices.....	61

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project explores the reflections of a small cohort of Professional Master of Education (PME) students at Marino Institute of Education (MIE) on the role of religion in schooling. Specifically, the research project investigates how participants reflect on the place of religion in their own compulsory education, their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at MIE, and the role of religion in schooling into the future. As Ireland's population has become increasingly diverse in recent years, there have been calls for this diversity to be reflected in Irish schools (Coolahan et al., 2012; CSO, Darmody & Smyth, 2017; Devine, 2005; O'Toole, 2015; Parker-Jenkins & Masterson, 2013). However, approximately 96% of primary schools remain under religious patronage, with roughly 90% under the patronage of the Catholic Church (DES, 2017). Equally, despite a diversification of the pupil population, the teaching profession remains homogenic and "decidedly of Irish ethnic origin" (Coolahan, 2003, p.30).

Although there is a plethora of literature advocating the diversification of Ireland's predominantly denominational education system (Coolahan et al., 2012; Daly, 2009; O'Toole 2015;), there is a relative dearth of consideration afforded specifically to teachers (Heinz et al, 2018). It is hoped that this research project gives voice to the reflections of prospective teachers on the place of religion in schooling. This chapter outlines the research aim and design, as well as my personal motivations for undertaking the project and a summary of key findings.

Research Aims

The research question which the project sought to answer was:

- How do a small number of PME students reflect on the role of religion in schooling in the Irish context?

From this initial question, several sub-questions emerged, namely:

- What role did religion play in participants' compulsory education?
- How have the participants experienced religion as part of their ITE at MIE?
- What role do participants see for religion in schooling into the future?

The project was particularly interested in the reflections of student teachers on ET, the largest school patron not associated with one particular denomination, from the perspective of both those who had and had not completed a placement in an ETNS.

Research Design

The sample consisted of eight PME students, approaching the conclusion of their ITE at MIE. Of the eight participants, three had undertaken at least one placement in an ETNS, while the remaining five had taught in Catholic schools only, and it was along this binary that the sample were purposively targeted. Owing to the highly subjective nature of experiences relating to both religion and education, a qualitative methodological approach was pursued, employing a semi-structured interview schedule to yield detailed and personal data. Analysis was then conducted through an anti-positivist lens, involving the systematic coding of transcripts line by line. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology employed in greater detail.

Motivation

In addition to its social and academic salience, the research is of great personal value to me. For the most part, I have enjoyed the privileges associated with my belonging to Ireland's ethnic majority, namely white and middle-class. My own primary education at an Educate Together National School (ETNS) in South Dublin perhaps shielded me from the potential impediments of the one minority aspect of my identity, my atheism, or rather lack of Christian capital (Blumenfeld & Jaekel, 2012; Riswold, 2015; Seifert, 2007). Although aware that the position of Catholic primary education as the default model might prove professionally and personally compromising for me as teacher, similarly to the experience described by one participant, I had not anticipated the Catholic ethos of MIE. Equally, I was somewhat taken aback by the homogeneity of my fellow postgraduate ITE entrants, in terms of ethnicity, identity and education. I was therefore interested to explore my peers' reflections on the place of religion in education, with a particular emphasis on their experiences and perceptions of the ET model of patronage, the site of my own formative educational experience.

Key Findings

The most prevalent and emotive themes to emerge from the data yielded were challenges to teacher authenticity and integrity, faith formation in the primary classroom, the place of religion in ITE, and knowledge of school patronage, specifically ET. As well as concerns for pupils outside the religious minority, the meaningfulness and educational value of Religious Education (RE) for Catholic pupils was challenged. The status of primary schools of a Catholic ethos as default

proved an obstacle to the professional integrity and authenticity of student teachers, and was highlighted as a potential barrier to the diversification of the teaching population in Ireland.

The interview sample transpired to have a rich variety of experiences of their shared time at MIE, particularly with regard to their experience of religion. They were, however, unanimous in their belief that obtaining a Certificate in Religious Studies (CRS), equipping them to secure employment in Catholic school, was essential due to the dearth of alternative school patrons. The CRS is an optional module for all students undergoing ITE at MIE, but is “a necessary prerequisite to teaching in Irish Catholic primary schools” which “offers foundational knowledge and skills for communicating the Catholic faith to children” (Mary Immaculate College, 2018).

Perhaps the most conflicting views to emerge related to student teachers’ knowledge, experience and perceptions of ET. Those participants who had undertaken a placement at an ETNS were unanimous, although not alone, in their endorsement of the ET model. The encouragement of critical thinking, child-centred focus and acceptance of religious diversity were cited as positive aspects of ET.

Conversely, varying levels of uncertainty were reported as reservations about pursuing posts in ET settings upon graduation by all participants, with some citing their own Catholic education as the being at the root of this reservation.

Although not witnessed firsthand by participants, negative aspects of ET included excessive parental involvement, a lack of teacher authority and status, an extreme level of independence afforded to pupils.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the context for my professional and personal engagement in the research project, outlining my aims and the design of the project, as well as her personal motivation for conducting such research. The chapter concluded with a brief summary of the key findings which emerged upon analysis of the data. These findings are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4, Data Analysis and Discussion.

The next chapter will contextualise the research project by reviewing existing literature salient to the study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Historical Context

Ireland has a long and complex history of education and schooling, particularly at primary level, as outlined in great depth by broad spectrum of academics (Coolahan, 1981; Walsh, 1976; Walsh, 2016; Mawhinney, 1996). The Stanley Letter of 1831 (Stanley, 1831) is the original cornerstone of the primary education system in Ireland. Stanley's aim was to "unite in one system children of different creeds" (Stanley, 1832, p.2), namely Catholic and Church of Ireland, undoubtedly influenced by tensions associated with Ireland's colonial status. However Stanley's proposal of mixed, non-denominational primary education met with much resistance and, after "long and bitter struggles" (Coolahan, 2014, p.474), although primary education "remained *de jure* a mixed system, it became *de facto* a denominational one" (Coolahan, 2014, p.474).

Despite these early power struggles, perhaps the greatest problem regarding primary education in Ireland, from the perspective of those outside the hegemonic norm, stems from Bunreacht na hÉireann (Oireachtas, 1937). Article 42 commits that "the State shall provide for free primary education", thereby effectively privatising the primary education system; the State would be responsible for funding, but not directly providing, primary education for all the children of the State (Oireachtas, 1937). By committing to the provision *for* rather than the provision *of* primary education, the Irish State divested control of, and responsibility for primary education. This facilitated denominational congregations, often at parish rather than

national level, taking responsibility for the primary school sector. It is remarkable to think that a single syllable preposition could have such a monumental impact on the Irish education system for almost a century to come. Reflecting the majority Catholic population and the status of the Catholic Church, the default state of Irish primary education became denominational, specifically Catholic. The position of denominational patronage was strengthened by the introduction of the integrated curriculum in 1971, allowing religious instruction to permeate all aspects of daily school life (Hyland, 1996). Rule 68 of the Rules for National Schools, drafted some six years earlier, decreed that “of all parts of the school curriculum, Religious Instruction is by far the most important, as its subject matter, God’s honour and service, includes the proper use of all man’s faculties” (Oireachtas, 1965, p.38)

Contemporary Developments

In recent years, Ireland’s increasingly diverse population has led to an increased discourse in multi-denominational education and interculturalism (Bryan, 2009; Devine, 2005; Darmody et al., 2011; Parker-Jenkins & Masterson, 2013). It would be fallacy to believe that Ireland was homogenous prior to recent inward immigration (Bryan, 2009; Keane & Heinz, 2014), however this religious and ethnic diversity became more apparent and could no longer be ignored. In March 2011, then Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn announced the establishment the *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector*. He appointed an advisory group to gather and assess the various views and perspectives submitted including those of parents, patrons, teachers and the wider community. The Forum’s Report, published in April 2012 recommended steps that could be taken to ensure that the

education system at primary level could “provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none” (Coolahan et al., 2012, p.3). The Forum sought to address “the mismatch between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society” (Coolahan et al., 2012, p.1). However extricating religion and education has proven an onerous task, as for many people “religious belief plays a sensitive and intimate part in people’s lives. In Ireland, the religious dimension has been very interwoven with the primary schools’ way of life” (Coolahan et al., 2012, p.2/3).

Rule 68 was abolished in January of 2016, in accordance with the *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector’s* recommendations. Upon its abolition, then Minister for Education and Skills Jan O’Sullivan termed the rule “archaic” and “anachronistic” (*Irish Times*, 2016). This action was perhaps the first tangible step towards meaningful inclusivity in the “culturally and religiously diverse” Ireland depicted in the Forum’s Report (Coolahan et al., 2012, p.1).

Voices dissenting against the inherited system of denominational education have been audible for many years; a key moment in Ireland’s educational history came in 1978, with the establishment of the Dalkey Project, the result of extensive lobbying by parents and educators, resulting in Ireland’s first multi-denominational school. The Dalkey Project was the first embodiment of Educate Together, itself established in 1984 (Hyland, 1996). Áine Hyland outlines in great detail the subtle resistance and lack of support with which the parents were met by both church and state (Hyland,

1996). Despite these struggles, the Educate Together model has grown exponentially since Hyland's paper, increasing from 14 to 82 in number at primary level, as well as the addition of 9 second level schools (ET).

Alternative Patronage

According to the 2016 Census, there were 30,747 of primary school age children in Ireland are of no religion, approximately 5.6% (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2016). As of 2002, those identifying as of no religion now constitute the second largest religious grouping in Ireland (CSO, 2012). This trend is especially prevalent in urban areas, and specifically in Dublin, where the percentage who identify as Catholic is at its lowest, and rates of those identifying as Muslim are at their highest (CSO, 2016). The vast majority of the population still considers itself Roman Catholic. However, this is not necessarily reflective of the demand for schools under Catholic patronage; the majority of children attending Educate Together schools are, in fact, Catholic (Educate Together, 2017). Furthermore, as O'Toole succinctly explains, domination does not have to be actively exercised for a power imbalance to exist; the simple fact that the default model of primary education is denominational, and in the vast majority of instances, Catholic, constitutes a serious imbalance (O'Toole, 2015).

Secularism

Secularism has a complex and ambiguous history, with definitions varying greatly (Taylor, 2009); however the requirement of "some kind of separation of church and state" (Taylor, 2009, p.xi) is universally accepted. Taylor (2009) sees secularism as

comprising three goods, which he equates to the three principles of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity of religion. Furthermore, Taylor considers the French model of *laïcité* a polemic example which neglects the fraternity of religion (that all religious voices must be included and heard), which insists that public spaces “must be purified of any religious reference” (Taylor, 2009, p.xx).

Simply put, *laïcité*, which eludes direct translation, requires religion to be contained to the private sphere; the public sphere, including education, therefore maintains a secular, non-denominational outlook (Massignon, 2011). In the mainstream media, *laïcité* is often portrayed as, at least partially, responsible for the rise of Islamist extremism in France, due to a lack of integration of immigrants. Some (Resnik, 2010) posit that France’s policy of uniform assimilation has led to feelings of isolation of minority communities. Other commentators refute such suggestions, finding that *laïcité* in schools is generally viewed positively by students, who do not feel it impinges on their religious freedom (Massignon, 2011). Nevertheless, there are calls for a redefinition of secularism, shifting from the fetishisation of religion as a threat to the state, towards the appropriate response to diversity by a democratic state (Taylor, 2011).

In the Irish context, O’Toole posits that by divesting a proportion of denominational schools to alternative patrons so as to afford parents greater choice of schools, “a window of opportunity” is being missed, namely a more radical reform introducing non-denominational state schools (2015, p.92). As Daly (2009, p. 241) keenly observes:

[...] this constitutional synthesis of communitarian and liberal conceptions of religious freedom operates as a function of the power relations between religious groups. Specifically, the compromising of liberty conscience through the devolution of public education to denominational interlocutors entails an unequal distribution of religious liberty between differently situated individuals (2009, p.241).

Crucially, defenders of the denominational do not object outright to the existence of alternative educational patrons, assuming that an alternative is viable, with adequate “critical mass” (Daly, 2009, p.237). However, such defences of the denominational model “implicitly make individual religious freedom subject to certain empirical and demographic contingencies which are arbitrary from a political-moral standpoint” (Daly, 2009, p.250).

Patronage of Irish primary schools remains a contentious issue, with many voices positing a wide variety of ideologies; some vehemently defend what they consider the necessity of faith formation in schools (Lane, 2009), while others are vocal in their support of multi-denominational patrons such as Educate Together (Hyland, 2006), and some hold state-run, non-denominational schools (O’Toole, 2015). Undoubtedly, the question of denominational patronage has moral and legal considerations regarding human rights and the potential for discrimination on religious grounds (Fischer, 2016; Mawhinney, 2007). As Mawhinney succinctly summates, “the nature of the integrated curriculum found in Irish primary schools suggests that its practice fails to respect international guarantees of religious

freedom: its teachings are doctrinal; its aim is one of indoctrination; opting out is impossible and alternative acceptable schooling is extremely limited” (2007, p.395). Both Mawhinney (2007) and Daly (2009) emphasise the importance of the presence, or absence, of alternative school patrons to the default (Catholic) denominational model in determining whether human rights of minority religious beliefs are breached. As Mawhinney advises, “religious bodies should not be placed in a monopoly position, either functionally or geographically, in providing a particular service” (2007, p.403). Furthermore, both outline how the Irish Constitution and current legislation support the existing default of denominational education, justifying “ the practice of the ‘integrated curriculum,’ and the legislative validation of religious discrimination in enrolment” (Daly, 2009, p.250). Simply put, for many, the central issue with denominational education at primary level in Ireland is not its existence outright, but rather its privileged status as the default model in most communities.

Teacher Motivation and Sustenance

There remains a severe paucity of literature regarding teachers’ perceptions of ET and diverse school contexts more generally. Perhaps it is useful, therefore to consider existing research exploring the motivation to become a teacher, particularly in environments often deemed challenging. It is also helpful to consider this through Bandura’s work on “self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1997) relating to teacher motivation. Many teachers cite the feeling of ‘making a difference’ in a child’s life as a sustaining force during challenging times in their professional lives (Kitching et al., 2007). The relative lack of places on ITE courses, compared to demand in Ireland generally yields high-ability teachers and for many years teacher attrition at primary level was

almost negligible (Kitching et al, 2007). Nonetheless, despite a dearth of academic research, a surge of (often temporary) emigration among young teachers is well documented in the mainstream media (McMahon, 2017; O'Brien, 2018). Factors including lower pay scales and difficulty securing permanent posts are anecdotally associated with this increase (O'Brien, 2018), however no empirical research exists to support this claim.

A study of factors influencing teacher motivation and sustenance at local, national and global levels found that “to neglect the significance of the individual school and the ethos of support [...] is a serious admission” (Kitching et al., 2007, p.16). Global factors, such as the status of the profession, and national factors concerning pay, were found to be of relative unimportance. Kitching et al. (2007) posit that positive experiences, such as feelings of ‘making a difference,’ greatly outweigh negative experiences, and emphasise that positive experiences are not merely defined by the absence of negative experiences. A belief that experiences of positive emotions merely serve to counteract negative emotions is an “oversimplification [which] ignores the fluctuations and co-occurrences of positive and negative feelings that characterise a teacher’s day” (Morgan et al., 2010, p. 201). It was also found that the regularity of emotional experiences rather than their intensity had the greater impact on teacher sustenance (Morgan et al., 2010).

Milanowski et al. (2009) explore whether incentives, such as salary increases, loan forgiveness and subsidies for further professional development, affect retention rates for teachers in schools with high poverty and low student achievement. Their study

focuses on South Wisconsin, USA and investigates whether “incentives provide a compensating differential for potentially unattractive job characteristics associated with poverty, low student achievement, and racial or ethnic differences” (2009, p. 2). The findings were somewhat surprising, with principal reputation, curriculum flexibility and the presence of induction programmes all considered as more influential than financial incentives. However, if media reports are to be believed this intrinsic motivation is finite, with many Irish teachers emigrating, even if only temporarily (McMahon, 2017; O’Brien, 2018).

Teacher Authenticity and Integrity

“Authenticity is a description of identity. Something that is authentic, is aligned in its identity; it is self-identical; it is what it says it is” (Bialystok, 2016, p. 314). Bialystok (2016) proceeds to question the prevailing belief that authenticity is, by definition, a desirable quality in teachers. Regardless of whether authenticity is required to be a good teacher, it is perceived almost universally to be.

Perceived self-efficacy is "concerned not with the number of skills you have, but with what you believe you can do with what you have under a variety of circumstances" (Bandura, 1997, p.37) Factors influencing self-efficacy beliefs include experiences of mastery, vicarious experiences, verbal messages from others, and physiological and emotional responses. Thus, self-efficacy can be impacted by external factors. Furthermore, perceived self-efficacy affects willingness to tackle, and persistence with, challenging situations (Bandura, 1977, p.79/80).

Student teachers are particularly susceptible to the impact of external factors on their sense of self efficacy. Chong et al. (2011), in a study of the shifting identities and values of student teachers, found that their belief in the value of teaching remained unchanged over the course of their ITE, supporting a belief in the intrinsic value of teaching as a sustaining and motivating force for teachers. Conversely, factors associated with teacher self-efficacy experienced a sharp decline over the duration of ITE; “for the pre-service teachers, this aspect of identity is particularly vulnerable to change from one practicum experience to the next, as each school placement can differ widely” (Chong et al., 2011, p. 34). This may be in part due to overly idealistic notions of teaching upon entry to ITE, notions which transpire to be unsustainable and unrealistic in the primary classroom.

It has been suggested “that the prospect and experience of entering a third level learning and future professional space that is permeated by a religious, predominantly Catholic, ethos will cause conflict between personal beliefs and professional requirements for many potential and actual ITE applicants and entrants” (Heinz et al., 2018, p.243). Furthermore, in terms of professional longevity and sustenance, it is important to consider “how may ‘faking’ religious beliefs or feeling a ‘fraud’ impact on teachers’ conscience, morality and professional integrity in the longer term?” (Heinz et al., 2018, p. 242). Research has found that the majority Catholic patronage of primary schools constitutes a barrier to authenticity for some lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGBT) teachers (Fahie, 2017; Neary, 2012). LGBT teachers articulated an exasperated sense of being “complicit in perpetuating a dogma” (Fahie, 2017, p.15) by teaching in Catholic primary schools.

A sense of authenticity does not affect teachers alone; its presence can be keenly felt by pupils, and is perceived by them as comprising expertise, passion, unicity, and an appropriate distance (De Bruyckere & Kirschner, 2017). De Bruyckere and Kirschner (2017) noted the impact and appreciation of informal moments in which teachers reveal aspects of their personal selves on pupils. Teacher authenticity was found to be perceived by secondary pupils as comprising expertise, passion, unicity, and an appropriate distance (De Bruyckere & Kirschner, 2017). De Bruyckere and Kirschner (2017) noted the impact and appreciation of informal moments in which teachers reveal aspects of their personal selves on pupils.

Homogeneity in Initial Teacher Education

Recent decades have been characterised by a dramatic shift in Ireland's economic status and demography (Keane & Heinz, 2016; Parker-Jenkins & Masterson, 2011; Bryan, Devine, 2005). For the first time in the State's history, net immigration began to outweigh emigration during the 'Celtic Tiger' era; furthermore, migrants were not those typically associated with the Irish diaspora. As Devine correctly notes:

[...] teachers as a group are not immune to this social change, and bring to their work a series of discourses on ethnicity, immigration and identity that both reflect and are influenced by the norms and values prevalent in society at large (2005, p. 52).

Research into teacher perceptions of increased diversity in the primary school classroom reveal classed and racialised assumptions about pupils' ethnicity, despite

teachers reporting almost exclusively positive experiences with migrant pupils. These perceptions were “underpinned by an assumption that integration implied blending and melting into the Irish way of life” (Devine, 2005, p.63). In this way, Roma children were routinely referred to using deficit language, while African children were deemed a positive presence, and Asian children defined by a strong work ethic. Middle-class pupils were found to be considered more desirable than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. As Devine succinctly puts it, “the teachers’ concepts of different immigrant groups cannot be divorced from their own positioning as white, sedentary, Irish middle-class professionals, resulting in feelings of affiliation and sensitivity to those who most appropriated this norm” (2005, p.64).

Others echo Devine’s concerns regarding the homogeneity of the Irish teaching population at primary level, due partially to the restrictive entry requirements, namely relative fluency in the Irish language (Leavy, 2005; McDaid & Walsh, 2016). If we accept that a dramatic diversification of the teaching profession is unlikely, in the short-term at least, “then the task of education faculty, then, will be to teach a white, monolingual, middle-class population of preservice teachers to teach an increasingly diverse population of children” (Leavy, 2005, p.160). Minority pupils, who do not see themselves represented in the teaching force, are further ‘othered’ by elements of schooling such as uniform and curriculum content, with tokenistic approaches to intercultural education (Parker-Jenkins & Masterson, 2013; McDaid, 2011).

A study of 2014 applicants and entrants to ITE (Heinz et al., 2018) found that Roman Catholics are “significantly overrepresented while those stating that they have no

religion are underrepresented in primary ITE cohorts compared to the overall population” (Heinz et al., 2018, p.241). However, the high proportion of participants who identified as Roman Catholic was not reflected in levels of religiosity, attendance at religious services, and support for religious ethos in schools (Heinz et al., 2018). There is therefore a discrepancy between religious self-identification and practice among ITE students, and potentially the teaching population at large.

Keane and Heinz posit that “[w]hite Irish teacher applicants have high levels of governmental national belonging capital,” and either consciously or unconsciously mobilise “this capital to position themselves in a place of power relative to those with either more passive national belonging capital or those with no national capital at all” (2014, p.520). It is suggested that this power dynamic has “significant implications” for ITE in terms of the “preparation of student teachers for teaching for diversity and social justice, particularly in relation to their identity work, pedagogical development and student support” (Keane & Heinz, 2014, p.520).

While much of the private sector, and public sector professions such as nursing, experienced diversification during the Celtic Tiger due to the combination of a booming economy and and strong inward migration, the teaching profession did not experience such heterogeneity (McDaid & Walsh, 2016). Instead, homegrown solutions such as the recognition of Hiberia were favoured. Some attribute this homegrown solution to “a state concern with exercising a strict regulatory authority over those to be imbued with the right to perform the highly moral act of reproduction of Irish society, a task long associated with the elementary education system”

(McDaid & Walsh, 2016, pp.154). From this perspective, the prerequisite for competency in the Irish language can be viewed “as a sieve through which only desired teachers may pass” (McDaid & Walsh, 2016, pp.154).

Research has found that, prior to undertaking a placement in a school assigned Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) status, a significant number of teachers admitted negative connotations relating to pupil ability and behaviour, and parental involvement (Slevin, 2013). However, upon completion of the placement, the vast majority of student teachers found their perceptions of educational disadvantage and diversity altered, while only a small minority had their pre-existing beliefs reinforced (Slevin, 2013). Thus, first-hand exposure to educational disadvantage impacted on attitudes towards it. There is a paucity of research regarding student teachers’ expectations and experiences of undertaking placements in ETNS. However, considering Slevin’s research (2013), it does not seem unreasonable to posit that increased familiarity and exposure to diverse school contexts, such as ETNS and CNS settings among ITE students, could have a similarly dramatic impact on their conceptions of ET and other minority school patrons.

The potential impact of ITE in preparing student teachers for diverse school contexts should not be underestimated, however it does not appear to be adequate at present (Lalor, 2013). Apprehension among NQTs at the prospect of teaching in ET schools, attributable to a lack of exposure to them, has been noted (Lalor, 2013). Furthermore,

Lalor cites a prevailing view that the denominational orientation of teacher training colleges in Ireland as an impediment to teaching in diverse school contexts (2013).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter chronicles the research process, from research design and piloting, through data gathering, and finally to analysis of the data obtained. The rationale for selecting a qualitative research method in the form of semi-structured interviews is explored. My use of purposive sampling, according to whether or not potential participants had undertaken a placement at an ETNS, is also outlined. Ethical consideration and my own positionality are also discussed.

Positionality

I am cognisant of the potential impact of my own identity upon the research project (Bourke, 2014). Naturally, the researcher's socio-economic, cultural and religious background, and ideological stance represent a credible bias in both data collection and analysis (Denscombe, 2010). Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to expand on my own positionality regarding the research question; I am a white, heterosexual female. I was raised as, and remain, an atheist. With the exception of a two year period while teaching in Spain, I have lived for the entirety of my life in South Dublin. I myself attended an ETNS, before completing my secondary education at an all-girls Catholic school. During my ITE, I have completed two placements at the same ETNS, as well as two placements in Catholic national schools.

Qualitative Method

A qualitative research method seemed the only viable option, as the emotive subject matter of the research question demands "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973, pg.10)

for interpretation and interrogation. The rationale for opting for a semi-structured interview, in contrast to a more rigid structure, was that it would allow me as a researcher to garner a richer insight into the perceptions and experiences of participants (Bryman, 2012). As religion, and its place within the education system, is a highly contentious and emotive issue (Lane, 2013; Dunne, 1991), the complexities are best served by a qualitative, descriptive approach, rather than a more binary quantitative methodology. Although the prepared instrument would inevitably be informed by my own personal standpoint, a semi-structured approach would afford participants the opportunity to emphasise issues and experiences they considered important, rather than on my own preconceived notions of the answers certain questions might yield. Again, owing to the highly personal nature of the data being requested, one-to-one interviews seemed the optimum medium in which to gather rich, honest opinions.

An Interpretivist Paradigm

As Maxwell notes, the use of an established paradigm affords the researcher a foundation of “coherent and well-developed approach to research” (2009, p.224).

Paradigms are not merely methodologies, but rather lenses through which to view the world (Cohen et al., 2011). Interpretivism is a paradigm often associated with qualitative research (Brown & Dowling, 1998; Bryman, 2012; Maxwell, 2009), with the researcher attempting to make sense of participants’ meaning of the world (Creswell, 2009). Through an interpretivist paradigm “the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participant’s views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2009, p.8), thus an interpretivist paradigm allows for the simultaneous

existence of multiple realities and constructions of meaning (Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2011). In contrast to a positivist paradigm, which seeks an objective reality, interpretivism espouses the belief that meaning is negotiated between participants, including the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, owing to the contentious nature of role of religion in education (Lane, 2009), the focus of an interpretivist paradigm “individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation” (Creswell, 2009, p.4) rendered it an appropriate lens through which to view the research project.

Data Collection

Prior to each interview the researcher provided each participant with an information letter (appendix 1) and a form of consent (appendix 2) see appendix. As Brown and Dowling (1998) note of a qualitative approach, “often, the interviewer is already known to the interviewee, and no introduction is necessary” (p.74); as all participants were PME II students at MIE, and the researcher is currently undertaking that same course, this was indeed the case. Although this pre-established rapport allowed for free-flowing interviews, the potential impact of participants’ prior knowledge of the researcher on the data yielded cannot be ignored. In many ways, my pre-existing relationship with the participants afforded me the opportunity to delve deep into their experiences and reflections. Conversely, participants would have been aware to greater or lesser extents of my own positionality; consequently, some participants may have been reluctant to be entirely candid, if their views were at odds with their perception of my own views.

Ethical Considerations

“Religion is a controversial subject at the best of times. Equally, education is a contested space. Trying to talk about religion *and* education together is not easy” (Lane, 2009, p.5). Owing to the sensitive subject matter of the research project, and the tenuous position of the participants as emerging newly qualified teachers (NQTs), confidentiality occupied paramount position (Bell, 2010). The principle of confidentiality is that any information the participants’ may provide should in no way divulge their identity (Cohen et al., 2011). So as to ensure this, I did not use the names of the participants but assigned each individual a pseudonym. In addition, I anonymised or omitted any details which had the potential to reveal a participant’s identity, such as the names of specific locations and schools. It is through confidentiality that the researcher protected, and will continue to protect, the interviewee’s privacy (Cohen & Manion, 2011).

Furthermore, it was vital that the researcher consider “the effects of the research on participants, and act in a way as to preserve their dignity” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.84). With that, I assured the interviewees of this preservation within the information letter, the consent form and at the commencement of interview. I reminded the participants that engagement with the research project was voluntary; the interviewees were not compelled to take part and were free to withdraw at any time. In accordance with the Marino Ethics in Research Committee (MERC), a research proposal was submitted, outlining ethical considerations associated with the project, and detailing steps necessary to protect participants from any potential risk. To conclude, the ethical considerations were of low risk and my research proposal was approved by MERC.

Pilot Study

Having drafted and re-drafted my methodological instrument, I set about conducting a pilot interview, as advocated by Brown and Dowling (1998), with the aim of assessing whether the instrument would yield appropriate results and set participants at ease. The pilot participant was a female student from within the PME cohort, who had undertaken two of her four placements in Educate Together schools. It may also be informative to note that the participant held an undergraduate degree in religion, and was therefore very knowledgeable of world religions. In hindsight, it may have been informative to have also included in the pilot sample a participant who was less familiar with Educate Together, as the pilot participant was representative of less than half the final sample.

During the pilot interview, I felt that several questions posed were slightly repetitive, although the answers yielded were not so. Upon completion of the interview, I put these issues to the participant, who disagreed. Rather than finding the questioning repetitive, the participant expressed gratitude at the opportunity to clarify and refine her answers. I therefore decided not to alter the instrument immediately, but to see how the remainder of the interview schedule unfolded. However, when I began to interview participants who had not completed a placement in an Educate Together school, Q. 26 (What is your understanding of: Multi-denominational/ Equity based? Child-centred? Democratically run? Co-educational?) elicited great hesitation and tangible discomfort from participants. After one such interview, I probed the participant as to their feelings towards this line of questioning, to which she

responded that it was akin to an academic examination. Therefore, this question was dropped from subsequent interviews, unless the participant was very familiar with the ethos of Educate Together. Appendices 3 and 4 show pilot interview schedule and the amended schedule respectively.

Interview Sample

In the selection of the research sample, I employed “purposive sampling” (Bryman, 2012, p.418), a “strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide” (Maxwell, 2009, p.235). My initial intention was to an even split of participants who had and had not completed at least one placement in an ETNS, although this was not achieved in the final sample. As only a relatively small number of the approximately 60 PME II students had any experience teaching in an ETNS, the potential sample fulfilling this piece of criterion was extremely limited. It therefore cannot be assumed that their views are reflective of the PME II cohort at large. Furthermore, the employment of purposive sampling, a “non-probability sampling technique” (Bryman, 2012, p.418), does not lend itself to generalisations about the ITE population at large. This point would appear particularly salient to to sample in question, as only two participants self-identified as practicing Catholics, a disproportionately low level relative to general ITE population (Heinz et al., 2018), while three identified as atheist or of no faith. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show a breakdown of the sample according to several categorisations.

Table 1.1: Gender and Religion

Participant	Gender	Religion
Amber	Female	Lapsed Catholic
Hannah	Female	Lapsed Catholic
Emily	Female	Catholic
Lucy	Female	Catholic
Ferdia	Male	Atheist
Susie	Female	Cultural Catholic
Conn	Male	Atheist
Róisín	Female	No religion

It should be noted that, unlike other studies which consider teachers' religious beliefs (Heinz et al., 2018), in keeping with an anti-positivist paradigm I elected to request that participants define their religious beliefs and practices in their own words, rather than employing the categorisations used by the CSO. Thus, comparison of religious identities is difficult, as definitions are subjective and may differ from participant to participant.

Table 1.2: Education History & School Placements at MIE

Participant	Education History	Placements in ETNS	Placements in Catholic NS
Amber	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	2	2
Hannah	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	0	4
Emily	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	0	4
Lucy	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	0	4
Ferdia	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	0	4
Susie	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	0	4
Conn	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	1	3
Róisín	Catholic (Primary & Secondary)	1	3

Data Analysis

Transcription, as well as requiring the researcher to spend much time contemplating the data gathered, has the benefit of “keeping intact the interviewee’s words” (Bryman, 2008, p.453), and was therefore employed as the first step of data analysis. In order to further analyse the data yielded from the interviews conducted, I undertook a thematic coding approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2011), useful for its refinement of the “thick descriptions” yielded by qualitative research (Geertz, 1973, p.6). Upon embarking on analysis of the data gathered, it was first necessary to scrutinise the interview transcripts, systematically applying codes to each line. I then grouped these codes according to common concepts, from which several key themes emerged (appendix 5) Regarding these

analysis process, it is important to acknowledge the subjectivity which undoubtedly influenced my identification of and focus on certain themes which I deemed relevant to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the research determined that themes be selected according to their relevance and intensity rather than merely their prevalence.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the rationale behind the research paradigm employed, and the methodological process followed in order to obtain the required data. In addition, I have detailed my own positionality with the intention of offering an insight into any potential unconscious bias on my part as researcher. Furthermore, I have explained my targeting of the project's sample, and any ethical considerations associated. The next chapter will analyse the data gathered according to four key themes: teacher authenticity and integrity, faith formation in the primary classroom, initial teacher education, and knowledge of the primary education sector, specifically ET.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter will address the overarching objective of the research project, to analyse the reflections of participants on the role of religion in their own school and ITE, and its role over the course of their careers. Participants' knowledge, experience and perceptions of Educate Together varied hugely, as did their experiences of the PME at MIE, and their own primary education. Nevertheless, several themes demanded particular attention; these areas included teacher authenticity and integrity, faith formation in the primary school classroom, experiences during ITE, and knowledge of the school patrons within the primary system, with particular emphasis on ET. Many participants reported anxiety associated with the conflict between their own religious beliefs and default Catholic ethos of primary education in Ireland. I will now discuss and analyse each of these findings, with reference to pertinent literature.

Teacher Authenticity and Integrity

As Palmer (2007) explains, "teaching holds a mirror to the soul" (p.102), an activity which occurs at the "dangerous intersection of personal and public life" (p.112).

Several participants reported that the Catholic ethos of the majority of schools posed a challenge to their professional authenticity and integrity, having experienced or anticipated the necessity either to lie to pupils about their own beliefs, or to contradict the ethos of the school. Although anxiety regarding authenticity did not emerge universally across the sample, the theme emerged strongly for several participants.

Participant 8 recounted her conversations with pupils on placement in a Catholic school:

And y'know, they're asking questions and, like, 'And what do you do if you don't believe in God?' As a placement student I don't know how to deal with this. I know how I'd like to talk to you about this but, y'know I - I can't. Em, and you just have to be like 'I'm Catholic...I'm a great Catholic' [Laughs]. And you're just lying to them! So it's a bit weird.

Several other participants echoed this concern regarding the impact of religious ethos on their professional integrity and sustenance. Hannah expressed a belief that, although willing to teach in a Catholic school as an NQT, her status as a religious outsider would eventually prove an impediment: "I think that my own beliefs could definitely become a hindrance long term...if I were to work in a Catholic school long term." Indeed, as Coolahan et al. note, non-religious teachers are often left feeling "frustrated and hypocritical in teaching religious education and faith formation to their classes" (2012, p.99).

Hannah added:

[...] to be honest because I'm gay as well [...] not every Catholic school is going to have an issue with that, but you do have to be careful. And yeah, going into a Catholic school, and if that's not in keeping with their ethos, that could cause a tension as well.

These concerns are in keeping with research (Fahie, 2017; Neary, 2012) detailing

the challenges to authenticity and integrity faced by LGBT teachers in religious schools. The strong desire expressed to be one's authentic self within a professional context suggests that the façade employed by many teachers (Kitching, 2009) is one of necessity rather than choice.

Faith Formation in the Classroom

Faith formation, specifically Catholic, was deemed potentially problematic and exclusionary of pupils outside the Catholic majority by the entire sample, although several participants claimed not to have witnessed exclusion of minorities during faith formations, due to the religious homogeneity of many classrooms:

“Possibly because I was in a rural school as well, em, there wouldn't have been much diversity in the school [...] and then in my own teaching as well, I wouldn't have had much diversity in my classes.” Such an observation is reminiscent of those challenged by Daly (2009); although rural populations may be predominantly Catholic, their relative geographical isolation makes the position of denominational schools as default all the more problematic.

Others disagreed with sacramental preparation in primary schools on ideological rather than practical grounds, believing it to belong outside the sphere of public education, such as Hannah:

I don't really see it as being, like, a teacher's area. Like, I don't see it as being an area of education? It's an area of faith, it's a question of faith, so I think that it should be done between the family and the Church, without the school being involved.

The same participant went on to question the educational legitimacy of “dogmatic” faith formation in the classroom:

I would question the value of it, because what are the students learning? OK, they might be learning off a prayer for their Confirmation, or learning about something Jesus did...but are they learning to think? Are they learning to question? I do wonder about the value of it, to be honest.

Echoing Ruairí Quinn’s concerns about the time dedicated to RE relative to curricular areas such as physical education and science (as cited in Holden, 2013), even those participants who did not express an explicit objection to faith formation in the classroom raised the issue of efficient use of limited time. Lucy noted that RE occupies:

[...] too much time during the school day though, to be honest. Yeah, it just sort of takes over. There are monthly masses and they take so much preparation time. And I saw it cutting into time for maths and things like that, so yeah.

Beyond logistical concerns regarding the place of faith formation in an already crowded curriculum, others took issue with the very idea of teachers being responsible for children’s faith formation. Although a lack of parental involvement in faith formation emerged as problematic with just a fraction of participants, it emerged

strongly for those few. Amber expressed the belief that parents are ultimately responsible for their children's faith formation, saying:

Personally, I think if parents feel strongly enough about their children being prepared for various sacraments [...] then they should be happy to do it after school. I don't think it's something that, if you feel passionate enough about it, I don't think you should be demanding that it has to be done during the school day.

Considering this reflection, it is noteworthy that Article 42 of Bunreacht na hÉireann "acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide [...] for the religious [...] education of their children" (Oireachtas, 1937, p.166).

Ferdia expressed a similar desire for parents to embrace a more active role in their children's faith formation as the "natural and primary educator" (Oireachtas, 1937, p.166):

I think it should be done by the parents outside of school. If they think it is important enough to do....A lot of Catholic parents are only Catholic out of tradition...don't practise their religion regularly and expect the education system to look after their child's religious beliefs[...] I think the parents having a greater hand in it would either strengthen their own belief, by getting involved in it properly, or make them realise that they aren't a true Catholic. And not bother with it at all.

Róisín, recalled an instance from her own primary education in which the wishes of a non-religious parent regarding her daughter's sacramental preparation were overridden by pressure from other pupils:

I remember making our Confirmation, there was one girl and her mam was of no faith and, like, had basically told this girl "I don't think you should make your Confirmation," and the girl came into school and was like, humming and hawwing, and wasn't sure about it. And then... basically had a nervous breakdown because it was, like, the peer pressure from her classmates doing it. So she was doing it for the wrong reasons.

Concerns about the suitability of the primary classroom as a place for sacramental preparation were also raised, with several participants deeming in-class faith formation as problematic from the perspective of Catholic and non-Catholic pupils, and teachers alike. Hannah felt that sacramental preparation would be made more meaningful if undertaken outside of the primary school context:

I don't think it should take place in the classroom. I think that, em, it's more meaningful to happen outside of school because...if you doing it in school, maybe it's forced on you a little bit , or it's just something you're doing or that you don't care about.

Róisín echoed this belief, citing Ireland's peripheral position in this regard:

I think, like, if it's done outside school - and even though in [in large English city] they had so much religion during the day [...] faith

formation was completely outside school with their church...which I think just does make it more meaningful because then...that's...you're doing it out of your own spare time. It's not just because everyone else is doing it. So yeah.

In terms of inclusivity, many reported pupils opting out of RE and several of those who had not witnessed exclusion cited a lack of diversity as a possible explanation for this seeming inclusivity. Although a homogeneous classroom undoubtedly minimises the chance of exclusion, this assumption takes for granted that an absence of pupils opting out of formal RE guarantees inclusion. No consideration is afforded to those who, for a variety of reasons, do not opt out but nonetheless experience exclusion. As Hannah noted: "It's assumed that it's inclusive, because it's almost like 'Well, why wouldn't you be Catholic? Why wouldn't you, y'know, believe this? Why wouldn't you take part in this?' But I don't think it always is." A lack of awareness often characterises Christian privilege (Blumenfeld & Jaekel, 2012). Thus, correcting the status of Catholic denominational schools as the "default" (Daly, 2009, p.238) "those whose privilege is being dismantled will be asked to see that their beliefs, while no longer the norm, are still respected" (Seifert, 2007, p.16).

Initial Teacher Education

All participants undertook their ITE as postgraduate students at MIE and all are due to among the cohort of 2018 graduates. However the data yielded at interview depicted a variety of perceptions of this shared experience, particularly with regard to the religious ethos of the college. As discussed by a wealth of academics (Leavy,

2005; Devine, 2005; Heinz, 2011; Heinz et al., 2018), the role of primary teacher in Ireland is often synonymous with an identity that is female, Catholic, heterosexual and white or WHISCS (Tracy, 2000 cited in Bryan, 2010). It is possible that many potential ITE entrants are deterred by these assumptions and the anticipation of an overtly religious ethos permeating both ITE and their later teaching careers (Heinz et al., 2018). This sentiment was reflected in Hannah's recollection: "Em...I was always apprehensive going into - I mean, training as a teacher in Ireland. I was always very apprehensive about the religious aspect." Hannah went on to detail how, as a sixteen year old contemplating primary teaching at undergraduate level, she visited another ITE institution:

And I remember walking in, and there was just this massive photograph on the wall of all these nuns. And I was like, I actually can't study here. Like, I can't spend three/four years here, studying under...y'know, being expected to, em, to...carry out religious education when I just don't believe it.

It was only after completing an undergraduate degree in another field, followed by several years spent teaching abroad that she returned to Ireland to undertake ITE. Part of her decision to attend MIE was her impression of a less "institutionalised" or "old-fashioned" college than the ITE institution she had visited as a teenager. In light of this finding, the power of religious iconography in ITE institutions should not be underestimated in the discourse surrounding the diversification of the teaching profession, as those deterred from applying for ITE courses naturally do not feature in examinations of religious diversity among ITE applicants (Heinz et al., 2018).

The general consensus was that religion did not play a major role in the life of a PME student at MIE by default, although many optional religious services were available. There were, however, several dissenting voices with regard to the optional nature of MIE's denominational ethos. Although most participants did not remark on the religious ethos of MIE, perhaps reflecting a tendency to comply with, rather than reject or endorse RE (Heinz et al., 2018), Ferdia expressed disappointment at the amount of time dedicated to preparation to teach in ETNS, CNS or other non-Catholic contexts, "considering the disgraceful amount of religious input we had," and felt that if he were to pursue a post in an ETNS, much independent reading would be necessary. This observation echoes the onerosity facing ITE regarding the diversification of Irish society (Leavy, 2005; Lalor, 2013), not just in terms of the homogeneity of entrants (Heinz et al., 2018), but also in terms curricular content and the denominational ethos of ITE institutions.

Róisín recalled how taken aback she was upon entry to MIE: "I didn't realise it was religious. It kind of confused me, I was like, 'Oh, God! It's denominational!'" She then proceeded give an anecdotal account of an interaction between another PME student and the school placement department at MIE; the student expressed an interest in undertaking her ten-week placement in a Church of Ireland school, but was told that she was almost certain to be unsuccessful due to the school's denominational ethos.

Hannah, who had completed a placement in an ETNS reported that, to her knowledge, all of the teachers had trained either at Hibernia, or in the UK. Although she qualified this claim by stating that the school was relatively small, with a single stream, she was nonetheless struck, noting:

It was unique that I was coming from Marino. And I don't know if that may be because they do shy away from the religious aspect of it a little bit. So yeah, I thought that was interesting.

Knowledge and Awareness of the Sector

Owing largely perhaps to their experiences on placement during ITE, participants' knowledge and perceptions of Educate Together varied significantly across the sample. It is similarly noteworthy that positive attitudes towards ET, such as a preference for teaching in an ETNS as an NQT or for sending their own children to an ETNS, were more prevalent among those who identified as belonging outside the Catholic Church.

Despite a generally positive disposition towards ET schools in principle, a degree of reservation rooted in uncertainty at the prospect of teaching in an ETNS as an NQT was tangible in all interviews, albeit to varying degrees. Amber recalled:

[...] before I went in [to an ETNS] I was concerned about, like, when people sneeze can I say 'Bless you'? Or do I have to change how I speak to not be excluding anyone because that would be a sort of Christian/Catholic phrase to use? [...] because part of the curriculum is

teaching about other faiths, maybe that I wouldn't be as knowledgeable as I should be in those faiths to be able to really teach them properly.

Others had reservations which ran deeper than simple uncertainty as to what might be expected of them, which might easily be rectified. Ferdia reported having heard of ET "that they are not very structured... and don't have many rules."

At first Susie's reservations about ET eluded description: "But...Educate Together...I - I don't know...I just have, like, a bad feeling about them." However, she went on to illustrate her reservations with several anecdotal accounts from teachers she knew, such as friends and the mother of her boyfriend: "... the stories I've heard. Just about - about parents, really. The involvement of parents in the school...and they've kind of, like, just disrupted the learning, basically [...] the parents coming in in the morning, that was tough." Susie proceeded to claim that parental permission was required for a teacher in an ETNS to request that pupils apologise to each other. Such anecdotes are very much at odds with research (Lalor, 2013) highlighting parental engagement as one of the strengths of ET, thanks to the democratically run nature.

Susie expressed something of an internal conflict regarding the widespread practice of ET schools operating on first name terms, and the idea of:

The whole thing is [...] the teachers are kind of equal to the kids, everyone is [...] just treated equally. But then, it's hard to be a teacher in that sense. Like, even you know, the whole name thing in ET [...] the

teacher's are called by their first names, so...you're kind of, I don't know, brought down. Like [...] your sense of authority...you don't have as much authority in your teaching role.

Another incident related involved an NQT receiving a visit from the Inspectorate as part of her probation:

The inspector was, like, eating a biscuit and having a cup of tea down the back of the class or something, and one of the children was like, "Oh, em...excuse me, why are you allowed to eat now and we're not allowed to eat now?" So that was just her example of, like, how they - the children just, eh, can be challenging, I suppose [...] just that whole 'sense of equality' thing was a challenge for her.

Thus for Susie, and to a lesser extent for Ferdia, anecdotal accounts of ET, rather than ITE, appear to have impacted on teacher self-efficacy. It is salient to note that other participants may have shared these concerns, but were less forthcoming, perhaps resulting from an awareness of my positionality. It is equally noteworthy that these reservations, although nonetheless valid, were based on vicarious experience (Bandura, 1997) rather than personal observation, as neither participant had completed a placement in an ETNS. In terms of self-efficacy as noted by Bandura (1997), vicarious experiences are quickly usurped by personal ones; thus the opportunity to succeed in an ETNS has the potential to transform perceptions.

Amber remembered anticipating “an absence of religion [...] that a person’s religion sort of wouldn’t be spoken about that much” prior to undertaking a placement in an ETNS, due its the multi-denominational nature. Such an expectation is in keeping with Daly’s (2009) observation that secularism is often viewed as non-religious rather than religiously neutral. She went on to explain that during her first placement in an ETNS religion did not feature heavily in conversation, something she attributed to the fact that she was teaching a junior infants class. However, in her second ET placement, she was struck that, far from an absence of religion, “dialogue with each other about various different concepts from the perspective of various religions” was very much the norm. Thus, in this instance the participant’s preconceived notions of ET were not reinforced, just as undertaking a placement in a DEIS setting disproves many negative connotations regarding educational disadvantage (Slevin, 2013). Undoubtedly perceptions of ET founded on hearsay are not helpful in the ongoing discourse regarding school patronage. As Róisín noted:

And even I remember someone saying ‘I don’t want to work in an ET school because they don’t deal with Christmas’ [...] that’s just an idea that you have that’s not real. And that puts people off [...] people just have these preconceived ideas of ET schools. Even if they’ve never been in one, they’ve just heard these things...you know, ‘The kids are wild!’ [...] ‘They don’t know how to sit down!’ and all this kind of stuff. Like, it’s not like that at all!

Perhaps a requirement by ITE institutes for all student teachers to complete a placement in a diverse school context, such as ET would allow meaningful personal experiences to eclipse more vicarious interactions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although participants' observations and experiences of religion and education varied greatly, several themes emerged as highly salient to the research question.

Participants broadly expressed frustration regarding the time consuming nature of faith formation within the primary classroom, claiming that it often encroaches on core curricular areas. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the exclusion of pupils of minority faiths and none, with several participants questioning the educational value of the activities undertaken by pupils opting out of RE in Catholic settings. Some participants spoke of an assumption of inclusion due to apparent homogeneity in the classroom, something which cannot be taken for granted, considering Ireland's increasingly multicultural population and the rapid growth of those identifying as belonging to no religion. Furthermore, challenges to the meaningfulness of in-school faith formation undertaken by the Catholic majority emerged strongly for some participants.

The prevalence of Catholic ethos as default is characterised as an obstacle to a sense of teacher authenticity and integrity, as many participants recall and anticipate instances in which they are faced with either concealing a part of their identity, or

flouting the school's denominational ethos. Although the entire sample completed the Certificate in Religious Studies, deeming its possession tantamount to a necessity, several participants doubted their professional longevity in a Catholic primary school, owing to these challenges to their professional authenticity and integrity.

Participants' knowledge and experience of the sector appears to have influenced both their selection of school placements and their willingness to teach in an ETNS as an NQT. Although expressed to varying degrees, some level of uncertainty regarding ET was unanimous among participants. Having all come through the Catholic education system themselves, such a sense of unfamiliarity and anxiety is perhaps to be expected, particularly from those who had not undertaken a placement in an ETNS (Slevin, 2013). Certain negative perceptions of ET permeated some reflections, with the implication that the unfamiliarity of ET had undermine self-efficacy, largely based on vicarious rather than personal experiences (Bandura, 1997).

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this chapter will summarise the findings of this research project, as well as highlighting relevant observations, recommendations, and limitations of the research.

Summary of Findings

The prevalence of faith formation and sacramental preparation in the classroom, as well as the integrated nature of the primary curriculum, were found to be problematic for both pupils and student teachers outside the homogenous norm, namely of the Catholic faith. Furthermore, the meaningfulness and educational value of RE for Catholic pupils was challenged.

The status of primary schools of a Catholic ethos as default proved an obstacle to the professional integrity and authenticity of student teachers, and was highlighted as a potential barrier to the diversification of the teaching population in Ireland.

The interview sample transpired to have extremely varied experiences of their shared time at MIE, particularly with regard to their experience of religion. They were, however, unanimous in their belief that obtaining a Certificate in Religious Studies, equipping them to secure employment in Catholic school, was essential due to the dearth of alternative school patrons.

Perhaps the most conflicting views to emerge related to student teachers' knowledge, experience and perceptions of ET. Those participants who had undertaken a placement at an ETNS were unanimous, although not alone, in their

endorsement of the ET model. The encouragement of critical thinking, child-centred focus and acceptance of religious diversity were cited as positive aspects of ET.

Conversely, varying levels of uncertainty were reported as reservations about pursuing posts in ET settings upon graduation by all participants, with some citing their own Catholic education as the being at the root of this reservation.

Although not witnessed firsthand by participants, negative aspects of ET included excessive parental involvement, a lack of teacher authority and status, an extreme level of independence afforded to pupils.

Limitations

All participants were final year PME students at MIE, with no students from other institutions being interviewed. Therefore, the findings are applicable only to one ITE setting and can be considered limited. Another limitation of this research project relates to the sample size; in-depth, one-to-one interviews were conducted with eight pre-service primary teachers studying for the PME at MIE, representing only a fraction of the total postgraduate ITE community, which is itself a minority route to the primary teaching profession.

Equally, owing to the small fraction of PME students who had undertaken one or more placements in an ETNS, the experiences of these participants cannot be assumed to be representative, as they relate to only a small number of the 82 ETNS schools nationwide.

Observations and Recommendations

This project adds to the small body of research documenting the motivations, experiences and attitudes of student teachers regarding religion and education, however, there remains a relative dearth of such research. The limitations of this research project reveal opportunities for future research regarding the role of religion in education. In terms of assessing the impact of ITE on student teachers' reflections, a study contrasting thoughts before and after ITE could prove informative. Similarly, research comparing the reflections of undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers has the potential for informative findings.

This research focused on the reflections of a small cohort of PME students at MIE; further research exploring the reflections of prospective teachers across all ITE institutions in Ireland would undoubtedly be beneficial to the ongoing discourse surrounding the place of religion in schooling. Furthermore, the reflections of existing teachers would add greatly to the discourse surrounding the role of religion in schooling.

Particularly salient to this research project were the reflections of student teachers who identify as atheist, of no faith, or non-practicing Catholic, voices seldom heard in discussions surrounding the role of religion in Irish schools. As documented, much research focuses on the needs of pupils from religious minorities in a system where Catholic remains the default school ethos, but what of non-Catholic teachers? More research is needed in this regard to better understand the implications of Christian (or in this case Catholic) privilege for the teaching profession in Ireland.

Reference List:

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bell, J. (2010). *Doing your research project* (5th Ed). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Bialystok, L. (2016). Should teachers be authentic? *Ethics and Education*: 10(3), 313–326.
- Blumenfeld, W.J. & Jaekel, K. (2012). Exploring levels of Christian privilege awareness among preservice teachers. *Journal of Social Issues*. 68 (1), 128-144.
- Bourke, B. (2014). Reflecting on the research process. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(33), 1-9.
- Brown, A., & Dowling, P. (1998). *Doing research/reading research : a mode of interrogation for education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Bryan, A. (2010). Corporate multiculturalism, diversity management, and positive interculturalism in Irish schools and society. *Irish Educational Studies*: 29 (3), 253-269. doi:10.1080/03323315.2010.498566
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Central Statistics Office. (2017). *Census of Ireland 2016: Profile 8*. Stationery Office, Dublin.

Chong, S., Ling, L.E. & Chuan, G.K. (2011). Developing Student Teachers' Professional Identities - An Exploratory Study. *International Education Studies*: 4(1), 30-38.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education* (7th Ed.), Abingdon Oxon: Routledge.

Coolahan, J. (2014). 'The shaping of Ireland's faith-based school system and the contemporary challenge to it.' In *International Handbook of Learning, Teaching and Leading in Faith-Based Schools* (Ed. J.D. Chapman, S. McNamara, M.J Reiss & Y. Waghid), Dordrecht: Springer.

Coolahan, J. (2003). *Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science.

Coolahan, J. (1981). *Irish Education: History and Structure*. Dublin: Institute for Public Administration.

Coolahan, J., Hussey, C. & Kilfeather, F. (2012). *The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum's Advisory Group*. Dublin: INTO.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Patronage-and-Pluralism-in-the-Primary-Sector/The-Forum-on-Patronage-and-Pluralism-in-the-Primary-Sector-Report-of-the-Forums-Advisory-Group.pdf>

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. London: SAGE Publications.

Daly, E. (2009). Religious Freedom as a Function of Power Relations: Dubious Claims on Pluralism in the Denominational Schools Debate. *Irish Educational Studies*, 28 (3): 235-251. doi:10.1080/03323310903335377

De Bruyckere, P., Kirschner, P.A. & Hui, S.K.F. (2017). Measuring teacher authenticity: Criteria students use in their perception of teacher authenticity. *Cogent Education*, 4(1), N.PAG. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2017.1354573

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide : for small-scale social research projects*. (4th Ed). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Denscombe, M. (2007). *The good research guide : for small-scale social research projects*. (3rd Ed). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Department of Education. (1965). *Rules for National Schools under the Department of Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Devine, D. (2005). Welcome to the Celtic Tiger? Teacher responses to immigration and increasing ethnic diversity in Irish schools. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 15(1), 47-70.

Dunne, J. (1991). 'The Catholic School, the Democratic State and Civil Society: Exploring the Tensions,' in *The Catholic School in Contemporary Society*. (Ed. N. Brennan). Dublin, CRMS.

Fahie, D. (2017). Faith of our fathers – lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of religion in Irish denominational primary schools, *Irish Educational Studies*, 36:1, 9-24. doi: 10.1080/03323315.2017.1289700

Fischer, K. (2016). *Schools and the Politics of Religion and Diversity in the Republic of Ireland: Separate but Equal?* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Heinz, M., Davison, K. & Keane, E. (2018) 'I will do it but religion is a very personal thing': teacher education applicants' attitudes towards teaching religion in Ireland, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(2), 232-245.

Holden, L. (2013). 'Quinn questions amount of school time spent on religious education.' *Irish Times*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/quinn-questions-amount-of-school-time-spent-on-religious-education-1.1358847>

Hyland, Á. (2006). 'Challenges for the Irish Education System for the Next Generation and Beyond: the Issue of School Patronage.' Dublin: Educate Together.

Hyland, Á. (1996). 'Multi-Denominational Schools in the Republic of Ireland 1975-1995.' at a Conference Education and Religion organised by C.R.E.L.A. at the University of Nice. 21-22 June 1996.

Hyland, Á., & Bocking, B. (2015). Religion, Education, and Religious Education in Irish Schools. *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 18(3), 252-261.

Keane, E. & Heinz, M. (2016). Excavating an injustice?: nationality/ies, ethnicity/ies and experiences with diversity of initial teacher education applicants and entrants in Ireland in 2014. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(4), 507-527. doi:10.1080/02619768.2016.1194392

Kitching, K. (2009). Teachers' negative experiences and expressions of emotion: being true to yourself or keeping you in your place? *Irish Educational Studies*, 28(2), 141-154. doi: 10.1080/03323310902884201

Lane, Dermot A. (2013). *Religion and Education: Reimagining the Relationship*. Dublin: Veritas.

Lalor, J.P. (2013). 'Educate Together: An Inclusive Response To The Needs Of A Pluralist Ireland?' Dublin: DURAS.

Leavy, A. (2005). 'When I meet them I talk to them': the challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education. *Irish Educational Studies*, 24(2 /3) September 2005, 159/177.

Lynch, K. and Lodge, A. (2002) *Equality and Power in Schools: Redistribution, Recognition and Representation*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Mary Immaculate College. (2018). *Certificate in Religious Education and Teaching*.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.mic.ul.ie/education/Isre/Pages/CertRelEd.aspx>

Massignon, B. (2011). Laicite in practice: the representations of French teenagers. *British Journal Of Religious Education*, 33(2), 159-172.

doi:10.1080/01416200.2011.543598

Mawhinney, A. (2007). Freedom of religion in the Irish primary school system: a failure to protect human rights? *Legal Studies*. 27 (3), 379–403.

doi: 10.1111/j.1748-121X.2007.00062.x

McDaid, R. & Walsh, T. (2016). 'Challenging the homogeneity of the elementary school teaching force in Ireland.' In C. Schmidt & J.Schneider (Eds.), *Diversifying the Teaching Force in Transnational Contexts: Critical Perspectives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

McMahon, Á. (2017). Where have all of Ireland's teachers gone? *Irish Times*.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/where-have-all-of-ireland-s-teachers-gone-1.3045138?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishti>

[mes.com%2Fnews%2Feducation%2Fwhere-have-all-of-ireland-s-teachers-gone-1.3045138](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/where-have-all-of-ireland-s-teachers-gone-1.3045138)

McMahon, Á. (2016). Rule prioritising religion classes in primary schools abolished.

Irish Times. Retrieved from:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/rule-prioritising-religion-classes-in-primary-schools-abolished-1.2514202>

Milanowski, A.T., Longwell-Grice, H., Saffold, F., Jones, J. Schomisch, K. & Odden, A. (2009). Recruiting new teachers to urban school districts: what incentives will work? *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, 4(8), 1-13.

Morgan, M., Kitching, K., & O'Leary, M. (2007). 'The psychic rewards of teaching: examining global, national and local influences on teacher motivation.' AERA Annual Meeting, Chicago.

Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496123.pdf>

Morgan, M., Ludlowb, L., Kitching, K., O'Leary, M. & Clarke, A. (2010). 'What makes teachers tick? Sustaining events in new teachers' lives.' *British Educational Research Journal*: 36(2), pp. 191–208.

Neary, A. (2013). Lesbian and gay teachers' experiences of 'coming out' in Irish schools. *British Journal Of Sociology Of Education*, 34(4), 583-602.

doi:10.1080/01425692.2012.722281

O'Brien, K. (2018). Bruton says strong economy to blame for teacher shortages. *Irish Times*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/bruton-says-strong-economy-to-blame-for-teacher-shortages-1.3349781?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Feducation%2Fbruton-says-strong-economy-to-blame-for-teacher-shortages-1.3349781>

O'Donoghue, T. & Harford, J. (2014). The conception, construction, and maintenance of the identity of Roman Catholic female religious teachers: a historical case study from Ireland. *Teachers and Teaching*, 20(4), 410-426.

Oireachtas. (1937). *Bunreacht na hÉireann (Constitution of Ireland)*. Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair.

O'Toole, B. (2015). 1831–2014: an opportunity to get it right this time? Some thoughts on the current debate on patronage and religious education in Irish primary schools. *Irish Educational Studies*, 34(1), 89-102.

doi:10.1080/03323315.2015.1010704

Palmer, P.J. (1997). The Heart of a Teacher Identity and Integrity in Teaching *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 29(6), 14-21.

doi:10.1080/00091389709602343

Parker-Jenkins, M. & Masterson, M. (2013). No longer 'Catholic, White and Gaelic': schools in Ireland coming to terms with cultural diversity. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(4), 477-492. doi: 10.1080/03323315.2013.851438

Resnik, J. (2010). Integration without assimilation? Ethno-nationalism in Israel and universal laïcité in France. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 20(3), 201-224.

Riswold, C.D. (2015). Teaching the College "Nones": Christian Privilege and the Religion Professor. *Teaching Theology and Religion*. 18, (2), 133-148.

Robson, C. (2011) *Real world research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*. Chichester: Wiley.

Santoro, N. (2015). The drive to diversify the teaching profession: narrow assumptions, hidden complexities. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 18:6, 858-876. doi:10.1080/13613324.2012.759934

Seifert, T. (2007). Understanding Christian Privilege: Managing the Tensions of Spiritual Plurality. *About Campus*. 12(2), 10-17.

Slevin, M.P. (2013). *The DEIS placement: student teachers' perceptions of educational disadvantage*. Dublin: MIE.

Stanley, E.G. (1831). *The Stanley Letter*.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Boards-of-Management/Stanley-letter-1831-Boards-Of-Management.pdf>

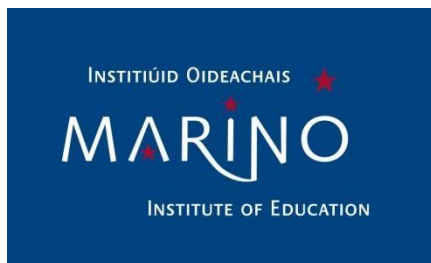
Taylor, C. (2009). 'What is secularism?' In *Secularism, religion and multicultural citizenship*. (Eds. G.B. Levey & T. Modood). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. (2011). 'Why we need a radical redefinition of secularism.' In *The power of religion in the public sphere*. (Eds. J. Butler, J. Habermas, C. Taylor & C. West). New York: Columbia University Press.

Walsh, T. (2016). 100 years of primary curriculum development and implementation in Ireland: a tale of a swinging pendulum. *Irish Educational Studies*, 35 (1), 1-16. doi:10.1080/03323315.2016.1147975

Walsh, T. (1976). *Primary Education in Ireland, 1897-1990: Curriculum and Context*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Appendix 1: Information Sheet



Dear participant,

Thank you for considering participation in my research project.

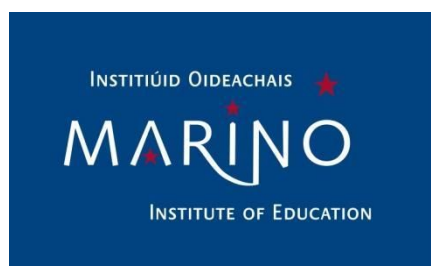
I am undertaking this research for my dissertation as part of the Professional Masters in Education at Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I wish to explore student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Educate Together. The research will comprise of one-to-one, in-depth interviews regarding participants' experiences and understanding of Educate Together.

- Participation in this research project is completely voluntary; participants can withdraw from the project before, during or after the interview process. In such circumstances, all relevant data will be destroyed.
- All interviews will be audio recorded, and later transcribed into written format.
- All data gathered during interviews will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- Extracts from interviews with participants may be quoted in my dissertation, although participants will remain anonymous and any identifying features will be removed.
- Data will be stored securely for 13 months after submission of my dissertation; the data will then be destroyed.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at XXX, or by email at XXX.

Many thanks,
Sara Reilly

Appendix 2: Consent Form



I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I understand that participation involves an interview regarding my perceptions of Educate Together.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's dissertation as part of the PME course at Marino Institute of Education.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained securely for 13 months after the submission of the researcher's dissertation.

I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for 13 months after the submission of the researcher's dissertation.

I understand that I am free to contact the to seek further clarification and information.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

	ETNS	CNS	Catholic	Other
Placement 1				
Placement 2 (SEN)				
Placement 3				
Placement 4				

- What type of primary school did you attend?
- Can you think of any particularly memorable teachers?
- What role did religion play in your primary school?
- What type of secondary school did you attend?
- Now, can I ask you about your own religious beliefs and practices?
- Did your own religious beliefs motivate you to become a teacher?
- Now, can I speak with you about the PME. Firstly, was there something specific that attracted you to Marino?
- What role do you think religion has in the life of a PME student in MIE?
- Can I speak with you about the placements you have undertaken in Marino?
Have you undertaken a school placement in an ETNS/Catholic/CNS?
- If you did not take a placement in an ETNS school, did you consider it? If not, why did you not?

- What were your experiences of teaching in the ETNS? (Probe on ethos and Learn Together).
- What were your expectations before you went to the school? How did these measure up against your experience in the school?
- What were the biggest learnings for you on that placement?
- Have you undertaken a school placement in a Catholic denominational school? What were the main differences between the two school types?
- Given the choice, which school type would you rather teach in as an NQT? Why? Why not the other school types?
- Do you have any particular reservations about teaching in an ETNS/ Catholic denominational school?
- Do you feel that RE is an important part of the primary school timetable?
- In your experience, both as a teacher and as a pupil, is RE an inclusive part of the primary school day?
- What are your thoughts on faith formation/ sacramental preparation? What about those who do not wish to partake in faith formation or sacramental preparation?
- How do you feel the Learn Together curriculum compares to similar Catholic programmes, such as Alive-O or Grow in Love?
- Have you completed the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies? Why?
- Have you completed the certificate in Multi-Belief and Ethical Curricula in Diverse School Contexts? Why?
- What is your understanding of the ethos of ET?
- Do you feel that your ITE has adequately prepared you to teach in an ETNS?

- What is your understanding of:
- Multi-denominational/ Equity based?
- Child-centred?
- Democratically run?
- Co-educational?
- If geography, etc. was not an issue, what type of school would you like to send your own children to? Probe for why, especially if there is a discrepancy?
- Do you find there to be a discrepancy between your ideological beliefs and your willingness to teach in a particular school type?

Appendix 4: Amended Interview Schedule

	ETNS	CNS	Catholic	Other
Placement 1				
Placement 2 (SEN)				
Placement 3				
Placement 4				

- What type of primary school did you attend?
- Can you think of any particularly memorable teachers?
- What role did religion play in your primary school?
- What type of secondary school did you attend?
- Now, can I ask you about your own religious beliefs and practices?
- Did your own religious beliefs motivate you to become a teacher?
- Now, can I speak with you about the PME. Firstly, was there something specific that attracted you to Marino?
- What role do you think religion has in the life of a PME student in MIE?
- Can I speak with you about the placements you have undertaken in Marino?
Have you undertaken a school placement in an ETNS/Catholic/CNS?
- If you did not take a placement in an ETNS school, did you consider it? If not, why did you not?

- What were your experiences of teaching in the ETNS? (Probe on ethos and Learn Together).
- What were your expectations before you went to the school? How did these measure up against your experience in the school?
- What were the biggest learnings for you on that placement?
- Have you undertaken a school placement in a Catholic denominational school? What were the main differences between the two school types?
- Given the choice, which school type would you rather teach in as an NQT? Why? Why not the other school types?
- Do you have any particular reservations about teaching in an ETNS/ Catholic denominational school?
- Do you feel that RE is an important part of the primary school timetable?
- In your experience, both as a teacher and as a pupil, is RE an inclusive part of the primary school day?
- What are your thoughts on faith formation/ sacramental preparation? What about those who do not wish to partake in faith formation or sacramental preparation?
- How do you feel the Learn Together curriculum compares to similar Catholic programmes, such as Alive-O or Grow in Love?
- Have you completed the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies? Why?
- Have you completed the certificate in Multi-Belief and Ethical Curricula in Diverse School Contexts? Why?
- What is your understanding of the ethos of ET?
- Do you feel that your ITE has adequately prepared you to teach in an ETNS?

- If geography, etc. was not an issue, what type of school would you like to send your own children to? Probe for why, especially if there is a discrepancy?
- Do you find there to be a discrepancy between your ideological beliefs and your willingness to teach in a particular school type?

Appendix 5: Sample of Thematic Coding

<i>Hannah</i>	<i>Thematic Coding</i>
<p>Do you have any particular reservations about teaching in a Catholic denominational school?</p> <p>Yeah, I would. A lot. Now, I loved the schools that I've been in, they were really good school, I really enjoyed them. But the religious aspect I find very difficult because I don't believe myself and, y'know, you have kids asking a lot of questions. And, y'know, you are expected to deliver the RE curriculum but...I find it's going against my own beliefs. And that's something that I really...don't feel comfortable with.</p> <p>Because I feel like I'm lying to students.</p> <p>Em, so yeah, I just don't feel comfortable with that at all. And also, to be honest because I'm gay as well, and lot of...[Sighs] I don't want to, like... y'know, not every Catholic school is going to have an issue with that, but you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acknowledgement of good aspects of Catholic schools ● Positive personal experiences ● Religious ethos as a challenge; Outside the religious norm ● Expectancy; no discussion ● Authenticity and own moral code ● Lying to students ● Uncomfortable ● LGBT issues ● Some Catholic schools supportive of LGBT rights

do have to be careful. And yeah, going into a Catholic school, and if that's not in keeping with their ethos, that could cause a tension as well. So yeah, I would have reservations, even though the schools I have been in have been really good schools, and I've had really good experiences. So I think in the long term, I would struggle with teaching in a Catholic school.

- Need for caution
- Ethos vs. Self
- Conflict & tension
- Positive personal experience; apprehensive of possibility
- Longevity in Catholic school?