

## Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion – Research Report No. 27

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# Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion

## Final Report to the National Council for Special Education

Peter Hick<sup>1</sup>, Aikaterini Matziari<sup>1</sup>, Joseph Mintz<sup>2</sup>, Finn Ó Murchú<sup>3</sup>,  
Kevin Cahill<sup>4</sup>, Kathy Hall<sup>4</sup>, Catriona Curtin<sup>4</sup> and Yvette Solomon<sup>1</sup>

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November 2019

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# Foreword

The NCSE is pleased to publish the final report from the Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion study. We commissioned this research to examine the impact of changes introduced in Ireland in 2012 to initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. These changes included the extension of the length of programmes and the mandatory inclusion of modules on inclusive education and differentiation. The changes also introduced a minimum of two placement settings for student teachers, which ideally should incorporate a variety of teaching, class and school contexts, and educational needs.

This report is the second of two reports published as part of the study. The first report examined the content of ITE programmes, and the experience of student teachers and their teacher educators in their final year of ITE. For this report, the research team followed student teachers as they moved into their role as newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The research team surveyed and spoke to NQTs in both their first and second years as NQTs. They also spoke to principals of schools who employed some of these NQTs across both years.

When reflecting on their ITE experience, NQTs felt that the school placement experience was the most important factor in preparing them as inclusive teachers. Those who had placements in a special school, special class or in a special education teaching role, felt better prepared to teach diverse learners as NQTs. The authors argue that the quality of school placement and the extent to which partnership between schools and ITE providers aligns with the student experience in relation to inclusive practice, is as important as specific curriculum content or organisation.

The findings were echoed as the students become NQTs and highlight the central role that the school context and culture plays in the development of NQTs as inclusive teachers. There was substantial variation in the range of experiences and how well supported NQTs felt in their early jobs. NQTs often reported a perceived discrepancy between the emphasis on inclusive teaching advocated within ITE programmes, and the practices and contexts they experience in schools. The way in which schools approach inclusive teaching, support the NQT through creating opportunities for collaborative planning and team teaching, provide informal support and guidance as well as the quality of the mentoring support were very important.

Most NQTs noted that their ITE programme made a positive difference to their students' academic outcomes, and their social and emotional development. However, some areas where they reported the greatest challenges were in dealing with challenging behaviours, managing the time demands required for differentiation, and working with special needs assistants, other professionals, and parents. Experience over time helps NQTs overcome some of these challenges but felt ill prepared for liaising with parents and external professionals and this was a consistent finding across the data sources in the study.

We know that the most important factor in achieving good outcomes for all students is the quality of teachers and their teaching. The findings from this study contain important lessons for all those involved in educating and developing inclusive teachers so as to improve outcomes for all students, including those with special educational needs.

I would like in particular to thank the Teaching Council for all their assistance with this project.

**Teresa Griffin**  
Chief Executive Officer

**December 2019**

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# Acronyms

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorders
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
BOS	Bristol Online Survey
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Delivering of Equal Opportunity in Schools
EADSNE	European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (formerly EADSNE)
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITE4I	Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Research Project
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NBSS <sup>1</sup>	National Behaviour Support Service
NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NQT1	First-year NQT
NQT2	Second-year NQT
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PME	Professional Masters in Education
PDST	Professional Development Support for Teachers
PST	Professional Support Team
RQ	Research Question
SEN	Special Educational Needs

SESS <sup>1</sup>	Special Education Support Service
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SSE	School Self Evaluation
TES	Teacher Education Section (of the Department of Education and Skills)
UCC	University College Cork
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VTS <sup>1</sup>	Visiting Teacher Service (for students with hearing and visual impairments)

<sup>1</sup> This organisation no longer exists. The services is provided are now provided by the NCSE.

## Glossary

### **Cosán**

The Framework for Teachers' Learning

### **Droichead**

The Integrated Professional Induction Framework

### **Profile of Inclusive Teachers**

EADSNE (2012), *Teacher education for inclusion: Profile of inclusive teachers*. Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.

# Executive Summary

## 1. Background to the project

The context for this project is a growing international consensus on the importance of policy initiatives to both raise the quality of teaching (OECD, 2005) and to better prepare teachers to respond to increasing diversity in communities and classrooms (EADSNE, 2011).

All Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland were re-accredited from 2012, involving a reconceptualisation and a significant extension in length. Mandatory content was added related to inclusive teaching and a wider range of school placement experiences. Following this major reform, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) commissioned a study of 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' in 2015. NCSE's aim was: 'to establish what the components of inclusive/special education are within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland and to explore if the recent changes prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive using the indicators set out in the EASNIE's Profile of Inclusive Teachers'.

The **European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education** (EASNIE) conducted a four-year project on Teacher Education for Inclusion, producing a '**Profile of Inclusive Teachers**' (EADSNE, 2012) which identified key attitudes, knowledge and skills to be addressed by ITE to prepare all new teachers to become more inclusive. The NCSE proposed the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teaching as the baseline definition of inclusive teaching for the project and it is used by the research team as a framework and starting point for analysis.

The 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' project (ITE4I) ran from 2015-2018. The research team was led by Manchester Metropolitan University in partnership with University College Cork<sup>1</sup> and University College London, Institute of Education. We believe that this project is the first system-wide study of ITE for inclusive teaching in Europe. Its longitudinal approach, tracking the experiences of the first cohort of ITE students to graduate from the extended programmes through their first two years of teaching, lends further significance to this study.

---

1 Dr Finn Ó Murchú was at UCC at the start of the study and moved to MIC during the project, where he continued as a member of the research team.

## 2. Scope of this report

A previously published report on the first year of the project focused on the components of ITE programmes and the experience of student teachers: 'The Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Project, Report on Phases 1 and 2' (Hick, P., Solomon, Y., Mintz, J., Matziari, A., Ó Murchú, F., Hall, K., Cahill, K., Curtin, C. and Margariti, D., 2018). It drew on a range of data, including documentary analysis and surveys and interviews with student teachers and their teacher educators. The Report on Phases 1 and 2 presents the policy context and an initial review of the literature on understandings of inclusive education and ITE for inclusive teaching.

This Final Report covers the second and third years of the project in 2016/18. It analyses the progress of the student teachers recruited to the project in its first year as they moved into their first two years as newly qualified teachers (NQTs). It draws on data including surveys and interviews with NQTs in each of their first two years of teaching, together with interviews with principals of schools where NQTs are employed. The Final Report sets out the policy context for NQTs in Ireland and includes a review of international research literature on ITE for inclusive teaching and on NQTs' developing professional identities.

This project was commissioned under the title 'Initial Teacher Education for *Inclusion*', taking the EASNIE 'Profile of *Inclusive Teachers*' as a point of reference. Our literature reviews explore the definitional debates underlying the various meanings of terms such as 'inclusion' (Hick *et al.*, 2018). In this report, we use the terms '**inclusive teaching**' where appropriate to refer to **the practice of teachers**, and '**inclusive education**' to refer more broadly to **a movement towards equitable schooling for all learners, which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination.**

## 3. Research design

The research design was longitudinal, using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. Full details are given in the Research Reports.

The Research Questions were as follows:

1. What are the components of inclusive/special education within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland for primary and post-primary teachers?
2. Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?

3. What are NQT's experiences of inclusive teaching?:
  - RQ 3.1 How well prepared do NQTs feel to engage with inclusive practices?
  - RQ 3.2 How do NQTs see the fit between their experience of engaging with inclusive practices in ITE placement and their experience of learning about inclusive practices in their ITE provider-based support sessions?
  - RQ 3.3 How does school context influence NQT engagement with inclusive practices?
  - RQ 3.4 In what ways are NQTs developing their understandings of inclusive practices?
4. What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened to better prepare student teachers to be inclusive?
1. What lessons can be identified from this research for initial teacher education in Ireland and subsequent phases in the continuum of teacher education?

Data collection and analysis was planned through a series of phases:

Phase 1 (Sept. – Jan. 2016): Analysing ITE Programme Content

- Scoping review of literature
- Documentary analysis (30 programmes from 13 ITE providers)
- Teacher educator survey (N=21)

Phase 2 (Feb. – Aug. 2016): Understanding the ITE Student Experience

- Student teacher survey (N=430) and interviews (N=47)
- Teacher educator interviews (N=11)

Phase 3 (Sept. 2016 – Aug. 2017): Understanding the NQT Experience (1st year)

- NQT1 survey (N=122) and follow-up interviews (N=20)
- School principal interviews (N=13)

Phase 4 (Sept. 2017 – May 2018): Understanding the NQT Experience (2nd year)

- NQT2 survey (N=38) and follow-up interviews (N=23)
- School principal (N =8) interviews

## 4. Summary of findings

### 4.1 What are the components of ITE programmes for inclusive teaching?

#### Commitment to inclusive teaching in the ITE curriculum

There is broad evidence of a commitment to inclusive teaching and the core values of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers across ITE programmes in Ireland. **Recognising the diversity of learners in schools is a common theme, variously described in terms of special educational needs, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, language, ability, religion and so on.**

Some programmes display a strong sociological perspective on the diversity of learners, whereas other programmes embrace and value diversity without articulating a specific theoretical orientation. The language of psychology and needs is frequently interwoven within the rhetoric on diversity. Whilst some programmes take a broader approach rooted in a social justice framework, others are relatively narrower in their view and focus more specifically, and predominantly, on individual special educational needs. There is significant variation in this respect, both within and between institutions.

#### Reflective and inclusive teaching

**The commitment to inclusive education is mirrored in two related perspectives: the notion of the teacher as reflective practitioner and the notion of the teacher as agent of change,** with the former being especially privileged across all programmes and all providers. In the Profile of Inclusive Teachers, the core competence of reflective practice is articulated around **teaching as a 'problem-solving activity'**, stressing the skills of reflection on practice and of **metacognitive and research skills as tools for personal and professional development** (EADSNE, 2012, p. 16/17). This important aspect of developing as inclusive teachers seems to be under-developed in ITE programme documentation, in terms of a specific focus on engaging with inclusive practices with diverse learners.

Reflective practice in the ITE programme documentation is framed more broadly, stressing the need for the future teacher to reflect not only on their own practice, **but also on the beliefs and practices of others, on curriculum and assessment policy, on school and local and national policies.** **There is an emphasis on a critical perspective, inviting the would-be teacher to appraise and challenge the content and process of knowledge and policy production.**

## Discrete and permeated approaches to content on inclusive teaching

Programmes vary in terms of both the modules that address issues of inclusive teaching and the extent to which inclusive teaching is stressed as an overall approach. A focus on special educational needs (SEN) remains central, with all programmes having several modules incorporating that term in its descriptor, whereas modules specifically dedicated to inclusive education more broadly are far less common. Our evidence points to a predominantly specialist, discrete approach to SEN, while the broader area of inclusive education is assumed to permeate across programmes without explicit reference. There is a strong psychological underpinning to the SEN modules, reflecting a within-child, individual-deficit based approach. However, references in more generic modules related to inclusive education – e.g. multicultural education – tend to be more strongly framed by sociological concepts like inequality and social justice.

Undergraduate primary concurrent programmes have more elective flexibility, with some offering multiple elective modules to students where a specialist interest could be developed. In the student teacher interviews, those on SEN pathways valued what they saw as a greater emphasis on practical skills for teaching *all* learners, not only those with SEN.

Some programmes have begun to develop permeated content on inclusive education throughout their curricula, whilst moving away from traditional approaches towards more hybridised modules, more explicitly linked to practice. We did not, however, locate evidence of in-depth planning which related theory and practice with college and school placement elements of programmes, with a focus on inclusive teaching. Thus, the question of how the ITE curriculum and school experiences are aligned emerged as an issue for inclusive teaching. While 'valuing learner diversity' is accorded high emphasis in the documentation, the subsequent emphasis on skills and professional competences associated with its enactment in school placement modules is not in proportion.

## 4.2 The impact of ITE on preparation for inclusive teaching

Overall, ITE programmes do provide a broad foundation for student teachers to develop a clear understanding of the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to be an effective inclusive teacher. In our survey of first-year NQTs, most respondents indicated that the following key elements of their ITE programmes were helpful for 'effective inclusive teaching as an NQT... to a significant or very significant extent':

- Input on inclusion in subject specific modules (67.7%)
- Input on inclusion across the academic classes (63.2%)
- Experience on school placement (76.6%)
- Experience in a special school, resource class or learning support role (70.4%)

Most first-year NQTs feel that their ITE programme made a difference to the academic outcomes for their pupils, and to their social and emotional development (65% agree or strongly agree in each case). Most of these NQTs report having experience of pupils with SEN in the school at which they were teaching, to a significant or very significant extent (67%).

## NQTs and 'reality shock'

We saw **evidence of 'reality shock'**, clearly **shown by a significant drop in the overall level of positive attitudes, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching expressed between the student and first-year NQT survey data**. Our data suggest that this may be due to factors including: a greater understanding of the complexity of the task of effective inclusive teaching; the challenge of behaviour management; the challenge of establishing their role or identity as a teacher in their class or school; or, for some NQTs, a decrease in their overall motivation to be inclusive teachers, particularly for post-primary teachers.

These findings echo much of the international literature on reality and 'praxis' shock, and to some extent are to be expected as novice teachers **meet the significant challenges of the classroom** in their NQT year. They do not in themselves indicate that the current provision in ITE is not meeting their needs. What they do suggest is that the expectations for what ITE can achieve should be carefully calibrated, alongside more broadly what can realistically be expected in terms of teacher development in the ITE and NQT phases.

When compared to student teachers, NQTs understood more about the complexity of how theory relates to practice, realising that this is a complex, messy and often uneasy relationship. They also had gone further in their ability to think about the needs of specific learners, although **in many cases they still had a way to go in reframing difference as a positive resource**. Likewise for understanding how they could think about meeting the needs of all learners, as opposed to employing what could be regarded as more limiting forms of differentiation. However, both NQTs and principals discussed how NQTs are aware of the principles of inclusive teaching from their ITE experience and their commitment, often, to developing their understanding through ongoing professional development.

The second-year NQT2 survey illustrates how they often strengthened their commitment or developed a more nuanced understanding, with greater confidence in their practice. However, many are still at a relatively early stage of consolidating their skills for inclusive teaching. Our interview data provides a rich picture of how their engagement with inclusive teaching can deepen through responding to the learning of their pupils.

## The importance of school context

It is also clear from the NQT surveys and interview data that **the most important influence on the development of inclusive teachers is their experience in school**, both as student teachers and as NQTs. The student and NQT surveys showed that the extent to which beginning teachers have experience of working with diverse groups within the classroom was moderately correlated with an increase in positive attitudes, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching. The NQT interviews indicated that NQTs see their school placements as the most important element of their ITE experience, for their development as inclusive teachers.

It was also clear from the NQT and Principal interviews that various factors made a key difference to the extent to which beginning teachers developed their identity as inclusive teachers: the ways in which the school approaches inclusive teaching; the school culture in relation to supporting the developing identity of NQTs as teachers; and how they approached issues of equality, diversity and inclusive education. For ITE, the quality of support for inclusive practice provided by the Placement Tutor, and for NQTs, the quality of mentoring support in general and specifically in relation to inclusive teaching, were also very important. It was also clear from the data that there was considerable variation in all these elements across schools. Overall, it could be argued that the quality of school placement and the extent to which partnership between schools and ITE providers aligns the student experience in relation to inclusive practice, is as important as specific curriculum content or organisation.

### 4.3 The NQT Experience

#### Reflecting on learning from ITE

Some NQTs described feeling disappointed when they were sometimes less successful than they hoped in engaging particular students with special educational needs. This tended to be attributed to curricular or resource constraints within the school, rather than to individual student deficits, or to a lack of knowledge or teaching strategies on the part of the NQT. This finding is to some extent echoed in a survey of recently qualified teachers, which found that lack of support for students with difficulties in learning was one of *least* frequently cited reasons for career dissatisfaction (ASTI, 2017).

There were some specific areas where NQTs tended to report feeling less well prepared for their role in relation to inclusive teaching. This was particularly the case for dealing with challenging behaviours, time demands for differentiation, working with Special Needs Assistants, with external professionals, and working collaboratively with parents. The difficulties that NQTs experienced in the areas of behaviour and time management skills appeared to be overcome to a great extent with more experience. However, the lack of preparation for liaising with parents and with external professionals was a consistent longitudinal finding across data sets, which has implications for both support for NQTs and for planning school placements.

#### Shifting focus from teaching to learning

The process of transition within NQTs' early professional identity towards accepting the role of becoming an authority figure was evident in the data. This was sometimes linked to NQTs' learning in relation to managing behaviour in the classroom, which was framed in the interviews as a skill that can only be learned in practice as a teacher.

When interviewed during their ITE programme, student teachers tended to identify a mismatch between the theoretical and practical elements of their learning. However when interviewed again as NQTs, this issue was not referred to so frequently. Our analysis suggests that their accounts of this notion of a 'theory/practice divide' became more complex and nuanced, and were influenced by their early professional practice.

Our analysis of the second-year NQT interviews showed how the ITE school placement became viewed with hindsight as focused on teaching as practice for 'teaching perfect'. The pressure to conform to ITE-provider protocols and assessment practices seems to reinforce student teachers' focus of attention on themselves and their teaching. **Our evidence suggests that collaborative and supportive school cultures can enable NQTs to develop greater confidence in inclusive teaching, as a flexible and adaptive response to the learning that is taking place in their classrooms.**

Our interview data shows how second-year NQTs can develop a stronger commitment towards inclusive teaching as they come to experience its value, in terms of the outcomes for their pupils. This finding provides an important counterpoint to our analysis of the survey data, which indicated an overall decrease in levels of confidence expressed by first-year NQTs. NQTs often begin to move away from an 'idealised' notion of inclusive education, so that where inclusive teaching is promoted and supported within their school context they may come to develop and strengthen their own inclusive practices.

## **How the school shapes early professional development**

The characteristics of the pupil population seems to influence NQTs' understandings of what inclusive practice entails. Key factors evident within the NQT interviews include the school's approach to providing support for pupils with special educational needs. **NQTs' views of the feasibility of inclusive teaching seemed to be influenced by the level of support and resources available within their schools.** At the post-primary level, NQTs tended to highlight curriculum constraints as a strong influence on how far they felt able to develop more inclusive practices.

The type and level of opportunities for collaboration with other teachers was widely cited as important by NQTs. **Where the school enabled opportunities for collaborative planning and team teaching, this offered a powerful medium for early professional development for inclusive teaching.** Likewise, planned opportunities for **observing more experienced teachers**, and **informal spaces for consultation with colleagues**, were often highly valued. School principals also emphasised the importance of opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

**There can be a tension within school-centred processes of induction and collaboration, where they may tend to focus on reinforcing established practices rather than on critical reflection.** Variations between schools are evident not only in terms of formal policies, but were also experienced by NQTs through the strength – or weakness – of informal cultures of collaboration. NQTs' perceptions of a 'supportive school' were often based on the quality of support offered by individual colleagues, as opposed to explicit reference to structures such as the Professional Support Teams (PSTs) in Droichead schools.

## 4.4 What lessons can be identified for ITE and subsequent phases in the continuum of teacher education?

### Embedding inclusive pedagogy across ITE programmes

Our central theme focused on processes for embedding inclusive pedagogy across the ITE curriculum. Our student interview and survey data suggest that there can be significant variation *within* programmes in the quality of experiences reported by student teachers, about their perceptions of both taught input and support for school placement. This contrasts with a relative lack of evidence of any consistent variation reported between programmes or providers in this regard. The documentary analysis identified a tendency to revert to a focus on identifying difference in relation to special educational need or disability in understandings of inclusive teaching. Taken together, we find that our evidence indicates **a need for ITE to further develop more consistent approaches to inclusive teaching across a whole programme.**

### Professional learning for teacher educators

A significant issue emerged in our data in relation to the need for teacher educators to have access to opportunities for professional development in the area of inclusive teaching. The staff survey clearly indicated a mismatch between the importance teacher educators placed on inclusive teaching, and the degree of confidence they expressed in their capacity to deliver it. **The interviews echoed this and suggested a need for greater collaboration between those academics with particular expertise in this area and their subject-specialist colleagues.**

The notion of creating spaces for collaboration and reflection between colleagues with expertise in inclusive education and those with subject-specialist expertise is supported in the literature (Florian, 2012). One approach would be to link professional learning activities for teacher educators to opportunities to review ITE programmes, in relation to how inclusive pedagogy is embedded across the curriculum. Such initiatives might usefully be extended to involve Placement Tutors and consider the role of Cooperating Teachers as teacher educators in practice. **In this respect, we draw attention to the recommendation that preparing inclusive teachers is the responsibility of all teacher educators** (EADSNE, 2012, p.11).

It is important to locate expectations for the impact of changes in ITE in the context of the education system as a whole. Our research questions necessarily focus on programmes, but learning in ITE takes place in the overall context of school cultures and policy systems, and these exert an influence on the student and NQT experience.

## Planning inclusive teaching

Engaging in a process of embedding inclusive pedagogy across an ITE programme might usefully involve collaborative reflection on approaches to planning inclusive teaching. An example would be the uses and meanings ascribed to the term 'differentiation', which seems to operate as a trope for a range of responses to learner differences. On the one hand, differentiation can be taken to refer to practices that involve identifying particular learners as requiring different teaching approaches than the majority within a classroom. An alternative approach would be to plan teaching activities that all learners can engage with in various ways, without the need to identify some as 'different'. So for example, there might be a range of practices from offering different worksheets to particular groups of pupils, to adopting a Universal Design for Learning<sup>2</sup> approach throughout.

Both interpretations seem to co-exist within the guidance available to teacher educators. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers proposes that: **it is 'normal to be different ... learner diversity is to be respected, valued and understood as a resource that enhances learning opportunities'** (EADSNE, 2012b: 12). Knowledge underpinning effective teaching in heterogenous classes includes: 'differentiation of curriculum content, learning process and learning materials to include learners and meet diverse needs' (EADSNE, 2012b: 14). This approach is reflected within NCSE guidance that: 'Curriculum planning involves differentiation of curricular content, processes and outcomes' (NCSE, 2011: 32). Likewise, the DES guidance is that: 'Teachers meaningfully differentiate content and activities in order to ensure that all pupils are challenged by the learning activities and experience success as learners' (DES, 2016: 10).

However, the skills of differentiation may not always be sufficiently supported by clear attitudes and beliefs about the value of learner differences, and the situated and contingent nature of learner 'abilities'. Our documentary analysis identified this concern across ITE programmes. In our staff interview data, academics with expertise in the area of inclusive education gave a particular focus to both of these issues, whilst expressing a lack of confidence that their approach was necessarily shared across ITE programmes as a whole. Others with a broader remit, such as programme leaders, were more likely to describe addressing difference as engaging with individual learning needs through differentiation.

## Developing skills for inclusive teaching

We know from international research that ITE students do not always make connections between their university experience and what they can learn in practice, and may see university 'input' as inadequate (Allen, 2009; Bullock & Russell, 2010; Goos *et al.*, 2009). In line with this research, we found that students were sometimes critical of their ITE programmes in relation to what they saw as the omission of courses on specific skills in inclusive practice that they felt they needed for school placements.

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2 Universal Design for Learning refers to the principle that curriculum should be designed from the outset to be accessible to all learners, for example using multiple means of representation, expression and engagement.

So a degree of disconnect is evident between ITE programmes and student teacher perceptions of skills input, in relation to inclusive teaching. The documentary analysis reveals substantial coverage of content related to both knowledge and understanding and skills and abilities for the area of competence 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classes', in the Profile of Inclusive Teachers. However, there is a consistent theme within the student interview data of a perceived lack of preparedness in terms of practical skills.

The interview data suggested that student teachers sometimes see teacher educators as stressing the importance of inclusive teaching, without providing detailed guidance on how to enact inclusive practices. Or teacher educators were sometimes seen as providing 'textbook' examples of strategies which student teachers found difficult to implement in schools. This is also reflected in the student survey, with students identifying the following items most commonly as areas for improvement in college learning: more input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs, and more input on subject specific strategies for inclusive teaching.

Where students were able to articulate an alternative approach, this typically reflected a desire for closer alignment between programme and placement learning. So for example, some student teachers expressed a wish for more workshop-style sessions where they could reflect on issues arising from their practice on school placement.

### **Working with families**

Whilst 'supported engagement with parents' is recommended as an element of school placement activities in Teaching Council guidance (Teaching Council, 2013, p.15), we found little evidence to suggest that this was prioritised consistently. The theme of working with parents and families seems to be relatively weak and rather too dependent on the school placement module, in terms of coverage and emphasis.

According to our analysis, this whole theme is somewhat misaligned with the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers. In the programme documents, the preparation of student teachers to work with parents and families appeared to be the least developed area of competence. Likewise, school Principals noted that NQTs were often not well prepared in this area.

### **Aligning school placement experiences within ITE programmes**

In all programmes it is clearly stated that student teachers need to have experience of teaching in at least two contrasting school settings. Some concurrent programmes explicitly state that students should gain experience in special schools or 'resource teaching' settings. While contrasting school placements enabled student teachers to experience more diversity in terms of pupil cohorts, the HEI tutor survey respondents noted difficulties in locating quality placements and ensuring placement diversity. Some respondents in the staff interviews also reported that the additional requirement to increase school placements had impacted negatively on the time available for programme content on inclusive education.

However, students' learning about inclusive teaching on school placement is inevitably bound up with what is available to be learned in those placement settings. **There is recognition that there may be tensions between the values of inclusive teaching as presented in modules, and observed and experienced practice in school placement settings.** Our findings suggest that there is a need to further examine opportunities for greater alignment between taught sessions and school-based learning experiences. In part, this relates to the issue of developing skills with opportunities for critical reflection, enabling teachers to develop and learn from their experiences (DES, 2012; Villegas, Ciotoli & Lucas, 2017). In addition, there are questions about expectations of the range of experiences available within school placements.

We found a substantial degree of variation in how well supported student teachers felt in developing inclusive teaching on school placements. This related both to the range of support offered by Placement Tutors from ITE providers and to the roles adopted by Cooperating Teachers in schools. Teacher educators also recognised the existence of mixed messages for students between HEIs and the practices of the schools, and this is an issue which programmes might directly address.

Equally, the assessment of inclusive teaching on school placements is likely to form a key influence on the depth to which a commitment to inclusive teaching is embedded in practice across ITE programmes. This issue was not detailed in the Teaching Council proforma that formed the bulk of the data for our documentary analysis, but was addressed to a degree in some responses to the staff survey. Assessment of inclusive practice is in turn linked to the configuration and planning of school-based support for student teachers. However, the literature would suggest that this is a key concern.

### **Diversity and student teachers**

In our student survey, most student teacher respondents indicated positive attitudes towards inclusive teaching in a number of respects; and this was generally the case irrespective of their background or type of programme. For example, 97% agreed or strongly agreed that: 'Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities'. A further key finding was that nearly half the respondents had significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability; and a similar proportion had prior experience of working with pupils with special needs.

A relevant point from our literature review was the suggestion that enabling student teachers to draw on their own experiences of difference or 'otherness' can support their engagement with social justice approaches (Baglieri, 2008; see also Hick, Arshad, Watt, & Mitchell, 2011). This is a potentially significant counterpoint to the overall lack of diversity amongst the student teacher population.

Some staff interviewees made the point that student teacher attitudes to diversity pre-ITE are shaped by their own experiences of schooling and **that the student teacher cohort tends to reflect a relatively narrow demographic**. In this context, it is interesting to note that our analysis of the student and NQT survey data suggested **that a minority of student teachers and NQTs may be relatively resistant to adopting attitudes and beliefs identified in the Profile of Inclusive Teachers as important for inclusive teaching**.

Overall however, both student teachers and **NQTs tended to report a perceived discrepancy between the emphasis on inclusive teaching advocated within ITE programmes, and the practices and contexts they experience in schools**. So for example where selection, streaming or setting based on ability is practised in schools, this may sometimes be seen as negating some of the inclusive practices advocated within ITE programmes. Of concern is how ITE programmes equip new teachers to negotiate aspects of school contexts, that may be experienced as presenting contradictions for them. **One aspect of this might be to ensure that ITE programmes provide student teachers with a firm theoretical grounding for a critique of deterministic notions of ability, as a basis for reflection in working in schools where more selective practices are dominant**.

### **Positioning new teachers as 'change agents'**

ITE programmes may encourage new teachers to see themselves as part of a generation who are well placed to promote the development of more inclusive practices in schools. Some student teachers did see themselves as 'agents of change', advocating and addressing inclusive education in their practice. In some cases, they might wish to question what they saw as more conventional pedagogic practice. **However, this may at times conflict with a requirement on student teachers to comply with the existing policies, practices and culture of a school which is hosting their placement experience**. Student teachers sometimes expressed a need for more support in navigating such issues and in reflecting on potential differences between the content of their ITE programmes and their experiences in schools.

**For newly qualified teachers, their developing identities as inclusive teachers were tempered by the predominant influence of the school context**. How far newly qualified teachers are able to function as change agents in relation to inclusive teaching within their schools is likely to be strongly influenced by the leadership of their school.

The main support accessed by NQTs is overwhelmingly located within the schools in which they are employed. For example, they seek support from more experienced teachers to develop confidence in their skills in managing behaviour in their classrooms. In this context, NQTs seem to engage with a role of initiating change within the realms of collaborative rather than personal action. However, NQTs also referred to informal peer support networks as important in offering opportunities to reflect on their school contexts.

## 4.5 What are the implications of this research for developing teacher education for inclusive teaching in Ireland?

### Inclusive pedagogy in the ITE curriculum

Our evidence indicates a need for ITE providers to further develop consistent approaches to inclusive teaching across a whole programme. We suggest that the notion of inclusive pedagogies offers **an overarching theoretical framework to support this**. The Profile for Inclusive Teachers offers one set of stimulus material for reflection which takes this approach. For example, when programmes are preparing for planned periods of review, this could present an opportunity for staff with expertise in inclusive education to collaborate with their colleagues with expertise in particular curriculum subjects **on developing a holistic approach**. The process of developing a clear and explicit approach to inclusive pedagogy understood by all teacher educators and stakeholders within an ITE programme or provider, can **provide a shared language for collaboration and reflection**.

### Professional development for teacher educators

**We found clear evidence of demand for further professional development for teacher educators in preparing inclusive teachers**. We suggest that creating spaces for collaboration and reflection between colleagues with expertise in inclusive education and those with subject-specialist expertise may be a fruitful approach (Florian, 2012). It may be helpful to link professional learning activities for teacher educators to opportunities to review ITE programmes, in relation to how inclusive pedagogy is embedded across the curriculum. Such initiatives might usefully be extended to involve Placement Tutors and consider the role of Cooperating Teachers as teacher educators within school placements. In this respect, we draw attention to the recommendation **that preparing inclusive teachers is the responsibility of all teacher educators** (EADSNE, 2012, p.11).

### Developing skills for inclusive teaching

We suggest that ITE programmes ensure that input on planning for inclusive teaching covers **approaches aimed at the whole class, and is not restricted to forms of differentiation that require identifying particular pupils as 'different'**. ITE programmes could review how student teachers are provided with planned experiences for engaging in inclusive practices in schools; and how these are linked to opportunities for collaborative, critical reflection with peers and tutors in college-based sessions. **Student teachers should have opportunities to participate in reflective enquiry processes for understanding how to better engage particular pupils or groups of pupils in learning**. Likewise, **their prior experiences of disability and diversity could be given greater attention as a resource for learning**.

Whilst 'school placement reflection workshops' are recommended within Teaching Council guidance (Teaching Council, 2013, p.15), our data suggests that more focused use can be made of these in relation to student teachers' engagement with inclusive practices. Where possible, such reflective workshop-style sessions may benefit from collaboration between teacher educators who are subject experts and those whose specialism is in inclusive education. For example, this kind of collaboration could enhance the development of more subject-specific inclusive approaches within ITE.

### **Aligning school placements within ITE programmes**

There is a need for a clearer focus on developing student teachers' skills for inclusive teaching, with greater alignment within ITE programmes between taught sessions and school placements. One approach would be to plan opportunities for student teachers to engage with inclusive practices in schools, to enable student teachers to make use of enquiry processes to reflect on pupils' learning, and to participate in workshop sessions with support for critical reflection from both subject specialists and experts in inclusive education. **Planning for the range of opportunities afforded to student teachers within school placements could give greater attention to the degree of involvement with pupils with diverse needs; and could include opportunities to observe meetings with parents.**

We suggest that ITE providers seek opportunities to further harmonise the approaches to inclusive teaching adopted by Placement Tutors and Cooperating Teachers, in collaboration with academic teacher educators. It is commendable that the DES has been able to resource four days for *Droichead* training with substitute cover for each member of the school's Professional Support Team. This underlines the contribution of school-based colleagues in teachers' professional learning, whilst at the same time pointing to the role of Cooperating Teachers in Initial Teacher Education. If support for Cooperating Teachers could be similarly resourced, it would assist them in engaging with ITE Providers in offering a more consistent approach to supporting student teachers with inclusive teaching. This may also provide an incentive to increase the availability and diversity of school placements for student teachers.

We suggest that the Teaching Council may wish to consider whether school placement guidance might usefully be strengthened in relation to the range of opportunities that are desirable for student teachers to engage in and observe regarding inclusive teaching with diverse learners. Likewise, we suggest the Teaching Council may wish to consider whether the accreditation criteria for ITE programmes could be strengthened, in asking ITE providers to be more explicit in how inclusive teaching within school placements is assessed. Such a move might be helpful in clarifying that inclusive teaching is a responsibility for all teachers and for all teacher educators; and in stimulating conversations within ITE providers about any associated professional development requirements.

## Enabling NQTs to negotiate school contexts

Newly qualified teachers are simultaneously learning to demonstrate competence in their role in the classroom, whilst developing their own professional identities as beginner teachers. Where they seek to develop as inclusive teachers, they also have to negotiate school contexts that they may see as more or less supportive for this. **The school context is clearly a dominant influence on their initial development, and the major source for their learning is often informal consultation with their more experienced colleagues. At the same time, they may need access to support for reflection independently of their particular school context, including the requisite knowledge and skills.** In addition to developing **reflective skills for professional learning**, they also need **a knowledge base to support critical thinking in response to less inclusive practices that they may encounter.** There is evidence from the literature to suggest that equipping student teachers with **a sound knowledge of critiques of determinist notions of ability** would assist them in this regard. **Whilst opportunities to experience a range of specialist provision were often valued by student teachers on school placement, we found that a substantial proportion of NQTs are teaching at least some of the time in 'resource' classes of various kinds.** Whilst in some cases they respond to this experience positively as part of their introduction to the school, a question remains as to whether and to what extent this practice is appropriate. In relation to teaching special classes, teachers sometimes report feeling under-qualified for their roles (Banks *et al.*, 2016); and the NCSE (2015: 19) proposed:

The DES should reframe its policy on the use of over quota hours for resource teaching to ensure that only teachers with appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies are allocated resource teaching hours. The practice of spreading resource teaching hours over an excessive number of post-primary teachers' timetables should be discontinued.

## Supporting NQT's development

We suggest that the Teaching Council may wish to consider how inclusive teaching could be identified more explicitly within *Droichead*, the Integrated Professional Induction Framework (Teaching Council, 2017). It may be possible to build on the approach taken within *Cosán*, the Framework for Teachers' Learning (Teaching Council, 2016), which highlights inclusion as an area for professional learning. For example, within the school-based strand, would it be appropriate to suggest that one or more professional conversations or observations could focus on issues for inclusive teaching? In our interview data, principals made a number of relevant suggestions, such as developing specific skills in working with pupils with SEN.

Where school leaders are seeking to promote more inclusive practices within their school development plans, they may wish to enlist the support of new teachers who have benefited from the increased emphasis on inclusive teaching within the extended ITE programmes. So, for example, inviting NQTs to reflect on a school's self-evaluation documents in relation to inclusive teaching might encourage them to contribute in this area.

Our survey data, including open-text responses, showed that NQTs were sometimes quite critical of the SEN workshops provided by NIPT, with some NQTs tending to see them as repeating material introduced within the extended ITE programmes. This finding echoes that of the Teaching Council's evaluation of Droichead (Smyth *et al.*, 2016), which followed up an earlier cohort of NQTs. In the light of this, the NIPT may wish to review the content of induction workshops focused on inclusive teaching. It may be that NQTs would welcome a wider range of activities, including a **more interactive approach to collaborative problem-solving**. There may also be a place for **further self-assessment of CPD needs for inclusive teaching**, to guide NQTs in engaging with professional development opportunities and to further inform NIPT and other providers about their interests.

Some NQTs continued to draw on the personal and professional networks they established through their ITE programmes to support them through their early experiences of employment as a teacher. In terms of 'other professional learning activities' recognised within *Droichead*, we suggest that ITE providers consider scoping the demand from their alumni for opportunities for NQTs to reflect collaboratively on inclusive teaching experiences and on their developing professional identities. There may be potential for developing more open peer support networks for NQTs, either face-to-face or online, and where this can be offered by ITE providers this is likely to be welcomed.

Sustaining newly and recently qualified teachers' relationships with ITE-providers offers the potential for a continuing engagement with schools that may be mutually beneficial, for example in enhancing teacher educators' knowledge of inclusive practices. Drawing the existing services for supporting schools in promoting learning for all into such collaborative networks with teacher educators would enhance this. Similarly, the promotion of teachers' professional learning (Cosán, Teaching Council, 2016) offers a potential framework for such collaboration, reflection and action in schools.

## **Access to specialist knowledge**

Initial Teacher Education should provide student teachers with an awareness of the range of needs that diverse learners may bring, including broad areas of special educational need or disability. When linked to access to more detailed information when it is needed, this may be a sufficient level of knowledge within ITE programmes. It would not be feasible to provide all student teachers with an in-depth knowledge of a wide range of categories of special educational needs, and any suggestion that they could not be inclusive teachers without this should be avoided. However, there is already a range of specialist postgraduate qualifications available in inclusive education and special educational needs, for teachers seeking to develop a higher level of expertise in this area.

So teachers may need access to more detailed information about particular disabilities or categories of special educational need, when they are teaching pupils with needs identified in those ways. Many of the NQTs we spoke to turned first to on-line resources in these circumstances, and would perhaps have found it helpful to have access to a single, authoritative point of reference for reliable guidance. For example, the NCSE website now hosts substantial information provided by the former Special Education Support Service (SESS) and may wish to consider evaluating the utility and accessibility of these resources to NQTs, and promoting them appropriately.

### **Aligning guidance to support inclusive teaching**

There may be scope for further alignment of the guidance available to teacher education providers, schools and associated support services in developing more inclusive teaching in Ireland. There is currently a wealth of guidance available from the DES, the Teaching Council, the NIPT, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the NCSE, and a range of professional associations. Our findings suggest that this guidance is not always as well understood or utilised as might be hoped. A mapping exercise, for example in relation to key elements of the Profile for Inclusive Teachers, may be helpful for those involved in teacher education in HEIs and schools in clarifying support for inclusive teaching.

In Ireland, there is a sense of convergence in the direction of policy development to support inclusive education, in terms of recent initiatives from the DES, the Teaching Council and the NCSE for example. Many of the building blocks are in place for developing more inclusive teachers, together with the potential to move further along this trajectory.

!!! **Further movement from a narrower focus on SEN, towards a broader understanding of inclusive teaching as encompassing diverse learners, could be stimulated by a wide-ranging debate and policy review at all levels.** Such a process would need to involve school leaders in reconfiguring partnerships for teacher education with ITE providers.

## 1. Introduction and context

This Final Report on the Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Project follows the publication of an earlier Report on Phases 1 and 2 of the project, as Hick *et al.*, (2018). The previous report focused on the components of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes on inclusive teaching and on how this was experienced by student teachers. This second report focuses on understanding the experiences of newly qualified teachers (NQTs); how well prepared they feel to be inclusive teachers; and on what can be learned for strengthening teacher education in Ireland, in relation to inclusive teaching.

This introductory section sets out the background to the project and gives an outline of the research design. A summary is presented of the initial findings from the Report on Phase 1 and 2; before moving to the context for newly qualified teachers in Ireland, both in terms of induction processes and employment prospects.

### 1.1 Background to the 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' (ITE4I) project

The context for this project is a growing international consensus on the importance of policy initiatives to both raise the quality of teaching (OECD, 2005) and to better prepare teachers to respond to increasing diversity in communities and classrooms (EADSNE, 2011).

The DES and the Teaching Council of Ireland developed policies requiring higher education institutions providing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to undergo a re-accreditation process from 2012. This involved both an extension and a reconceptualization of programmes, with mandatory additional content related to inclusive education and differentiation, together with the opportunity for a wider range of school placement experiences. For example, postgraduate primary programmes were extended by six months and postgraduate post-primary programmes were extended by one year; postgraduate programmes were re-accredited at Masters Level 9. Further details of the context for ITE in Ireland are summarised in Appendix 7.8; and a full account is given in the earlier Report on Phases 1 and 2 of the Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Project, Hick *et al.* (2018).

Following this major reform, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in Ireland commissioned a study of 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' in 2015. NCSE's research aim was: 'to establish what the components of inclusive/special education are within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland and to explore if the recent changes prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive using the indicators set out in the EASNIE's Profile of Inclusive Teachers'.

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) conducted a four-year project on Teacher Education for Inclusion, involving representatives of 25 countries. A key output was a proposed 'Profile of Inclusive Teachers' (EADSNE, 2012), which outlines a range of attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to four core values and eight areas of competence, to be addressed in initial teacher education to prepare all new teachers to become more

inclusive. The NCSE proposed the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teaching as the baseline definition of inclusive teaching for the project and it is used by the research team as the framework and starting point for analysis.

The 'Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion' project (ITE4I), ran from 2015-2018. The research team was led by Manchester Metropolitan University in partnership with University College Cork and University College London, Institute of Education. We believe that this project may be one of the first system-wide, longitudinal studies of initial teacher education for inclusive teaching in Europe.

## 1.2 The research design

NCSE's aims for this research were first 'to establish what the components of inclusive/special education are within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland'; and secondly 'to explore if the recent changes prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive using the indicators set out in the EASNIE's Profile of Inclusive Teachers'.

The initial Research Questions formulated by the NCSE were as follows:

1. What are the components of inclusive/special education within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Ireland for primary and post-primary teachers?
2. Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education's (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?
3. What is the intended impact of the changes in ITE on outcomes for students with special educational needs (SEN) and do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?
4. What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened to better prepare student teachers to be inclusive?
5. What lessons can be identified from this research for initial teacher education in Ireland and subsequent phases in the continuum of teacher education?

The project was planned to develop through a series of phases for data collection, over the three years of the project. Phases 1 and 2 addressed the components of ITE (Research Question 1) and how well they prepared new teachers for inclusive teaching (Research Question 2). These phases of the research were reported in Hick *et al.* (2018).

Phases 3 and 4 continued to explore how well newly qualified teachers felt they were prepared for inclusive teaching (Research Question 2), and whether they felt this made an impact on pupil outcomes (Research Question 3). This enabled us to identify where ITE might be strengthened in relation to inclusive teaching (Research Question 4) and any lessons for developing teacher education in Ireland (Research Question 5).

A summary of the research design is presented here for Phases 1 and 2, with full details in the published report. Phases 3 & 4 form the substantive content of this Final Report, so that the research design and methods are presented in full in Section 3. Further methodological details and copies of the data gathering instruments for Phases 3 and 4 are given in the appendices.

### **Phase 1 (Sept. – Jan. 2016): Analysing ITE programme content**

Data collection in Phase 1 included documentary analysis and a survey of teacher educators.

Documentation relating to some 30 programmes (out of 59 nationally) from 13 ITE providers (out of 19 in total) was obtained with the support of the Teaching Council. These were primarily standard proforma submitted for re-accreditation, with module outlines appended in 22 cases; in addition, reviews of these submissions published by the Teaching Council were analysed, together with the criteria used for re-accreditation. The documentary analysis started from a typology derived from the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, to examine how and where inclusive teaching is represented within ITE programme documents.

A survey of teacher educators was conducted at the same time, to collect initial data on the range of views expressed by teacher educators in relation to issues of inclusive teaching in ITE programmes. The survey was constructed to reflect areas of competence within the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, and to collect free-text comments. Following piloting, 21 respondents (programme leaders, module leaders, heads of departments) provided complete or near-complete responses giving information relating to 27 programmes from 13 institutions (some survey responses related to more than one programme).

### **Phase 2 (Feb. – Aug. 2016): Understanding the student teacher experience**

Data collection in Phase 2 included a survey of student teachers, together with interviews with student teachers and with teacher educators at five case-study sites. The five ITE providers were selected to represent a range of primary, post-primary, consecutive and concurrent programmes; and to provide a geographical spread of institutions.

The survey of student teachers elicited data about their experiences of initial teacher education and their understandings of inclusive teaching. The questionnaire captured demographic information, key areas of experience prior to and during the respondents' ITE programme, and a series of statements mapped to an analysis of the attitude, knowledge and skills components of the EASNIE profile. A total of 430 valid responses were received, representing a sample of approximately 14% of the national cohort of student teachers.

The interviews with student teachers aimed to elicit their views about their course and how their studies related to their school placement experiences; their understandings of inclusive teaching; their approaches to inclusive teaching in practice; and their reflections on their own professional development in relation to inclusive teaching and how their courses might be developed. A total of 47 students were interviewed in person or by Skype, with 32 recruited at the five case study sites and a further 15 recruited by survey responses from other institutions.

The interviews with teacher educators sought their views on issues of inclusive teaching and ITE in Ireland, and on the impact of the extension and reconceptualization of ITE programmes; their responses to emergent themes and issues arising from the survey of teacher educators and the documentary analysis; and their reflections on aspects of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers. A total of 11 staff interviews were conducted across the five case study sites, typically including the Head of School or a Programme Leader and a lecturer in inclusive or special education.

### **Phase 3 (Sept. 2016 – Aug. 2017): Understanding the NQT Experience (1st year)**

Following the Phase 1 and 2 report, we proposed a re-framing of Research Question 3 on the impact of ITE on outcomes for pupils with SEN. Our initial findings emphasised a broader understanding of inclusive teaching as addressing all learners, not only those with special educational needs, as outlined in the EASNIE Profile. Additionally, our documentary analysis showed that ITE programmes define learning outcomes for student teachers, but not for their pupils. The NQT survey and interview data refers to NQTs' perceptions of the impact of their training on their pupils' outcomes, but we did not collect pupil outcome data. Accordingly, the research team proposed a series of sub-questions to revise Research Question 3 as follows:

RQ 3.1 How well prepared do NQTs feel to engage with inclusive practices?

RQ 3.2 How do NQTs see the fit between their experience of engaging with inclusive practices in ITE placement and their experience of learning about inclusive practices in their ITE provider-based support sessions?

RQ 3.3 How does school context influence NQT engagement with inclusive practices?

RQ 3.4 In what ways are NQTs developing their understandings of inclusive practices?

Phase 3 ran from September 2016 to August 2017, covering the first year as newly qualified teachers of the first cohort to graduate from the newly extended ITE programmes, in the summer of 2016. The data collected in Phase 3 comprised a follow-up survey (N=122) and interviews (N=20) with NQTs who had participated in the earlier survey and interviews; together with interviews with Principals (N=13) in schools where NQTs are employed.

## **Phase 4 (Sept. 2017 – May 2018): Understanding the NQT Experience (2nd year)**

Phase 4 continued to examine the NQT experience, focusing on the second year of their post-qualification practice. We conducted a third survey (N=38) and set of interviews (N=23) with NQTs, who had participated in the earlier surveys and interview, to provide a longitudinal view of their experiences. These were supplemented by further interviews with school Principals and deputy principals (N=8).

It should be noted that attrition in response rates is widely recognised as a common feature of longitudinal studies (Frey, 2018). Further details of the design and methods for Phases 3 and 4 are given in Section 3. The data from Phases 3 and 4 enabled us to more confidently identify areas that could be strengthened in ITE in relation to inclusive teaching (Research Question 4). Together with the findings from Phases 1 and 2, this enabled us to identify the lessons from this research for the continuum of teacher education in Ireland (Research Question 5).

### **1.3 Key findings from Phases 1 and 2**

This Final Report covers Phases 3 and 4 of the Initial Teacher Education Inclusion project, focused on how well prepared newly qualified teachers are to be inclusive teachers. In this report we build on the findings of Phases 1 and 2 of the ITE4I project, published in Hick *et al.* (2018), which looked at the components of ITE and the student teacher experience. For this reason, we present below a brief summary of our findings from Phase 1 & 2.

#### **1.3.1 Inclusive teaching and ITE programme content**

Phase 1 of the project involved a documentary analysis of ITE programmes with respect to content related to inclusive teaching; and a survey of ITE providers. We found that programmes adopt a variety of approaches to configuring how content on inclusive teaching for diverse learners and on special educational needs is delivered. Many offer discrete modules which are clearly identifiable as relating to inclusive education more broadly or to special educational needs and disability. Some aim to 'permeate' content related to inclusive teaching across the ITE curriculum, but with varying degrees of depth in how these components are embedded in practice.

Components of ITE programmes that are relevant to developing inclusive teaching are not restricted to modules with titles specifically focused on this area. Modules related to, for example, school placement experience and to subject pedagogy are also important for inclusive education. Providers also made the point that the research component of ITE programmes offered an important opportunity to address issues of inclusive education for many student teachers, particularly within the Professional Masters in Education (PME).

### **1.3.2 ITE as preparation for inclusive teaching**

Our documentary analysis indicated that the core values and areas of competence identified within the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers are generally evident within ITE programmes in Ireland. Some areas are more strongly represented, such as teachers as reflective practitioners, while others are less evident, such as working with parents and families. There is good coverage of the area of competence on 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classrooms'. ITE programmes do generally address the EASNIE 'core values' for inclusive teaching related to valuing learner diversity and supporting all learners, but with variable emphasis on particular components.

Phase 2 involved a survey of and interviews with student teachers, which provided us with data on ITE as preparation for inclusive education in terms of the EASNIE Profile. We found that most student teachers are generally positive in their approach to inclusive teaching, irrespective of their demographic background. Many bring prior experiences of special educational needs or disability through family or friends, or through prior work experiences.

However, we also found a sense of disconnection between the stated intentions of ITE programmes and the perceptions of student teachers, in relation to enacting inclusive teaching in practice. Student teachers typically reported that they felt well prepared for inclusive teaching in terms of developing appropriate values and attitudes, but relatively under-prepared in terms of confidence in their knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices in school contexts. This finding is comparable to initial teacher education in other contexts, in the sense that student teachers' perceptions of a gap between university tuition and practice in schools is a phenomenon that has been recognised in research internationally.

### **1.3.3 Outcomes for school students with special educational needs**

NCSE's initial research questions suggested a focus on programme intentions and student teachers' perceptions, concerning the impact of ITE on outcomes for school students with special educational needs. However, we found that programme documentation and teacher educators tended not to express their intentions for the recent changes in ITE in terms of specific outcomes for school students with special educational needs. Rather their aims were expressed more broadly, in terms of preparing student teachers to include diverse learners as well as those with special educational needs.

Our survey of student teachers showed clear evidence of a link between the diversity of students' classroom experience on placement and positive attitudes, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching. This was particularly strong in relation to experience of working with children with special educational needs on school placement.

Where student teachers on a range of programmes had experiences of resourced provision for school students with special educational needs, albeit brief placements in some cases, they often described this as having a substantial impact on their understanding of inclusive practice. One cohort of student teachers who elected to take a major pathway on special educational needs in the primary sector, tended to highlight their additional focus on classroom practice as of benefit for their development as teachers of all children, not only those with SEN.

### 1.3.4 Opportunities for strengthening ITE for inclusive teaching

We found evidence to suggest a need for strengthening the alignment between school experience and the taught content of ITE programmes in relation to inclusive teaching. Student teachers said that they would value more opportunities for practical advice, collaborative critical reflection and support for problem-solving in relation to experiences of inclusive practices in schools.

We also identified that there is a sense in which some student teachers are encouraged to see themselves as part of a new generation of teachers who may be better placed than previous generations to promote the development of more inclusive practices in schools. This may at times conflict with a requirement that student teachers comply with the existing policies, practices and culture of a school that is hosting their placement. Student teachers sometimes express a need for more support in navigating such issues and in reflecting on potential differences between the taught content of their ITE programmes and their experiences in schools.

Teacher educators are generally supportive of the promotion of inclusive teaching within ITE. However, they are often not confident that these elements are covered in sufficient depth within their programmes. Teacher educators identified a need for further professional development opportunities on inclusive teaching, to enable those with expertise in this area to collaborate more effectively with their colleagues.

## 1.4 The NQT context: induction and job prospects

International evidence from several countries shows that the teaching profession itself remains homogenous relative to the heterogeneity of the pupil population (e.g., Hartsuyker, 2007 in Australia; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005 in the US). In Ireland, nearly all student teachers are white and from the majority nationality and ethnic group. Research by Keane and Heinz (2016) reported that 96% of the postgraduate post-primary entrants in 2013 identified as 'white Irish' in terms of ethnicity, and in 2014 the figure increased to 98.3% (largely attributed to the extension and therefore financial cost of the period of initial teacher training). As these researchers observe, addressing the gap between the student teacher/teacher body and the broader society is far from a simple matter of recruiting a greater diversity of applicants ethnically. It is also, crucially, about critically reviewing selection and admission practices. Some steps to consider this issue have been taken by the HEA, in the form of its *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)* as a part of the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019* (DES, 2015b). This initiative is designed to not only attract students from historically under-represented groups and communities into teaching, but to support them appropriately while learning to teach.

This Final Report concentrates on Phases 3 and 4 of the project, focused on understanding the experiences of newly qualified teachers and on how well prepared and supported they feel to develop as inclusive teachers. Accordingly, we set the scene here in terms of policy for the induction of NQTs and the context for their experiences of seeking their first teaching posts.

*Droichead* is a new integrated professional induction framework for NQTs. Still in its growth phase and not yet fully rolled out as a programme of induction, it has been designed in collaboration with the teaching profession. It is grounded in the belief that those best placed to induct NQTs are experienced colleagues, who have relevant and in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning in their respective schools. Induction builds on the initial teacher education phase which is longer in duration than previously and which now includes an extended period of time on school placement. Induction takes as its starting point areas for further development, which are identified during the initial teacher education phase.

NQTs experience a distinct phase of the continuum of teacher education, one that is recognized as partly a socialisation process into the particular context of the schools in which they are practising and into the profession. The integrated framework of *Droichead* incorporates school-based and additional professional learning activities to address the needs of NQTs as they begin their careers. It is led at school level by a Professional Support Team (PST) consisting of experienced colleagues who have engaged in a programme of mentor professional development led by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT).

The current policy (revised in March 2017) makes explicit the nature of *Droichead* as a non-evaluative professional induction process. As described on the Teaching Council's website (Teaching Council, 2017), this means that school principals, school colleagues or external school colleagues will not be engaged in the evaluation of NQTs for registration purposes – the latter was a bone of contention with teachers despite the positive experience by most participants in the national evaluation at the pilot stage (see Smyth *et al.*, 2016). At the conclusion of the process now, the NQT and the Professional Support Team make a joint declaration that they have engaged in a quality teaching and learning process. There is considerable flexibility in the revised policy with regard to the role of principals, the way in which the model can operate in different schools, the size of the professional support team (PST), and the use of an external PST member to act as a mentor where necessary. The role of the principal in leading the induction process, either directly or indirectly, links with the important role they play in deciding which class(es) are assigned to NQTs.

NQTs engaging in the *Droichead* process have the opportunity to observe and be observed by other teachers, and to reflect with those teachers on the teaching and learning they have observed. NQTs also compile a professional learning portfolio, which supports their learning and records their reflections on their learning. In an effort to ensure the growth and success of *Droichead*, release time with substitution paid by the DES allows PST members to attend mentor professional development and to support NQTs as they go through the process of induction. Furthermore, the revision of requirements regarding participation at NQT cluster meetings of NQTs sees a greater emphasis on contextualized issues as they pertain to the school.

The introduction of the *Droichead* programme in Ireland reflects a wider trend internationally toward the design of more systematic, integrated and intensive programmes to support induction and probation (see Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; OECD, 2014; Smyth *et al.*, 2016). It is noteworthy that practices prior to *Droichead* varied considerably, with some schools using trained mentors to support NQTs, while other schools adopted more informal approaches. Until the introduction of the more formal induction process offered by *Droichead*, NQTs in post-primary schools were required to have a specified number of hours of post-qualification employment (PQE) verified by the school principal as being satisfactory; while NQTs in designated primary schools had to complete 100 days and have their teaching observed and approved by a DES inspector. *Droichead* therefore represents a major shift in its emphasis on collaboration, whole-school support for the NQT and greater school ownership of the process.

In the context of this study on inclusion, while the NQTs who participated in the Smyth *et al.* study were in the main very positive about their experience, they were more critical of the extent to which ITE prepared them for dealing with diversity, in terms of teaching students with special educational needs and from culturally diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds. A minority of NQTs reported being adequately prepared for working with parents. In general, the findings of the evaluation of the *Droichead* pilot indicate that *Droichead* takes place within the broader context of formal and informal cooperation within the school. NQTs frequently rely for support on other teachers who are not involved in their formal induction process and also on other NQTs.

From the perspective of NQTs themselves, the major challenge facing them is the precarious working environment, and more specifically the difficulty around job security in Ireland. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) conducts a yearly survey on how graduates are faring in the spring after they leave their ITE programme. The 2014 survey (HEA, 2016) shows that there is a higher percentage than previously obtaining employment in Ireland with 80% of NQTs in a job nine months after graduating from their teacher education programme with 18% of those graduating from the then Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PDE) working overseas. There are high rates of casualisation for NQTs, especially for post-primary teachers. In the 2014 survey, some 32% of those graduating with a PDE and 26% of those with a BEd degree were working on a part-time basis. The pattern of employment of post-primary teachers is a mixed one with teachers working on a permanent, contractual and part-time basis. Unlike the situation at primary level, there is regular use of temporary, part-time contracts to provide coverage of subject needs and gaps.

While all teachers had their salaries cut under emergency legislation in 2010, NQTs endured an additional 14% reduction which, given their mostly part-time status, caused much dissatisfaction. According to a survey commissioned by the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI, 2017) two-thirds of teachers who qualified in the previous couple of years were working in part-time teaching positions. Casualisation of working conditions is a major problem for NQTs and overall job security is the foremost concern for them. More recently, a key positive change is that fixed term teachers can more easily and quickly gain additional hours; and NQTs have to wait for a minimum of two (previously four) years for a contract of indefinite duration (CID) which allows them to hold their hours on a permanent basis.

A recently published DES Report (DES, 2017) seeking to understand supply and demand of teachers in Ireland shows that, while casualisation and short-term contracts have been part of the lot of the NQT for many years, especially at second level, the picture would appear to be slightly more complicated than this would suggest. There would appear to be a serious shortage of second-level teachers for the following curriculum areas: Irish, Home Economics, Physics and European Languages (DES, 2017). There would appear to be an oversupply of teachers of history, geography and English. There is a major shortage of available teachers for substitution work at both primary and post-primary levels and this problem seems to be more acute at primary level. In their analysis of teaching supply between 2010 and 2015 only two-thirds of teacher absences were covered by substitutes such was the difficulty of schools to recruit them.

The DES report recommends a managed and co-ordinated approach to the number of teachers graduating to help prevent an under or over supply. The difficulty is that there is no accurate way of measuring these trends at present. The expectation is that the supply of primary teachers can continue to meet demand for the next four years but that there will be significant growth in the numbers of pupils in second-level schools requiring more teachers, assuming the pupil-teacher ratio remains at current levels. It is projected that pupil enrolments in post primary will increase steeply in the coming years peaking in 2025.

The process of projecting the needs of the system are made more complex because of inward and outward migration of teachers which increased as a result of the EU directive on the mutual recognition of qualifications and the arrival of a commercial provider (Hibernia College) 10 years ago in Ireland, the latter is now the biggest provider in terms of numbers of primary teachers. Both these features pose a particular challenge to regulating the system. While the DES understandably notes that an oversupply of teachers is more tolerable than an under supply, the former is seen as also problematic as with insufficient employment for teachers or teachers' inability to earn an adequate income, some leave the profession and/or reject teaching as a career thus posing problems for the quality of recruits.

While the trend of emigration to the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East has been a feature for some time, this has increased in more recent times due to the recession and the accompanying austerity measures in 2010 that triggered a 'two-tier' pay system (mentioned above). Schools recruit teachers in a variety of ways, including direct advertising of posts, through recruitment agencies and through local authority schemes. There is a practice of international recruitment firms recruiting teachers abroad with higher remuneration and better working conditions. In very recent times this has caused problems in many Irish schools of securing substitute teachers.

## 1.5 Summary and overview of the report

This introductory section of the report presented the background to the project; outlined the research design; and summarised the earlier findings from the Report on Phase 1 and 2 (Hick *et al.*, 2018). We then set out the context for NQT induction and employment, which forms the backdrop for Phases 3 and 4 of the project, focusing on NQTs' experiences in relation to inclusive teaching.

In the next section (2), we review the research literature on teacher preparation for inclusive teaching; and on the development of newly qualified teachers.

The following section (3) reports on the methodology of Phases 3 and 4, setting out the research design and detailing the methods used for data collection and analysis. It also highlights the longitudinal aspect of the project.

The 'findings' section (4) contains the substantive content of this report, and presents our interpretations of the data in detail in relation to each data source. These are the surveys of NQTs in their first and second years of teaching, and interviews with a sub-sample of NQTs in each year, together with interviews with school Principals.

In the final section (5), these findings are drawn together and presented with our reflections in response to each of the research questions, taking a longitudinal perspective.

## 2. Developing inclusive teachers: a literature review

This review presents an overview of the major strands of literature that inform our research.

The aim is to situate the project within broader research on inclusive education and on teacher education, rather than attempt a comprehensive or systematic review. The theoretical framework for the project is taken from the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2011), which itself was based on an extensive review of the literature. The literature reviewed here focuses on the period 2000-2015, highlighting the most recent published research, and drawing on a preliminary journal database search, together with a 'hand search' of key journals, authors and book series. This process was informed by consultation with members of the international expert reference group.

Our report on the first year of the project (NCSE, 2017), contains a more detailed review of the literature on key themes in inclusive education. The first two sections of this report, entitled 'Inclusion and diversity: changing perspectives' and 'Initial Teacher Education', offer an abridged version for readers who come to this Final Report fresh.

The third section, on 'Identity and the new teacher', builds on the earlier review with additional material on the themes of identity and agency in the early career development of inclusive teachers.

### 2.1 Inclusion and diversity: changing perspectives

The field of inclusive education initially developed as a response to the exclusion of children with disabilities from the mainstream of education, but has continued to change and broaden in focus. Clough (2000) outlined a framework of five broad approaches that map the major perspectives on special and inclusive education since the 1950s: the psycho-medical legacy; the sociological response; curricular approaches; school improvement strategies; and the disability studies critique. This is not to suggest a simplistic view of consensus or linear stages in the development of thought; rather the aim is to place some of the debates in a historical context. Arguably, the most significant shift in thinking about inclusive education more recently has been the turn to diversity and difference more broadly (Hick & Thomas, 2009).

Inclusion as a term was introduced into policy debates in the 1990s. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was particularly influential and led to many countries adopting local legislation related to both social and educational inclusion, as well as further development in international policy such as the UN Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006). This international recognition has continued, with UNESCO's Incheon Declaration (2015) proposal for a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

In this sense, inclusive education has moved on from the initial focus on disability or special educational needs, to encompass all learners, with particular attention to those who may be subject to exclusion or marginalisation from education. This has important implications for how we understand debates within the field, for example in relation to the notion of inclusive pedagogy, and for how we may seek to develop initial teacher education to prepare more inclusive teachers. Crowther, Cummings, Dyson, and Millward (2003, p. 63) point to a 'significant shift in thinking ... [that] needs to take place when the focus moves from the politics of disablement to the politics of social and economic disadvantage'. In terms of including diverse learners, the required 'shift in thinking' arguably needs to be broader, to encompass a focus on intersectionality in relation to race, gender and sexuality as well as class and social disadvantage. !!!

This is not to deny the difficulties schools and school systems may encounter in engaging with the challenge of developing more inclusive practices. As Slee and Allan (2001, p. 179) point out:

There is a tendency to speak in one breath about inclusive education, but to fail to acknowledge the policy context that presses us relentlessly towards educational exclusion in the other. Here we refer to the marketisation of schooling...

So inclusive education has increasingly been understood as encompassing all learners, particularly those seen as marginalised or more vulnerable to exclusion, but not restricted to those with identified special educational needs or disabilities. Indeed, inclusive education can also be understood in relation to social justice more broadly. For example, Fraser (2009) proposed an influential three-dimensional conceptualisation of social justice, incorporating elements of redistribution, recognition and representation. Waitoller and Artiles (2013) drew on Fraser's model to propose that:

the inclusive education movement should constitute an ongoing struggle toward (a) the *redistribution* of access to and participation in quality opportunities to learn (redistribution dimension); (b) the *recognition* and valuing of all student differences as reflected in content, pedagogy, and assessment tools (recognition dimension); and (c) the creation of more opportunities for nondominant groups to advance claims of educational exclusion and their respective solutions (representation dimension; see also Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

In the influential 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, & Shaw, 2002), inclusion is conceived as a process of promoting the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. Ainscow (2007), Ainscow *et al.* (2006) and Muijs *et al.* (2010) have argued strongly that addressing gaps in processes and structures within schools (as well as associated mechanisms in the wider education system) is the key to ensuring the realisation of inclusive education. In particular, Ainscow (2007) has identified the crucial role of school leaders in both setting the tone for inclusive approaches as well as the importance of a structured programme of identification of gaps such as resource issues or particular working practices that hinder effective response to individual student needs. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) consider the impetus to address such gaps as being located in the value systems adopted within a school, and thus their approach is both practically orientated and value driven.

Whilst this stance reflects a broadly supported approach, it must be acknowledged that inclusive education remains a contested concept, without a clear consensus on its meanings, which remain fluid and subject to appropriation for various purposes (Slee, 2010b). These debates are inevitably reflected differently in different national policy contexts (Artiles, Kozleski and Waitoller, 2011); it is therefore unsurprising that governmental agencies may sometimes revise their own definitions of inclusive education. For example, the European Agency for Inclusive Education and Special Educational Needs recently issued a Position Paper which shifted its stance from relying on a broad UNESCO definition:

Inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3).

EASNIE's new position statement declines to offer a definition of inclusive education, but rather proposes a vision of an inclusive education system:

The ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers (EASNIE, 2015, p. 1).

Nevertheless, promoting more inclusive teacher education remains widely accepted as a key priority for the development of more inclusive schools and school systems (Florian, 2009, 2011).

## 2.2 Initial Teacher Education

There is a consensus in the literature that research on initial teacher education for inclusion is still somewhat underdeveloped. For example, Pugach, Blanton, and Boveda (2014) conclude that 'research on preservice preparation for collaboration and inclusion... still seems to be in the early stages of development' (p. 158). Likewise, the European Agency for Special Needs & Inclusive Education state:

There is a developing, but still quite limited, research base documenting how teachers working in inclusive settings are being – or should be – prepared for their work (EADSNE, 2012, p.37).

This section aims to provide an overview of key themes within the international research literature on initial teacher education for inclusive teaching. These themes are the implications of inclusive pedagogies for teacher education; the development of curriculum models for promoting inclusive teaching within ITE; the link between school experience and the ITE curriculum; and the relationship between general teacher education programmes and inclusive teaching.

The section concludes by situating the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2012b) in the context of the literature.

### 2.2.1 Inclusive pedagogy

One influential strand of research (e.g. Sheehy *et al.* (2009)) has suggested that, despite traditional assumptions underpinning special education, there is limited evidence for separate specialist pedagogies for learners described as having special educational needs. Norwich and Lewis (2007) proposed that it may be helpful to distinguish between specialist knowledge of particular disabilities and categories of special educational need; the use of specialist teaching strategies and equipment; and whether these can be said to constitute a special pedagogy. This argument suggests that, whilst some learners may require more intensive teaching, this does not necessarily amount to a fundamentally different or 'special' mode of learning. At this stage, no clear consensus has been established within the research literature on how best to balance understandings of inclusive pedagogy in initial teacher education, with access to knowledge about particular categories of special educational needs or disabilities (Mintz & Wyse, 2015).

However, the issue of inclusive pedagogy extends beyond learners with disabilities to all learners who may be at risk of exclusion or marginalisation (Dyson & Hick, 2005; Wrigley & Hick, 2009). So in this sense the debate around specialist knowledge is superseded by the shift in focus away from inclusive education as concerned primarily with special educational needs and disability, towards situating inclusive practice in a broader framework in relation to diverse learners and encompassing issues of cultural responsiveness.

Lani Florian and colleagues (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Florian & Spratt, 2013) have more recently moved this debate onto the terrain of practice, through ethnographic study of the 'craft knowledge' of experienced teachers who were seen as adopting inclusive approaches. Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) description of the 'inclusive pedagogical approach' reads as one definition of inclusive pedagogy in practice, summarised in Box 1 below:

### **Box 1: Requirements of the inclusive pedagogical approach (from Florian and Back-Hawkins, 2011)**

#### The inclusive pedagogical approach requires:

1. Shifting the focus from one that is concerned with only those individuals who have been identified as having 'additional needs' to the learning of all children in the community of the classroom
  - Creating learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone, so that all learners are able to participate in classroom life
  - Extending what is ordinarily available for all learners (creating a rich learning community) rather than using teaching and learning strategies that are suitable for most alongside something 'additional' or 'different' for some who experience difficulties
  - Focusing on what is to be taught (and how) rather than who is to learn it
2. **Rejecting deterministic beliefs about ability as being fixed and the associated idea that the presence of some will hold back the progress of others**
  - Believing that all children will make progress, learn and achieve
  - Focusing teaching and learning on what children can do rather than what they cannot do
  - Using a variety of grouping strategies to support everyone's learning rather than relying on ability grouping to separate ('able' from 'less able' students)
  - Using formative assessment to support learning.
3. **Seeing difficulties in learning as professional challenges for teachers, rather than deficits in learners, that encourage the development of new ways of working**
  - Seeking and trying out new ways of working to support the learning of all children
  - Working with and through other adults that respect the dignity of learners as full members of the community of the classroom
  - Being committed to continuing professional development as a way of developing more inclusive practices

Research on the development of inclusive pedagogy within Initial Teacher Education remains at a relatively early stage. Florian (2008) considers the implications of inclusive pedagogy for teacher education, based on **an account of the dynamic reciprocal relationships between 'knowing, doing and believing'** in developing teachers' inclusive practices. She summarises the approach taken in the Inclusive Practice Project at the University of Aberdeen as aiming to ensure that student teachers:

have a greater awareness and understanding of the educational and social problems/issues that can affect children's learning;

have developed strategies that they can use to support and deal with such difficulties.

(Florian, 2008, p. 206).

Beacham and Rouse (2012) surveyed student teachers' attitudes towards inclusion before and after the introduction of a new ITE programme which drew on the 'Learning without Limits' approach, which focused on challenging notions of fixed ability (S. Hart, Dixon, Drummond, & McIntyre, 2004). In contrast to some previous findings that positive attitudes whilst on programme may become more negative following school experience, both primary and secondary students in this study were reported as sustaining largely positive attitudes throughout. Jordan, Schwartz, and McGhie-Richmond (2009) report a longitudinal study in Canada, which emphasised the role of inclusive pedagogy in both pre-service and in-service teacher education in challenging assumptions relating to learners' fixed abilities, and enabling teachers to take responsibility for developing more inclusive practices.

Booth (2011) draws attention to **the values that need to inform initial teacher education in order to promote more inclusive practices**, and builds on the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth *et al.*, 2002) to propose a draft set of 'indicators' for evolving inclusive approaches. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE, 2011) situates inclusive teaching more broadly within teacher education, and is discussed further in Section 2.2.5.

### **2.2.2 Curriculum models in ITE and teacher attitudes to inclusion**

**The turn from 'special' towards inclusive pedagogies is equally reflected in research on teacher education. There has been considerable debate around whether curriculum content related to inclusive education is best addressed in separate or discrete units or modules of an initial teacher education programme, or 'infused', 'permeated' or 'embedded' across the curriculum** (e.g. Loreman, 2010; Voltz, 2003). In part this has arisen from a historical legacy of special educational needs being seen as a specialist area – akin to a curriculum subject specialism – on which only a minority of student teachers would be expected to focus. This approach runs counter to the more recent move towards Initial Teacher Education aiming **to prepare all teachers to be inclusive**. In some countries, specialist ITE qualifications for particular categories of special educational need or disability remain the norm (e.g. in much of the USA); in others, specialist qualifications in inclusive or special education are primarily at the post-initial stage (e.g. the UK and Ireland).

A 'special pedagogies' approach would suggest a focus on delivering specialist knowledge and skills for particular categories of disability or special educational need. In a generic ITE programme, such content might lend itself to delivery through 'discrete' course components, such as distinct modules or units; or even in separate pathways within ITE programmes. An 'inclusive pedagogy' approach would suggest a greater emphasis on making links with the rest of the ITE curriculum. For example, there could be less focus on specialist knowledge and skills, or more attention to planning or adapting teaching for all learners.

There is a clear consensus in the literature that initial teacher education programmes should seek to promote positive attitudes towards inclusion amongst student teachers. One stream of research has sought to establish whether discrete or permeated models are more effective, in terms of promoting more positive attitudes to inclusive teaching. Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma, and Deppeler (2014) review approaches to measuring inclusive education and, despite identifying some 'potentially promising' work, concede that: 'in the absence of a unified definition of what inclusion is, attempts to measure or compare such a complex equity issue are challenging' (p.14).

There have been a considerable number of studies that seek to measure student teacher attitudes, many of which focus on specific curriculum innovations at particular institutions, often giving pre- and post-intervention measures of attitudes using similar survey instruments (Cullen, Gregory, & Noto, 2010; Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, 2011), sometimes addressing other issues such as perceptions of self-efficacy and school climate. There is a long-standing theme within the literature which notes that positive teacher attitudes to dealing with difference within the classroom can be positively associated with effective inclusive practice (Copfer & Specht, 2014). Much of this work has been quantitative and has involved the use of Likert scale-based studies and pre- and post-studies related to particular interventions in pre- and in-service teacher education (see for example Carroll, Forlin, & Jobling, 2003; Florian & Rouse, 2009; Forlin, 2012, 2010; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008)). This evidence base, however, is open to critique in terms of the extent to which it actually can in isolation demonstrate differences in experiences or outcomes for students and schools.

Specht *et al.* (2015) completed a large survey of Canadian student teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion, and found that prior experience of people with special educational needs was linked with more positive attitudes and greater confidence. In the Irish context for example, O'Toole and Burke (2013) surveyed attitudes to inclusion amongst initial teacher education students at a university in Ireland, and found that whilst students were generally positive in their approach, they expressed greater concerns in relation to supporting learners identified as presenting difficulties with behaviour. Lambe (2011) surveyed student teachers and interviewed teacher educators in Northern Ireland, and suggested that a 'permeation' approach to inclusive education may not always be effective, due to variations in approaches to the curriculum and to constraints experienced by teacher educators.

Kim (2011) surveyed students across 10 teacher preparation programmes in New York state and suggested that students showed more positive attitudes to inclusion where special education content is infused with the general teacher education curriculum. Sharma *et al.* (2008) completed a study of student teacher attitudes towards inclusion across five universities in four countries (Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore) and found evidence to suggest that:

both infusion and single subject models are effective. Based on the data available from this study, though, we cannot say whether the infusion model is better than a single unit model for educating pre-service teachers. (p.783).

### 2.2.3 School experience and inclusive teaching

The curriculum delivered through college or university-led sessions is of course only one part of Initial Teacher Education programmes. A substantial component consists of experience in schools, and a key factor is how this is integrated into the learning of student teachers.

Researchers have sought to address this issue and a review commissioned by EASNIE (2015b) argues that the balance between course content and placement experience is a key dimension of initial teacher education in preparing new teachers to become more inclusive. Forlin (2010) proposes a 'reframing' of teacher education for inclusion as a central element of initial teacher education for all student teachers and with greater links between school and university learning, together with increased attention to the recruitment of more diverse learners to teacher education programmes.

The notion of a professional development school or a clinical model of teacher education has become increasingly influential. For example, in the USA this was stimulated by the initial report of the Holmes Group (1986), although this early work was critiqued as neglecting special education (Sapon-Shevin, 1990).<sup>3</sup> Many examples of this approach have since been developed, and this shift towards school-based professional learning is summarised in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's 'Blue Ribbon' panel report on transforming teacher education (NCATE, 2010). Likewise, in an Irish context, research by Hall *et al.* (2012) on initial teacher education and the experience of being a 'student teacher' draws attention to the importance of school placement and the enculturation effect. However, the central issue remains how practical experience for student teachers in schools can best be aligned with the teacher education curriculum, in relation to developing more inclusive practices with diverse learners.

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3 It should be noted that because special education was not part of the consideration early on in the development of Professional Development Schools, some schools were identified as Professional Development Schools only for ITE in special education.

Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) reviewed course content for 109 elementary undergraduate teacher education programmes in the USA, and found that whilst many cover characteristics of disabilities, relatively few address key aspects of inclusive practice such as differentiation or teacher collaboration. Their focus was on a 'possible disconnect between what pre-service teachers are taught and what they face as practicing teachers' (p.11) and they suggest that more research is needed on how best to integrate fieldwork experience with university-based tuition. Nash and Norwich (2010) surveyed PGCE programmes in England and highlighted the need for more planned links between school and university learning opportunities:

Whether trainees learn about adapting teaching to the needs of pupils with varied kinds of SENs during whole class teaching practice would... depend on how the specific placement schools provided for these pupils (p.1478).

Lawson, Norwich, and Nash (2013) addressed this issue through a school-based task for learning about pupils with special educational needs, within a PGCE programme in England.

In summary, we would concur with Watkins, De Vroey and Symeonidou's (2016) view that 'teacher educators should model effective practices for teachers' (p.70), and with their summation that:

While there is wide agreement on the content required to effectively prepare teachers for diversity in the classroom, there is as yet little evidence to indicate the most effective approaches to teacher education and how best to support a move from discrete modules dealing with 'inclusion' towards integrated content (p.70).

Of course, this debate arises within the larger question of contextualising disability within diversity more broadly, and the question of a reconceptualisation of teacher education on this basis, which is addressed in the following section.

### **2.2.4 Inclusive teaching and general ITE**

There is clearly a need to locate research on initial teacher education for inclusion within the broader field of teacher education research. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012) discuss differences in disciplinary traditions between general and special teacher education in the US context and propose areas where these traditionally separate fields can benefit from collaboration, for example through a focus on social justice. This represents a further strand of the argument that a fruitful approach to resolving differences or potential contradictions between general and special teacher education traditions lies through relocating special education within a broader approach to inclusive education for diverse learners. The notion of 'culturally responsive pedagogy' in relation to learners with special educational needs (Waitoller, 2014) draws attention to a broader understanding of inclusive education in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity and issues of intersectionality. Taking an intersectional approach as a lens through which to understand multiple markers of difference is increasingly recognised as important in this context (Artiles, 2013; Cole, 2009).

Artiles, Dorn, and Bal (2016) point to the dual nature of disability as both an 'object of protection', affording access to resources, and as a marker of difference invoking discrimination and injustice. This approach may help to explain the sense of a 'gravitational pull' back towards special educational needs and disability, in teacher education programmes aiming to address inclusive education. In the USA, the situation regarding stand-alone specialist ITE qualifications for special needs is changing, with the introduction of dual certification schemes (Pugach, Blanton and Correa, 2011). However, Pugach and Blanton (2012) analysed programme documentation for three merged, special and general 'dual certification' teacher education programmes, and found a tendency for these redesigned programmes to continue to pay more attention to disability than to other aspects of difference and diversity. Oyler (2011) gives an account of how one merger process for dual certification developed into a full programme redesign, aiming for more inclusive teacher education and drawing on Linda Ware's notion of 'critical special education' (Ware, 2010). Such concerns point to the need for a more radical reconceptualisation of teacher education, requiring teacher educators to 'collaboratively reconstruct teacher education as a transformative experience that truly prepares all teachers for all students' (Villegas, 2012, 290).

Bhopal and Rhamie (2014) suggest that there has been insufficient research exploring student teachers' understandings of 'race', diversity and inclusion within initial teacher education programmes in England. Their study points to students' complex and multifaceted understandings, and highlights a need for more practical support on how to respond to diversity and issues of race within the classroom context. Likewise, Hick *et al.* (2011) draw attention to the need to provide opportunities for teacher educators to develop their confidence in dealing with issues of inclusion and diversity within the ITE curriculum.

Reflective learning is a well-established component of teacher education programmes, and a number of authors have considered how this might best address inclusive education. For example, Jones (2014) points to the importance of ensuring that students experience authentic 'insider perspectives' within teacher education programmes, to enrich their reflective learning in relation to inclusive education. Sharma (2010) reviews a range of strategies that could support reflective learning in focusing on inclusive practice. Baglieri (2008), writing from a 'disability studies in education' perspective, gives an account of a reflective process enabling student teachers to draw on their own experiences of difference or 'otherness', to both make meanings from social and cultural models of disability, and to make connections with their developing understandings of inclusive practices. She suggests that: 'providing teachers opportunities to reflect and connect to the experiences of persons with disabilities is a promising direction for inclusive education' (p. 601).

## 2.2.5 The Profile of Inclusive Teachers

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) conducted a four-year project on Teacher Education for Inclusion, involving representatives of 25 countries. The project addressed two key issues: what kind of teachers do we need for an inclusive society in a 21st century school?; and what are the essential teacher competences for inclusive education? Key outputs from the Teacher Education for Inclusion project included an international literature review (EADSNE, 2010) and, most importantly, the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (EADSNE 2012b).

The Profile of Inclusive Teachers has informed the theoretical framework for our project, so that it is important to situate this approach within the research literature. The research questions for the project set out by NCSE, take the EASNIE Profile for Inclusive Teachers as a key reference point. In practice, the Profile has provided the research team with an operational definition of 'inclusive teaching' to work from. EASNIE describe this Profile as 'stimulus material... not a script for ITE programme content', nor as a finished product which should be seen as set in stone. Section 3 of the report describes how we have drawn on the Profile in developing the methodology and research design.

The EASNIE Profile adopts a broad approach to inclusive education that encompasses diverse learners and is not restricted to those with identified special educational needs:

The values and areas of competence for inclusive education provide teachers with the foundations they need to work with learners with a diverse range of needs within a mainstream classroom. This is an important distinction that shifts the focus of inclusion beyond meeting the needs of specific groups of learners (e.g. those with special educational needs). The values and areas of competence reinforce the critical message that inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just an approach for particular groups with particular needs (EADSNE, 2012, p. 12).

The conceptual basis of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers lies in a values-based approach to inclusive education. The Profile further adopts an approach based on broad 'areas of competence', which are seen as developmental and as spanning both initial teacher education and early career development.

The four Core Values and the associated 'areas of competence' proposed in the Profile are:

- **Valuing Learner Diversity:**

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learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education. The areas of competence within this core value relate to: conceptions of inclusive education; the teacher's view of learner difference.

- **Supporting All Learners:**

teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements. The areas of competence within this core value relate to: promoting the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners; effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes.

- **Working with Others:**

collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers. The areas of competence within this core value relate to: working with parents and families; working with a range of other educational professionals.

- **Personal Professional Development:**

teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning. The areas of competence within this core value relate to: teachers as reflective practitioners; initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development.

These areas of competence are set out in terms of underpinning **attitudes or beliefs**, which rely on certain **knowledges or levels of understanding**, and require particular **skills or abilities** to be developed in order to be implemented in practice. The number of items listed under each heading varies; a copy of the full Profile of Inclusive Teachers is given in Appendix 1. Table 1 gives exemplars of an item from the area of competence on 'conceptions of inclusive education':

**Table 1: EASNIE Profile exemplars**

<b><i>Attitudes &amp; beliefs</i></b>	Access to mainstream education alone is not enough; participation means that all learners are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful for them
<b><i>Knowledge &amp; understanding</i></b>	Inclusive education as the presence (access to education) participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes) of all learners
<b><i>Skills &amp; abilities</i></b>	Critically examining one's own beliefs and attitudes and the impact these have on actions

An important point to note is that the Profile of Inclusive Teachers goes some way towards locating inclusive teaching within general teacher education. For example taking 'Personal Professional Development' as one of four Core Values reflects an established theme within initial teacher education. Some of the 'Areas of Competence' would also be familiar within teacher education, for example: teachers as reflective practitioners; initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development; working with a range of other educational professionals. This approach follows from the aspiration that all teachers should be prepared to be inclusive:

A key objective of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers is to... reinforce the argument that... inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers and that preparing all teachers for work in inclusive settings is the responsibility of all teacher educators working across ITE programmes (EADSNE 2012, p.11).

## 2.3 Induction and the NQT Year

It is well recognised in the literature that the first year of teaching can be a time of considerable challenge for beginning teachers. The shift from prospective teacher to professional schoolteacher has been characterised in the literature as a reality shock (McCormack & Thomas, 2003), a cultural shock (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) and a praxis shock (Gold, 1996). Feiman-Nemser (2001) notes that, like all beginning professionals, teachers must demonstrate skills and abilities they do not yet have and thus must live with uncertainty. The issues that teachers face in the novice teacher year that may contribute to these 'shocks' has long been the subject of research. For example, Veenman (1984; 1987) reports on a synthesis of over 100 studies on the transition to teaching, which identifies classroom management, discipline, motivating pupils, dealing with individual differences, assessment, relations with parents, classroom organization, insufficient resources and dealing with problems of individual students as the most challenging areas for students. To a greater or lesser extent, such factors continue to feature in the more recent literature (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015; Dowding, 1998; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Schuck, Aubusson, Buchanan, Varadharajan, & Burke, 2017).

As noted, the importance of induction in the novice teacher year to help beginning teachers deal with these challenges is well recognised in the literature. Issues considered include mentoring (Lindgren, 2005; Richter *et al.*, 2013; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); collaboration with other teachers and peers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2003, 2012), the type of delivery and intensity of induction programmes (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2008; Glazerman *et al.*, 2010; Kang & Berliner, 2012; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017), partnership with schools ((Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2006), school climate (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Johnson & Teachers, 2004); the relationship to assessment and certification (Darling-Hammond, 2017; A. N. N. McCormack & Thomas, 2003) as well as the link to the university (M. Cochran-Smith, 2005; Post, Pugach, Harris, & Hughes, 2006; K. Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2014) and the role of knowledge and expertise development (Boyd *et al.*, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Morris & Hiebert, 2017; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Other researchers have looked at the process of socialization in induction and its role in developing teacher identity (Clandinin *et al.*, 2015; Forseille & Raptis, 2016), and more generally there is a strong strand in the literature which focuses on identity as an organizing theme in the development of the beginning teacher.

### 2.3.1 Identity as an organising theme

At the outset we note that identity needs to be understood as something that is constantly evolving and contingent on context, history and politics at local as well as broader levels. Identity is not given or predetermined but something that is ever an interaction between the agency of the individual and the structures of which he or she is a part (Atkinson, 1985; Wenger, 1998). It is more an enactment, a performance than a possession or essential essence that is core or unchanging within the person. To exemplify this thinking on identity in relation to teachers, including new teachers, work by Maggie McLure (1993) some time ago is a helpful starting point. Based on an empirical study of 69 primary and secondary teachers, McLure explored the notion of identity as an organizing principle in teachers' lives. Her rationale stemmed from what she described as a possible 'crisis of identity' as traditional ways of being a teacher 'disintegrate' under new social and economic pressures. Her study is not confined to the beginner teacher but, along with other work on identity, is of interest here as it offers a strong theoretical account of identity and its value in understanding the lifeworld of the new teacher. She suggests that identity is a form of argument that people use to make sense of themselves and their actions, 'to seek coherence in their journey from past to present, to work out where they "stand" in relation to others; and to defend their attitudes and conduct'. Like others who have examined identity as a concept (e.g. Wenger, 1998) she challenges the notion of a core or essential essence as the foundation of an individual's actions and choices. Therefore identity can be viewed as an ongoing project that is part and parcel of living in the world. It is performed and enacted. It is performed through our actions and interactions with others and as such enabled and constrained by opportunities extended and denied as well as by structures and contexts, real and perceived.

### 2.3.2 Identity and Praxis Shock

Much of the literature about the new teacher's identity notes the impact of what is frequently termed the 'reality shock' (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012; McCormack & Thomas 2003) or 'praxis shock' (Gold 1996; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010) which occurs in the very first year of teaching, now that the new teacher is exposed to the full reality of their responsibilities. A key challenge for the NQT, according to the literature, is their need to be recognized as proper teachers from the outset. In the mid-1990s research conducted by McIntyre and Haggarty (1996) showed that NQTs did not perceive that they needed support and did not think that they should be viewed as such. The researchers reported that 'both NQTs and experienced staff seemed sceptical about any structured provision for NQTs which either distracted them from their classroom teaching or implied that they were not fully competent to undertake that teaching' (cited in Haggarty and Postlethwaite, 2012, p.243). Of course, the literature on induction and mentoring notes the value of support and mentoring in the early stages of the new teacher's career; however it is salient to note the tension, identified by the latter authors, which may occur between the need for ongoing support on the one hand and being positioned as not fully competent on the other.

It seems that, if induction is framed in a way that reinforces a deficit view of the new teacher, as opposed to one of progression, then problems unsurprisingly ensue for the identity of the new teacher. Haggarty and Postlethwaite's study indicates the importance of appropriate induction and avoiding the danger 'that the very people offering the support to the NQTs have limited conceptions of both their role and of pedagogy, and at the same time don't, or aren't able to, draw on thinking and the knowledge base that NQTs bring with them from ITE and their other experiences prior to taking up their teaching post' (245). This is a big demand of those more established in the profession and, arguably, it can't be assumed that the relevant mentoring expertise is available without appropriate training for would-be mentors. The analysis of Haggarty and Postlethwaite, albeit on a relatively small scale, leads them to go so far as to say that conditions under which the new teacher experiences their first year can determine their effectiveness and attitudes over an entire career.

Their empirical study highlights the problems of a perceived gap between actual identity (of the NQT) and a designated identity (by a mentor) leading to significant unhappiness on the part of the NQT and ultimately the closing down of 'opportunities for a more expansive transformation of thinking' (p.258) and the implementation of partially understood pedagogic practices. Where such a tension exists for the NQT it would seem that conservative practices win out over more innovative and progressive ones, thus shaping a new teacher identity in narrow terms.

Thus far, we can see how important an appropriate support structure is for the new teacher, one which recognizes the new teacher as competent but with opportunities to learn based on their understandings and needs.

### 2.3.3 Identity enhanced and extended by appropriate support

Several studies have focused more specifically on beginner teachers' professional identity. In an exploration of that literature Hong (2010) highlights six factors that are particularly relevant for teachers' career pursuit, decision-making and goal commitment: value, self-efficacy, commitment, emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and micropolitics, all of which are assumed to constitute professional identity. Drawing on these six concepts, using a mixed methods design, and focusing on US participants with five years' experience or less in the profession, including some who had left the profession during the period, the researcher sought to understand how her sample perceive their professional identity as a teacher. In comparison to their concerns at pre-service level, beginner teachers in this research indicated 'concrete and practical concerns' about such matters as class management, and relations with parents and colleagues. Classroom management and discipline was, apparently, mentioned by all participants as a factor in their professional identity, but was the most salient feature for those who dropped out of the profession within five years of embarking on it. For this group emotional burnout, characterized as unfulfilled commitment, lack of efficacy, unsupportive administration, a sense of heavy responsibility, was a critical issue for their professional lives. Thus, the building of supportive and collaborative working environments is vital for the beginner teacher and would appear to be a major factor in retaining teachers in the profession. Of interest in this study's findings also was that professional identity for the beginner is strongly shaped by pre-service experience such that professional identity can be viewed as an extension and development of the identities shaped at that earlier stage, thus highlighting the importance of initial teacher education.

A small-scale research and development study in 2000 (Corrie, 2000) which aimed to support NQTs' collaborative skills and to monitor their progress, is interesting in the context of new teacher identities. The study confirms earlier research (e.g., Menter, 1995) that showed that, by the end of their first year of teaching NQTs' professional understanding mostly privileged isolation, privacy and individualism. The NQT accounts drew on images of teachers as lone workers in their classrooms. Their accounts also attested to wanting to fit in and belong to the new school community and they gave no indication of being change agents in their schools. Some participants for instance were keen not to 'rock the boat' and became quickly absorbed into and by the culture of the school, in one case, abandoning initial attempts to engage colleagues in reflective discussion. On the other hand, where school cultures consciously and strategically supported collaboration and provided public recognition within the staff for NQTs, they were empowered to become agents of change as well as ongoing learners. In the latter case a key influence is the school principal.

Research by Williams, Prestage, and Bedward (2001) in England aligns with the above. Their research on the induction of NQTs and their experience in their first year of teaching led them to identify a continuum of cultures. At one end is the highly individualistic culture, the least positive culture, where NQTs survived but did not thrive. Here individualism among staff often constrained the new teacher and denied them access to particular developmental activities. At the other extreme, they found the more positive culture of 'spontaneous collaboration' where the new teacher obtained ongoing support through 'unpredictable but developmental activity' that goes well beyond the statutory requirements. Interestingly, these researchers conclude that while 'centralised and statutory demands seem to have been successful in raising the standard of induction practice, the characteristics that take induction practice beyond the satisfactory and into the realms of excellence are, by their nature, not amenable to statute or external mandate' (p.267).

How NQTs are socialized or mentored in their first few years would appear to be an influencing factor in their effectiveness as professionals and in their positive identities about their career choice. One comparative study of interest explored how mentoring is constituted as a social practice for the new teacher. The study was based in two settings: New South Wales, Australia and Finland, paying attention to official documents and to mentors' understandings (Heikkinen, Wilkinson, Aspfors, & Bristol, 2018). Both settings have an induction programme for new teachers though it is relatively new in Finland, a country that, despite its fame for recruiting highly qualified entrants to the profession, having a strong research-base to its initial teacher education programmes and scoring very highly in terms of international metrics, like PISA, has concerns about new teacher attrition (Heikkinen *et al.* 2018). An induction programme is only recently introduced in Finland. Importantly, it would seem that, in the model adopted, mentors and mentees are positioned as co-learners as they engage in professional dialogue with one another in a 'safe' environment. A hierarchical relationship is thus avoided and mentors constantly emphasized the importance of 'being equal' in their interviews. Inevitably, this impacts the new teacher's identity and confers a status that is certainly resistant to any deficit view. In a US context, Bacharach *et al.* (2010) studied a model of co-teaching within teacher preparation programmes, which could prepare student teachers for a co-learning context with more co-equal roles and might well be extended to an induction process for NQTs. Zeichner *et al.* (2014) also discuss the possibilities for equalizing power relations between beginning teachers and their teachers and mentors, and the potential benefits such restructuring of relationships might bring in terms of teacher development.

Although the Australian setting, like the Finnish one, emphasized such aspects as 'safe space' and the sharing of ideas, relations could not be described as 'equal' between mentors and mentees. In NSW there was a more instrumentalist focus and more stress on guiding practice by the mentor and **a stronger novice-expert relationship in evidence**. In Finland the analysis of the researchers showed a higher level of trust placed in new teachers and in their capacities for reflection and learning. Explanations for the differences in approach in the two settings shed light on the cultural differences that emerge in practice due to histories, political contexts and social expectations, but also due to the roles and expectations set for participants. Whether the mentor has a judgment and evaluator role as well as a supportive one is very significant. For instance in NSW mentoring practices are based on supporting the new teacher to become accredited. If mentees did not improve professionally then they would not be deemed to meet the accreditation standards and so could be dismissed. This was unsurprisingly a major feature in explaining the difference in the level of trust sometimes found in the two countries.

### 2.3.4 School culture and the identity of the new teacher

**One thing that is clear from the literature is that school culture is critical for shaping the new teacher's opportunities to continue to learn about teaching.** More specifically, what appears to be pertinent is a culture that **allows the new teacher to feel they can share any uncertainties and strengths in an open and collegial atmosphere** (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Jakhelln, 2011; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Totterdell *et al.*, 2008). One study conducted in Norway identified three key, school-based elements that account for teachers leaving the profession in the early years of their career. These are collective cooperation, role conflicts and emotional aspects of the job (see Engvik & Emstad, 2017). Opportunities for having their competence affirmed and recognized by significant others is important. Socialising the new teacher into the profession, according to the literature, means that school leaders should not take for granted that it happens effectively. Rather, **the message to school leaders is that leaders need to pay attention to how staff and groups within the staff help the NQT to be part of collaborations by encouraging their ideas and participation.** NQT relationships within the school are fundamental to the sense of belonging of the new teacher.

Narayan (2010) presents a valuable account of how a new teacher can engage with some of the dilemmas of inclusive teaching, in constructing their identity in a particular school context. A study in a different context reveals similar issues about the identity of the NQT (J. McIntyre & Hobson, 2016) insofar as the significance of relationship is concerned though in this case through external mentoring support. **The research shows how non-judgmental support from external mentors enhances beginner teachers' professional development if mentees are extended the opportunity to openly discuss their needs and to discuss alternatives to the performative norms of their schools.** Importantly in the context of the theme of identity, these authors are concerned with not just how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others but also how the notion of a 'designated identity' (see also Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012 above) impacts their identity professionally and personally. Like the study just noted these authors comment on the tension brought about by the conflicting roles that mentors in some systems have to perform in working with beginning teachers, especially when the mentor's role is associated with that of evaluator or gatekeeper. Their study therefore focused on beginner teachers' experience of being mentored by expert subject specialists who are external to the mentees' schools and as such had no role in assessing them against professional standards.

Beginning teachers are prone to identities being conferred upon them; they are prone to having their identities shaped by more powerful others (J. McIntyre & Hobson, 2016). Two possible inter-related explanations can be offered for this, according to the authors: the scrutiny under which new teachers find themselves, and the need to demonstrate their 'competence' against prescribed 'standards' in order to gain entry to the profession, although there is a considerable strand of thought in the literature which argues for the potential benefits of formal assessment and certification approaches for teacher induction (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2017).

McIntyre and Hobson (2016) note that where tensions occur between professional selves and the views of significant others in the system, such as mentors, the beginner has to negotiate an identity that they can live within their settings. It is in the context of such awareness that these authors initiated a project drawing on 'third space' theory (Bhabha, 1990), as a metaphor for a situation in which individuals can make sense of potentially competing identities from which new understandings can emerge about the professional self. The context was post-primary physics teachers in the first year of teaching. The researchers found how some beginning teachers spoke of the need to conceal their lack of subject knowledge from their school colleagues but were very willing to have open conversations with their external mentors. Consequently, some beginning teachers felt obliged to present and perform in a way that significant others would recognise as socially desirable but were more true to themselves in their interactions with the allocated external mentor. Thus the external mentor helped the beginner teacher 'navigate the emotionally charged processes of becoming a teacher' (p. 151) which in turn led to new understanding and enhanced their practice. The researchers recommend that beginner teachers have an 'ally' who can help negotiate externally set standards but also who can provide the space for the NQT to engage with any self-doubt and weaknesses in a safe environment with someone who has an independent perspective as occurred in the case of the external mentors in the study.

### 2.3.5 Professional identity bound up with relationships and emotionality

Research by Aspfors and Bondas (2013) points to the significance of the relational, social and emotional aspects of the experiences of the NQT. This issue is addressed by many authors; for example, Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) address the emotional ambivalence often involved in 'socially just teaching'. In this perspective on identity, the relational, the personal and the emotional are seen as relevant as the cognitive, the professional and the academic, with all these dimensions seen as inseparable one from another. Being a teacher is not just a technical or cognitive practice but is fundamentally relational: 'the quality of the human relation is, therefore, at the core, not only when it comes to teaching but in all communication with people within the school community' (Aspfors & Bondas, 2013, p. 243). Their study sought to explore NQTs' experiences within the school community during their first years of work. Based in Finland but with a number of similarities to the situation in Ireland, the study is particularly relevant here. Finland for instance, much like Ireland, expects the NQT to assume full responsibility for a class from the beginning and it, like Ireland, only recently introduced a programme of induction for the beginner teacher. Teaching in Finland is a masters-based profession and it does not have the difficulty evident in so many other countries of teachers leaving the profession, although it is increasingly conscious of this.

These authors show how communication seems to be more challenging for the NQT outside the immediacy of the classroom than within it. One explanation they put forward for this is that ITE tends to place such a strong emphasis on communicating with learners/pupils possibly at the expense of communication with other colleagues and parents. Like others before them the authors conclude that productive collaboration among members of the school community can be effective and how in the end this can compensate for lack of or inadequacies in a mentoring programme. They claim that 'the social atmosphere, emotional practice and culture of care embedded in schools are decisive for new teachers' personal as well as professional development, their identity formation, well-being and willingness to stay in the profession' (p.255). They also point out that some veteran teachers who themselves have had a non-academic teacher education experience may feel threatened by new entrants with strong academic backgrounds. Their findings ultimately lead to a tension between the joy of being a caring professional and the exhaustion that can occur. The contact with pupils affords the NQT the most satisfaction and this same fulfilment allows teachers to overcome any negative aspects. Overall their claims confirm other research including research in Ireland by Morgan, Ludlow, Kitching, and O'Leary (2010) which shows how the absence of positive experiences can undermine commitment and a sense of self-efficacy and how this is more significant than the occurrence of negative events.

### 2.3.6 Identity and the second year of teaching

There is little research specifically on the second year of teaching. However, a substantial longitudinal study, the *Becoming a Teacher* project (Hobson *et al*, 2009), shows some very interesting insights. One finding would appear to be that in the second year of teaching teachers profess enjoyment and a growing confidence in their role. A second finding is a theme that is very much confirmed by other research: that colleagues can be both a help and a hindrance to their ongoing development. Among the positive aspects of the latter is opportunity for collaboration with other teachers especially around classroom teaching and learning. The level of formality didn't appear to be a factor in this longitudinal work. Rather what is important is the nature of the collaboration itself and the idea that teachers are learning together. Team teaching and lesson observation seemed to be one important mechanism for overcoming the possible isolation of being a lone class-teacher. Another theme emerging from that work is the opportunity for the new teacher to work closely with colleagues of similar levels of experience although the opportunity to work with more established colleagues is also valued. Interestingly, though, more than half the 17 teachers in their second year of teaching tracked in a study by Burn, Mutton, and Haggart (2010) were critical of the extent to which their learning environments supported their professional development, thus highlighting the need to make provision for new teachers beyond their induction year.

### 2.3.7 Identity and agency for inclusive teaching

A further theme in the literature that informs our research is how new teachers develop a sense of agency, and how they might develop as change agents in relation to inclusive teaching.

D. McIntyre (2009) points to the disconnect between university course content for student teachers and their learning in schools as a general problem for initial teacher education, framed as one that creates particular difficulties for introducing innovations such as inclusive education. He argues that there is wide recognition of the need to move towards greater integration of school and university experiences to address this. Ainscow (2003) goes further in describing a process of teacher development in schools as key, rather than focusing on the role of initial teacher education. From this perspective, approaches that develop inclusive classroom practices should be primarily school-based, set within organisational arrangements that will provide appropriate support for teacher reflection and experimentation. Ainscow advocates a form of collaborative inquiry, with flexibility to deal with the uniqueness of particular educational contexts, whilst encouraging stakeholders to investigate their own situations and practices with a view to bringing about improvements. Arguably, the role of school and university partnerships in promoting inclusion within initial teacher education has been somewhat under-theorised; Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) provide a useful counterpoint to this in drawing on cultural historical activity theory to develop an account of learning through partnership settings.

Florian and Rouse (2009) analysed a major inclusive practice project for teacher education in Scotland. They suggest it may not be realistic to position student teachers as change agents and propose an approach to developing collaborative practices which can create reflective spaces for engaging with practice. Similarly Guðjónsdóttir *et al.* (2007) describe a 'praxis inquiry'-based approach in a three-year study of inclusive pedagogy in teacher education in Australia, Iceland, Latvia and the UK, which focused on the complex interactions between the individual student teacher and practices in the school system. Slee (2010b) highlights the need for teacher education to build the capacity of teachers to address barriers to inclusive education, adopting the notion of the 'cultural vigilante' in advocating that courses enable students to develop their critical thinking around issues of identity and difference.

Moving beyond initial teacher education to understanding how new teachers develop their identities, the literature suggests that practice should be analysed in relation to context. This approach to understanding teacher agency as linked to a dynamic relationship with the school context, is sometimes referred to as 'relational agency' (Edwards, 2015; Panti, 2015).

## !!!! 2.4 Summary

The key messages from this scoping review are first that teacher education programmes need to go further in addressing special education needs and disability more systematically within a broader approach to inclusive education for diverse learners. Secondly, a clear theme emerges from the literature pointing to the importance of linking curriculum content in more thoughtful ways to student teachers' practical experiences in schools. Thirdly, the review identifies the importance of carefully considering the ways in which universities and schools can work together to foster the development of teacher identity in a holistic and positive manner during ITE, in the NQT year and in the first few years of teaching.

In terms of curriculum organisation, there is a risk that discrete courses can underpin notions of difference in ways that may undermine inclusive practice more broadly; or that a 'bolt-on' approach to additional courses on inclusion may be less effective without wider reforms which embed inclusive practice more fully.

Overall, there is no overwhelming evidence in the literature to support any one specific curriculum model for addressing issues of inclusive education within initial teacher education. What can be concluded however is that the literature does indicate the importance of curriculum content related to inclusive practice for all student teachers, as opposed to focusing on a minority of 'specialists' at the initial teacher education stage.

Whilst research on measuring attitudes towards inclusion has been relatively well developed, there is an emerging view amongst some researchers internationally that other complementary approaches are now needed to take the field forward, for example with a greater emphasis on longitudinal and ethnographic studies of how beginning teachers make sense of inclusive teaching through their practice.

There are other indicative themes within the literature that inform our approach. First, student teachers need more opportunities to engage in inclusive practices collaboratively and critically. Secondly, teacher educators may need professional development, with opportunities for collaboration and reflection. Thirdly, student teachers' prior experiences of difference, diversity or disability can offer a valuable resource for learning.

Pugach *et al.* (2014) provide a useful review of studies of collaboration by general and special educators to develop or redesign teacher education programmes. They point to the need for a renegotiation of roles between general and special teacher educators. Developing opportunities for co-teaching by both student teachers and teacher educators is an important element of this work; however, the fundamental shift required is to situate 'special' education more clearly within a broader framework of inclusive education for diverse learners.

There are a number of pertinent messages from the literature on new teachers. Understanding the identity of the new teacher and attempting to extend the agency and identity of the new teacher requires a focus not only on the individual new teacher *per se*, but crucially on schools themselves as organisations. The evidence from the existing literature would caution against adopting a restricted view of the NQT as merely needing to fit in to existing structures, and instead would encourage attention to a more expansive culture where the whole school is on a learning journey and where a diversity of ways of understanding situations is valued (Haggarty and Postlethwaite, 2012). In this sense too, the literature would suggest caution about framing professional standards or codes of practice narrowly and certainly would caution against framing mentoring in a way that pushes towards 'standardised identities' (Devos, 2010) among new teachers.

## 3. Methodology and research design

### 3.1 The ITE4I project research design

The Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion project involved four phases: Phases 1 and 2, reported on in Hick *et al.* (2018), investigated the components of ITE and the experiences of student teachers, in relation to inclusive teaching. A summary of the method for the first two phases is given here. This report covers Phases 3 and 4 of the project, which followed the cohort of ITE students graduating in the summer of 2016, who were the first to complete the extended programmes. In this section we present our research design and methods for studying their experiences of inclusive teaching, as newly qualified teachers in the first and second years of their careers.

#### 3.1.1 Phases 1 and 2: Components of ITE and understanding student teachers' experiences

Phase 1 (Sept. – Jan. 2016) concentrated on analysing ITE programme content; and in phase 2 (Feb. – Aug. 2016) our focus moved to understanding the student teacher experience.

Data collection in Phase 1 included documentary analysis and a survey of teacher educators.

Documentation relating to some 30 programmes (out of 59 nationally) from 13 ITE providers (out of 19 in total) was obtained with the support of the Teaching Council. These were primarily standard proforma submitted for re-accreditation, with module outlines appended in some cases; in addition, reviews of these submissions published by the Teaching Council were analysed, together with the criteria used for re-accreditation. The documentary analysis started from a typology derived from the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, to examine how and where inclusive teaching is represented within ITE programme documents.

A survey of teacher educators was conducted at the same time, to collect initial data on the range of views expressed by teacher educators in relation to issues of inclusive teaching in ITE programmes. The survey was constructed to reflect areas of competence within the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, and to collect free-text comments. Following piloting, 21 respondents (programme leaders, module leaders, heads of departments) provided complete or near-complete responses giving information relating to 27 programmes from 13 institutions (some survey responses related to more than one programme).

Data collection in Phase 2 included a survey of student teachers, together with interviews with student teachers and with teacher educators at five case study sites. The five ITE providers were selected to represent a range of primary, post-primary, consecutive and concurrent programmes; and to provide a geographical spread of institutions.

The survey of student teachers elicited data about their experiences of initial teacher education and their understandings of inclusive teaching. The questionnaire captured demographic information, key areas of experience prior to and during the respondents' ITE programme, and a series of statements mapped to an analysis of the attitude, knowledge and skills components of the EASNIE profile. A total of 430 valid responses were received, representing a sample of approximately 14% of the national cohort of student teachers.

The interviews with student teachers aimed to elicit their views about their course and how their studies related to their school placement experiences; their understandings of inclusive teaching; their approaches to inclusive teaching in practice; and their reflections on their own professional development in relation to inclusive teaching and how their courses might be developed. A total of 47 students were interviewed in person or by Skype, with 32 recruited at the five case study sites and a further 15 recruited by survey responses from other institutions.

The interviews with teacher educators sought their views on issues of inclusive teaching and ITE in Ireland, and on the impact of the extension and reconceptualization of ITE programmes; their responses to emergent themes and issues arising from the survey of teacher educators and the documentary analysis; and their reflections on aspects of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers. A total of 11 staff interviews were conducted across the five case study sites, typically including the Head of School or a Programme Leader and a lecturer in inclusive or special education.

### **3.1.2 Phases 3 and 4: Understanding NQTs' experiences of inclusive teaching**

Phase 3 ran from September 2016 to August 2017, covering the first year as newly qualified teachers, of the first cohort to graduate from the newly extended ITE programmes in the summer of 2016. The data collected in Phase 3 comprised:

- a follow-up survey (N=122) with NQTs who had participated in the student survey;
- interviews (N=20) with NQTs who had participated in the student interviews;
- interviews with principals (N=13) in schools where NQTs are employed.

Phase 4 ran from September 2017 to May 2018, focusing on the second year of their post-qualification practice. The data collected in Phase 4 included:

- a third survey (N=38) with NQTs who had participated in both student and NQT1 surveys
- a third interview (N=23) with NQTs who had participated in the earlier interviews<sup>4</sup>
- further interviews with school principals and deputy principals (N=8).

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4 Including three who were interviewed as student teachers but were not available for NQT1 interviews.

Phases 3 and 4 addressed the Research Questions through follow-up e-surveys and interviews in order to provide a comparison between participants' accounts as ITE students and then as NQTs in their first and second years of teaching. It should be noted that attrition in response rates is widely recognised as a common feature of longitudinal studies (Frey, 2018). School principals were also interviewed to gain an understanding of their perspectives on how NQTs are engaging with inclusive teaching. The methods used to collect this data are outlined in section 3.2 below.

Our intention was to obtain samples of data covering the range of ITE provision across Ireland that would be both manageable in terms of data analysis within the timescale and resources of the project, and sufficiently representative to enable us to draw reliable conclusions from our analysis. Advice at the initial design stage from a Head of School of Education at a leading ITE provider suggested that a reasonable estimate of the proportion of ITE students who could be expected to find employment as NQTs in the year following graduation would be approximately 50%.

Phases 3 and 4 aimed to address Research Questions 2 and 3:

RQ2: Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education's (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?

Following the Phase 1 and 2 report, we proposed a re-framing of Research Question 3 on the impact of ITE on outcomes for pupils with SEN. Our initial findings emphasised a broader understanding of inclusive teaching as addressing all learners, not only those with special educational needs, as outlined in the EASNIE Profile. Additionally, our documentary analysis showed that ITE programmes define learning outcomes for student teachers, but not for their pupils. The NQT survey and interview data refers to NQTs' perceptions of the impact of their training on their pupils' outcomes, but we did not collect pupil outcome data. Accordingly, the research team proposed a series of sub-questions to revise Research Question 3, and to guide our analysis of the data during Phase 3.

RQ 3.1 How well prepared do NQTs feel to engage with inclusive practices?

RQ 3.2 How do NQTs see the fit between their experience of engaging with inclusive practices in ITE placement and their experience of learning about inclusive practices in their ITE college-based support sessions?

RQ 3.3 How does school context influence NQT engagement with inclusive practices?

RQ 3.4 In what ways are NQTs developing their understandings of inclusive practices?

This approach allowed us to draw on key findings from Phase 1 and 2 report, first that student teachers typically claimed that their ITE programmes were better at enabling them to develop their *understandings* of inclusive teaching, than they were in supporting them to engage with inclusive *practices* in the classroom. So both RQ3.1 and RQ3.4 build on RQ2, by focusing on this apparent distinction in students' perceptions, between understanding and practice.

Secondly, the findings presented in the Phase 1 and 2 report showed how student teachers tended to differentiate the *sources* of their learning within ITE, between school experience and taught sessions with their ITE provider. So RQ 3.2 draws attention to this issue, and builds on RQ3 in addressing newly qualified teachers' reflections on their learning during initial teacher education.

On the basis of the Phase 1 and 2 data from student teachers about the significance of variations between schools on their opportunities for learning, we hypothesised that school contexts may also be significant in influencing how newly qualified teachers engage with inclusive practices. This hypothesis is also supported by data from the staff interviews, identifying variations in school support for inclusive teaching by student teachers as a constraint for ITE. Accordingly, RQ3.3 addresses the influence of school context on how newly qualified teachers engage with inclusive practices.

Finally some of the data captures NQTs' reflections on their ITE programmes and in this way addresses RQ4:

What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects need to be strengthened to better prepare student teachers to be inclusive?

The ways in which the data collected in Phase 3 and 4 relate to these Research Questions, and also to the Areas of Competence within the EASNIE Profile, is summarised in Tables 18 and 19 (Appendix 2), 'Phase 3 and 4 Data Mapping'. This table represents a simplified schematic overview, however it does illustrate how data collection progressively focused on emergent issues, for example the importance of school context for how NQTs develop in relation to inclusive teaching. More detailed and nuanced accounts of how the data relates to the research questions and to the Profile of Inclusive Teachers, are developed in Sections 4 and 5 of this report.

### 3.1.3 Longitudinal analysis

A distinctive feature of the project is the opportunity to study change over time, in order to help us gain a better insight into how new teachers are being prepared to develop more inclusive teaching. This longitudinal element is typically absent from recent European research on initial teacher education for inclusion and is recognised by many researchers in this field as a key aim. The extension of ITE programmes across Ireland and the addition of mandatory content related to inclusive education represents a unique opportunity for our research in this context.

Given the longitudinal nature of the study and the multiple data sources involved, methodological choices were inevitably revised and adapted over time, as insights were generated into the nature and content of data sources and the ways in which they can be inter-related to allow cross-analysis of the data. Such an approach is in line with our theoretical stance that the way that inclusive practices are understood and conceptualised across different national settings is complex and difficult to interpret in linear ways (Artiles & Dyson, 2005; Norwich, 2013; Slee, 2010a).

The process of longitudinal research is often referred to as a 'journey' (Saldana, 2003) in which it is recognised that researchers are likely to need to adjust to changing circumstances and developments as they may arise. For example, a significant process of change occurring concurrently with this research project, was the various mergers and formation of alliances between ITE providers across Ireland (DES, 2012). Additional changes likely to impact on the experience of NQTs during the lifetime of the project include the development of the Droichead process to support induction in schools; and the introduction of the revised special education teaching allocation model, to resource support for students with special educational needs. Such processes add a layer of complexity to the research, which inevitably requires the research team to engage with how they impact on teacher educators and their practices in relation to inclusive teaching. It is important to note how adjustments to the research process evolve, to make this explicit and to take this into account in framing and qualifying findings. A number of approaches to this task are reported in the literature (e.g., Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2013) and particularly in relation to research on initial teacher education for inclusion (Young & Florian, 2013). The various adjustments made to the research process during Phase 3 are reported on in the following sections, in relation to the research questions and data collection and analysis.

We configured our data storage and analysis tool – NVivo – in such a way as to facilitate a range of further analyses as the project progressed. Whilst particular research questions form the focus for each phase, there is inevitably some overlap between research questions and phases. We focused on key themes as they emerged through an iterative process of engaging with the data, as the project progressed. The longitudinal nature of this project enabled us to analyse the data from a number of perspectives over time, performing a series of sequential but cumulative analyses. These 'waves of analysis' involved returning to data gathered in earlier phases in order to re-analyse it from the perspective of themes emerging in later phases. At the same time, the analysis of the data from earlier phases informed that of later phases.

In Phase 2 of the study, we interviewed staff and students at five ITE providers, which we referred to as 'case study' sites for the purpose of data collection. However, given our earlier finding that student teachers' experiences can vary significantly between programmes within one ITE provider, this approach assumed less importance as an interpretive or analytical frame. Equally, our reading of the literature suggests that the context of the schools within which NQTs are working is a key factor influencing their experiences of, and opportunities for, inclusive teaching. Accordingly, from Phase 3 onwards, we refined our focus for the unit of analysis of the study onto individual people, principally the follow-up cohort of NQTs.

We draw from NQT interview and free-text survey data to illustrate our narrative findings, highlighting significant themes in their experiences and trajectories of developing identities as beginner teachers. This approach enabled us to draw out a more nuanced account of how new teachers' early professional development in relation to inclusive teaching is influenced by a range of background and contextual factors and experiences, before, during and after their ITE programme.

The individual analysis supported a cross-cutting analysis, using reports generated by NVivo to identify what the follow-up cohort of NQTs say in their interviews in relation to what they said as students, and to key themes or 'nodes' of analysis. This is set against the findings of the longitudinal analysis of survey data to provide further contextualisation and to contribute to the overall rich picture of the experiences of newly qualified teachers, in relation to issues of inclusive teaching. The addition of a second NQT survey and set of interviews with NQTs in Phase 4 of the project added a further layer to this iterative process of longitudinal analysis.

## 3.2 Methods: Phases 3 and 4

### 3.2.1 The NQT Surveys

#### NQT Survey 1 – First year of teaching

The questionnaire was developed via a process of iterative consultation within the project team in collaboration with NCSE and the Advisory Group, and with reference to the research questions and the structure of the initial student survey. The NQT questionnaire captured demographic information, key areas of experience as an NQT, and the same series of statements mapped to an analysis of the attitude, knowledge and skills components of the EASNIE profile: i.e. Questions 21 and 22 on the original survey on attitude, knowledge and skills are repeated in the NQT Survey. The questionnaire was piloted a) initially with colleagues and students of the research team and then b) with a small selection of NQTs – this was facilitated by colleagues at NIPT. Feedback from each iteration was used to fine-tune the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then launched on the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) tool (see Appendix 4 for the full survey).

The decision was taken, with NCSE, to collect data from a new cohort of NQTs who had not completed the original student survey (Cohort 2), as well as those who had completed the original survey (Cohort 1). The rationale for recruiting Cohort 2 for the NQT1 survey was to increase the total number of responses, in order to facilitate additional statistical analysis.

Several versions of the questionnaire (collectors) were created:

1. A questionnaire specifically for emailing to NQTs who had completed the original student survey. This was sent to those NQTs who, as students, had given their email details and permission to be contacted again in the student survey. This collector did not repeat the demographic and ITE experience data requested in the student survey.
2. A general questionnaire designed to be completed by a) those who had completed the student survey (Cohort 1), and b) those who had not done so (Cohort 2). Routing questions in the survey, depending on whether NQTs had or had not completed the student survey, guided NQTs to complete the relevant sections. In particular, demographic and some elements of ITE experience were collected for Cohort 2, but again not repeated for Cohort 1.

In order to encourage engagement with the questionnaire by NQTs, a targeted campaign was undertaken with several strands:

- Direct Emailing to Cohort 1

A series of targeted emails were sent to those students who had completed the student survey that we had permission and email contact details for using the BOS system.

- Contacts with other organisations

We developed a database of other relevant organisations involved in education and professional development, including teacher unions, student unions, professional development bodies. We asked them to distribute collector 2 (as above) to NQTs. The Teaching Council included the collector in their E-zine, which is issued to all registered teachers.

- Social media marketing

The MMU marketing department set up a Facebook boost ad campaign using selected demographics/keywords relevant to NQTs and this ran for 10 days in June.

- Incentives

As with the student survey, an incentive of winning one of € 30 x 25 vouchers in a prize draw was offered to encourage NQTs to complete the survey.

The overall survey campaign ran from the beginning of April to the start of June 2017.

For Collector 2, close analysis indicated that some teachers who were not NQTs had completed the survey, even though it was clearly signposted as a survey for those who completed their ITE programme in the Summer of 2016. By analysing other contextual factors in the survey responses, it was possible to remove these non-NQT responses from the dataset.

Following cleaning, and elimination of missing records, the total sample was:

- Cohort 1 – i.e. NQTs who had also completed the student survey – 122, 28% of the original sample.
- Cohort 2 – i.e. NQTs who did not complete the student survey – 159.

### **Comparability of the two NQT Survey 1 Cohorts**

We investigated whether the NQT Cohort 2 dataset was similar in characteristics to the ITE dataset, i.e. whether respondents who responded to the NQT survey but not the ITE survey were similar to those who had responded to the ITE survey. If they were, then it might be possible to treat the two datasets as a cross-sectional longitudinal sample in our later analysis. To understand the representativeness of the NQT Cohort 2 dataset, we investigated the distribution of observed characteristics between individuals who were recruited at the ITE stage and those who were recruited at the NQT stage. This analysis (see Appendix 7 for further details) showed a difference in the distribution of experience with children with EAL and children with SEN between the

two groups, with those newly recruited to the survey at the NQT stage (Cohort 2) seemingly less likely to have experience of teaching children with these characteristics. Given the focus of this study and, thus, the potential relevance of experience of teaching children with SEN, these differences between the groups led us to conclude that the NQT Cohort 2 dataset could not be considered as directly comparable to the ITE survey dataset, and thus a longitudinal comparison would not be appropriate. Therefore, we only pursued our analysis and longitudinal comparison with NQT Cohort 1 – i.e. those respondents who completed both the ITE and NQT surveys.

### Open Text Responses

There were a number of survey items that invited open text responses:

Q16: If you would like, in your own words, tell us about how your placement tutor supported you in developing your practice as an inclusive teacher

Q20a: Describe your experience in working in a Resource or Special Class or in a Resource/Learning Support Role in your own words? (If relevant mention if you were involved in team teaching or worked alone)

Q21: Describe the role that Special Needs Assistants play in your class(es) in your own words

Q31: Tell us in your own words if and how the NIPT workshops helped you become a more inclusive teacher

Q35: Thinking overall, tell us in your own words, about what best prepared you for working as an inclusive teacher? You could discuss your experience in your initial teacher education programme and the experience you have had as an NQT.

Q35a: What would have helped you further in developing as an inclusive teacher? You might refer to aspects of your initial teacher education programme and/or your experience as an NQT

There was only one response to Q12, offering respondents an opportunity to give details of any special educational need or disability they may have, so this item was excluded from the analysis (Q11 Do you consider that you yourself have a special educational need or disability? Q12 If yes, give more details if you would like to).

A spreadsheet was prepared including all the NQT survey responses from a total of 122 NQTs who could be confirmed as having also completed the student survey. This ensured that the open text responses included in this analysis were from NQTs in their first year of teaching, who were in our student cohort and had completed their ITE programmes in summer 2016. This process involved collating responses from both the 'follow-up' NQT survey collector, which was distributed by email to individual student survey respondents; and the 'additional' NQT survey collector, that was distributed publicly by the Teaching Council and through other sources. Each individual NQT respondent was then hand-checked against student survey respondents by name and by email address to confirm their identity.

This verified dataset was imported into NVivo to facilitate analysis of the open text responses. The number of respondents who chose to give open text responses to these questions varied by question; and the length of answers given varied by individual respondent as well as by question. Responses were coded as a means of managing the data to support interpretation; reports were then generated for key themes, which assisted the process of interpretive analysis and of identifying illustrative quotations from respondents.

### **NQT Survey 2 – Second year of teaching**

The NQT Survey 2 questionnaire targeting the second year of teaching was sent to those students in Cohort 1, i.e. only those who had completed both the ITE and NQT 1 surveys. The survey was distributed to this cohort via email, using the email addresses that had been supplied in the ITE or NQT 1 surveys, and only to those respondents who had given permission for further follow up when completing the NQT 1 survey. The survey opened in January 2018 and closed at the end of February 2018. The questionnaire was developed via a process of iterative consultation within the project team in collaboration with NCSE, and with reference to the research questions and the structure of the ITE and NQT 1 surveys. The project team estimated that approximately 30% of the NQT 1 survey sample (N=122) might be expected to complete the NQT 2 survey. As such, it was felt that the scope for robust quantitative analysis of attitude, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching (i.e. repeating the content of Questions 21 and 22 on the student survey on attitude, knowledge and skills) was limited. These items were therefore omitted from the NQT 2 survey and instead a series of free text responses were added, which reflected the themes of the NQT 2 interview schedule. This development was discussed with, and accepted by, NCSE. The final questionnaire included a) attribute statements on participants' current roles and school experience, such as the role that SNAs play in their classroom; b) scale questions on participants' experience of working with different groups of children; and c) open text questions on their experience of and perceptions of inclusive teaching, such as:

- Have your views on inclusive teaching changed or remained the same since you were a student teacher?
- What have you learned about yourself as an inclusive teacher and how do you see yourself developing?
- Looking back, what advice would you give you to your Initial Teacher Education college and to your school where you were an NQT for supporting beginning teachers in developing inclusive teaching?

The full set of questions and the complete questionnaire is in Appendix 4.

In total, 38 respondents completed the NQT 2 survey. Initial inspection of the data indicated that most respondents responded to the free text questions and in many cases gave fairly detailed answers to most of these questionnaire items. As such, there appeared to be data worthy of further analysis that would likely add to our understanding of experiences in relation to inclusive teaching. Accordingly, the data was extracted from the survey tool and for interpretive analysis by question and by key theme.

### 3.2.2 The NQT Interviews

All the ITE students who gave interviews during Phase 2 of the project were contacted on a number of occasions requesting a follow-up interview as an NQT. This was mainly done via personal email addresses supplied by student interviewees, on their initial interview consent forms or in their survey response. A few student interviewees used their ITE provider email address but gave a home postal address for contact.

The researcher leading on conducting these interviews, who was based at UCC, maintained contact with the student interviewees throughout the summer and autumn of 2016 through a regular series of emails and individual correspondence. All NQT interviewees were offered a € 20 shopping voucher as an incentive for participation and to encourage maintaining contact with the research team with a view to conducting a second interview in Phase 4. NQTs who were slower in confirming consent to interview received a hard copy letter by post from Manchester Metropolitan University. Through this personalised approach we were able to track their progress from completing ITE towards seeking employment as NQTs, and to arrange interviews either at school or by Skype according to their availability and preferences.

The resulting sample covers the range of teachers from each of the primary and post-primary sectors, who had undergone consecutive and concurrent ITE programmes, as illustrated in Table 1. Precariousness of employment is a significant feature of the beginning teacher experience in Ireland, with many ITE students anticipating that they would initially seek temporary or part-time employment, often through an agency, or gain experience through a first teaching post abroad. We were careful not to exclude representations of the range of typical employment experiences for NQTs from the interview sample.

Table 2 shows the numbers of NQT interviewees by ITE provider and programme. There were 20 NQT1 follow-up interviews in Phase 3, and 23 NQT2 interviews in Phase 4, including three who were interviewed as student teachers but were not available for NQT1 interviews in Phase 3. Details of the 47 student interviewees are presented in the Report on Phase 1 and 2 (Hick *et al.*, 2018). Note that Case Study site C is not represented in Table 2 as there were no NQT follow-up interviews from the student teachers at this site.

The Interview Schedule for NQT1 (see Appendix 6) was initially developed from the student interview, with further questions added to address the Research Questions which are the focus for Phase 3 of the research. This was developed in discussion with the research team through a series of iterations, and piloted with two NQTs from UCC. The Interview Schedule for NQT2 (see Appendix 6) was based on expanding on themes identified in the previous phase with a view to gathering more data on areas of interest, and on capturing the element of development in NQT experience of inclusive practice. Interviewees all received a copy of the relevant Project Information Sheet and Consent Forms.

**Table 2: NQT Interviewees by ITE Provider and Programme**

NQT1 Interviewees (N=20)	NQT2 Interviewees (N=23)	Case study/ non-case study	ITE Programme	ITE Sector	ITE Subject area
NQT1A1, NQT1A3	NQT2A6	ITE Provider A	Consecutive	Post-primary	General (Education)
NQT1B2, NQT1B6, NQT1B8, NQT1B10	NQT2B2, NQT2B3, NQT2B4, NQT2B6, NQT2B8, NQT2B10	ITE Provider B	Concurrent	Primary	General (Education)
NQT1D1, NQT1D2	NQT2D1, NQT2D2, NQT2D3	ITE Provider D	Consecutive	Post-primary	Languages, Mathematics, Business
NQT1E3S, NQT1E4S, NQT1E6S	NQT1E2S (new in teaching), NQT2E3S, NQT2E4S	ITE Provider E	Consecutive	Post-primary	General (Education)
NQT1S9V, NQT1S13V	NQT2S9V, NQT2S13V	Non-case study	Concurrent	Primary	General (Education)
NQT1S11V	NQT2S11V	Non-case study	Consecutive	Primary	General (Education)
NQT1S1V, NQT1S14V	NQT2S1V, NQT2S14V	Non-case study	Concurrent	Post-primary	Physical Education, Home Economics, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
NQT1S10V, NQT1S12V, NQT1S15V, NQT1S19V	NQT2S2V, NQT1S5V (new in teaching), NQT2S12V, NQT2S15V, NQT2S19V	Non-case study	Consecutive	Post-primary	General (Education), Art & Design (x2)

### **NQT Interview Analysis**

The approach taken to analysing the NQT interviews was based on thematic analysis as used for analysing student and staff interview in previous phases. All the NQT interview recordings were first transcribed and imported into NVivo for analysis. For NQT1, a pilot sample of 3 interview transcripts was coded by two researchers, first independently and then reviewed together, to ensure consistency in coding and interpretation of data. Additional codes were then created where consensus was reached regarding new themes that were emerging in the data. NQT2 interviews were approached with a view to identifying any new themes emerging from this data set and two researchers identified independently potential emerging themes across interviews and agreed on the addition of two new codes on the initial coding structure (related to the participation of NQTs in decision-making processes and development of their professional identity). The initial coding structure was based on that used for student interviews, and drew on the research questions, the structure of the interview and the EASNIE profile.

When the coding was completed, indicative coded passages for each node were shared within the research team for review. The findings were initially presented in relation to the 'core values' (or 'areas of competence') of the EASNIE Profile, and shared with the wider research team to develop the final interpretation. A discussion was generated about findings from this raw data organised by thematic coding. Following this initial discussion, formulation of findings was developed further by two members of the research team, aiming to generate a richer interpretation of the data and to clarify and support the findings.

### **3.2.3 School Principal Interviews**

#### **Interview Design**

Principals were asked to share their expertise on supporting NQTs and on inclusive teaching through semi-structured interviews. It was made clear in the participant Information Sheets that the process was in no sense evaluative of them or their school; rather it was framed adopting a collaborative approach.

The interview schedule (Appendix 5) focused primarily on principals' perceptions of how well NQTs are prepared to develop as inclusive teachers and on their school's context in relation to inclusive teaching. Initial questions were designed to elicit their accounts of their school's context, both in terms of the demographic characteristics of the school and the ethos that principals aimed to engender, and the kinds of challenges that NQTs might expect to experience at their school in relation to inclusive teaching. Further questions addressed NQTs' preparedness for inclusive teaching and the impact of ITE programmes, going on to address issues of support for NQTs both within and beyond the school and how the teacher education system as a whole might develop further in this regard.

## Interview Sample

A total of 21 individual interviews with school leaders (principals (n=19) deputy principals (n=2) from a variety of contexts across primary and post-primary education in Ireland were conducted, across Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the project. Principals/Deputy Principals were invited to interview because of their experience of working with NQTs in their school settings and because of their connection to our case study sites.

Our initial plan in Phase 3 of the project was to request interviews from principals at each of the 20 schools where an NQT consented to be interviewed; attempts were made to contact principals at each of these schools with a letter by email or post. However, this strategy recruited only five principals, perhaps in part because some NQTs may have been reluctant to engage with principals about the project, possibly reflecting the often precarious nature of NQT's employment status. It may also be worth reflecting that this followed a period in which the question of principals' evaluations of NQTs was seen as contentious by teacher trade unions, in relation to the introduction of the Droichead pilot. At the same time Research Question 3 was amended to move away from a focus on outcomes for pupils with special educational needs, which might have benefited from matched interviews between NQTs and principals. The revised research questions sought to understand the experiences of NQTs in relation to inclusive teaching and to shed light on the factors that influenced this. In this context, it was no longer of importance to match particular NQT and principal interviews, but rather to gather views from principals in a range of schools with experience of NQTs.

Ten further principals were nominated by ITE providers connected to the research project and were invited for interview, eight of whom agreed, all with experience of working with NQTs who graduated from case study sites and other ITE programmes in Ireland. This produced a 'convenience' sample which may reflect the views of principals with relationships with ITE providers, or who have an interest in inclusive teaching and newly qualified teachers, or in participating in research.

Table 3 offers some contextual information on the NQT principal cohort, five of whom (B2, D2, S9, S11, S14V) were connected to members of the NQT with the same code, while the remaining eight were drawn from beyond the NQT cohort.

In Phase 4 of the project, we explored whether a focus group would provide a further opportunity to explore principals' views in more depth. However, this proved difficult to recruit to, due to difficulties with principals' availability. Accordingly, a further cohort of school leader participants (principals/deputy principals) were interviewed using a revised interview schedule that generated further data, relating to specific emergent ideas from the first round of interviews (Appendix 5). These principals and deputies were recruited through a second round of nominations by ITE providers connected to the project and are detailed in Table 4. Thirteen principals were interviewed in the first round of interviews (in Phase 3) and eight principals and deputy principals in the second round (in Phase 4).

**Table 3: NQT Principals Phase 3**

Principal Code	Sector	School Context
F1 Principal	Post-primary (Community College)	Urban; non-DEIS; co-ed; SEN, migrant students; EAL
F2 Principal	Post-primary (Community College)	Rural; non-DEIS; co-ed; SEN
F3 Principal	Post-Primary (Vol. Secondary)	Urban; DEIS; single sex (girls); ethnic minority; migrant students; SEN; EAL
F4 Principal	Primary (National School)	Urban; non-DEIS; co-ed; significant poverty; SEN; migrant students; EAL; religious diversity
F5 Principal	Post-primary (Community School)	Urban; DEIS; co-ed; significant poverty; SEN; migrant students; EAL; ethnic minority
F8 Principal	Primary (National School)	Urban; DEIS; single sex (boys); significant poverty; SEN; migrant students; EAL
F10 Principal	Primary (Gaelscoil)	Urban, non-DEIS; co-ed; Gaelscoil; SEN
F11 Principal	Post-primary (Special School)	Urban; SEN; co-ed; non-DEIS
B2 Principal	Primary (National School)	Urban; non-DEIS; co-ed; migrant students; EAL; SEN
D2 Principal	Post-primary (Community College)	Rural; non-DEIS; co-ed; SEN
S9 Principal	Primary (National School)	Urban; DEIS; co-ed; SEN; ethnic minority; migrant students; EAL
S11 Principal	Primary (National School)	Urban; non-DEIS; co-ed; SEN; migrant students; EAL; religious diversity; Educate Together
S14V Principal	Post-primary (Vol. secondary)	Rural; DEIS; co-ed; SEN; migrant students; EAL

**Table 4: NQT Principals Phase 4**

Principal Code	Sector	School Context
G1 Principal	Primary (National School)	Rural; non-DEIS; SEN; EAL; co-ed
G2 Principal	Primary (National School)	Urban; non-DEIS; SEN; EAL; co-ed; Educate Together
G3 Principal	Primary (National School)	Rural; non-DEIS; SEN; co-ed
G4 (Deputy Principal)	Post-primary (Community School)	Urban; non-DEIS; SEN; EAL; co-ed
G5 (Deputy Principal)	Primary (National School)	Rural; non-DEIS; SEN; co-ed
G6 Principal	Post-primary (Vol. Secondary)	Urban; non-DEIS; SEN; single sex (girls)
G9 Principal	Post-primary (Vol. Secondary)	Rural; non-DEIS; SEN; co-ed
G10 Principal	Post-primary (Community College)	Urban; non-DEIS; SEN; EAL; co-ed

### Interview Analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for interpretive analysis. This involved a process of thematic coding by two researchers, based on the structure of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers and on themes identified from the student and NQT interviews.

Along with the codes, interpretive memos were added to each transcript. The themes reported on here emerged across the data and, in the case of the principal interviews, from across the two rounds of interviews as detailed above. For example, there were principals from five DEIS schools included in the first round of interviews but none in the second round, so this approach to analysing the data together across both rounds of interviews supported a more balanced and fine-grained analysis.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 The NQT surveys

In this section, we present a basic descriptive analysis of the NQT 1 survey (at 4.1.1) and the NQT2 survey (at 4.1.2), followed by an analysis of the open text responses from each survey (at 4.1.3). A longitudinal analysis of data from those participants who completed both the ITE survey and NQT survey 1 follows (at 4.1.4).

#### 4.1.1 NQT Survey 1 characteristics and attributes (Cohort 1)

##### Gender, age, ITE specialism and ITE phase

In Cohort 1 (N=122), 81.8% of responses were from female NQTs, and 18.2% from male NQTs. In their ITE training, 45.9% had been on a Primary programme, and 54.1% on Post-primary. Tables 5 and 6 show age range and areas of specialism in ITE for Cohort 1. As in the student survey, Science/Mathematics/Technology and Humanities (Geography, History, Religious Education, Languages and Business) dominate in fairly equal quantities, while Special Education/Psychology were the smallest proportion of programmes represented. 'Creatives' includes Art, Design, Music, Drama and Physical Education.

**Table 5: Age range of Cohort 1 respondents**

Age	%
21-24	54.1
25-27	19.7
28-31	8.2
31+	18.0

**Table 6: Areas of specialism of Cohort 1 respondents**

Areas of specialism in ITE	%
Humanities	40.2
Special/Psych	8.2
Creatives	17.2
Science(s)/Maths/Tech	34.4

##### Current employment status

Table 7 shows respondents' answers to the question 'What are you doing now?'. Nearly three-quarters of NQTs had found employment as a teacher in Ireland, but only in temporary positions. Relatively few had secured permanent teaching positions, with a similar proportion working in a teaching position abroad or working in a role outside of education. However, a significant minority were still seeking employment as a teacher, nearly a year after completing their Initial Teacher Education programme.

**Table 7: Current employment status of Cohort 1**

What are you doing now?	Percentage (N= 122)
Not yet been employed in a school and looking for employment in a school	13.1
Working in a permanent teaching position in a school in Ireland	6.6
Working in a teaching position abroad	4.1
Working in a temporary teaching position in a school in Ireland	73.8
Working in another role outside of education abroad	.8
Working in another role outside of education in Ireland	1.6

Table 8 illustrates the situation of those who had teaching posts. Of those employed as teachers in Ireland, nearly half were in primary schools and a similar proportion were in post-primary school. There were no NQTs employed in special schools; however 22% indicated that they were working in a DEIS school (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools programme).

**Table 8: Type of school employed in – Cohort 1**

If applicable, what type of school are you working in? (If you have been working in several types of schools, indicate the type where you have spent most time)	Percentage (N= 103)
Rural Primary	12.6
Urban Primary	35.0
Urban Post Primary	31.1
Rural Post Primary	17.5
Centres for Education	1.0
Other Type of school or educational setting in Ireland	1.0
Other type of school or educational setting outside of Ireland	1.0
Other	1.0

### Experience in school of teaching children from various backgrounds and educational needs

NQTs varied in terms of their experience in allocation to teaching duties. Table 9 shows that over 50% had been allocated to a resource or special class or equivalent role some or all of the time.

**Table 9: Allocation to Resource or Special Class/Support Role**

Have you been allocated to a Resource or Special Class or to a Resource/Learning Support Role?	% Cohort 1 (N= 103)
All of the time	18.4
Some of the time	33
Not at all	48.5

More generally, NQTs' experience of teaching different categories of children is illustrated in Table 10. These data show that nearly 60% of NQTs had significant or very significant experience of teaching children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and with different levels of social disadvantage, while nearly 70% had significant or very significant experience of teaching children with SEN. Experience of teaching children with EAL was far less.

**Table 10: Experience of teaching children of different categories in current school**

To what extent have you had experience in the school at which you work now of teaching...	Very significant extent (%)	Significant extent (%)	Limited extent (%)	Very limited extent (%)
Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	33.0	26.2	25.2	15.5
Children with different levels of social disadvantage	35.9	24.3	26.2	13.6
Children with English as an Additional Language	21.4	14.6	37.9	26.2
Children with Special Educational Needs	28.2	37.9	27.2	6.8
Number of respondents = 103				

### The role of ITE in NQTs' teaching

NQTs were also asked about the contribution of their learning about inclusive education in ITE to student outcomes. Table 11 shows that the majority of NQTs agreed that their ITE had made a difference.

**Table 11: Contribution of ITE to NQTs' pupils**

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Tend to Agree (%)	Tend to disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
My teacher education programme makes a difference to the academic outcomes of my pupils	28.3	36.7	28.3	5.8	.8	0
My teacher education programme makes a difference to the social and emotional development of my pupils	25.0	40.0	21.7	10.0	1.7	1.7

They also responded to a series of items asking which elements of their experience helped them with effective inclusive teaching as an NQT. Items which are particularly pertinent to our interest in the contribution of ITE are illustrated in Table 12. Over 60% of NQTs reported that subject-specific and general input on inclusion was helpful to a significant or very significant extent, while at least 70% felt that placement experiences were significant, with special or resource school or class experiences more likely to be seen as very significant.

**Table 12: What helps effective teaching as an NQT?**

Thinking overall, to what extent do the following help you in effective inclusive teaching as an NQT?	Very significant extent (%)	Significant extent (%)	To some extent (%)	Limited extent (%)	Very limited extent/ not at all (%)
Input on inclusion in subject specific modules in the academic classes of my ITE programme	19.8	47.9	.8	21.5	9.9
Input on inclusion across the academic classes of my ITE programme	17.9	45.3	.9	27.4	8.5
Experience on school placement in general on my ITE programme	28.3	48.3	.8	15.0	7.5
Experience in a special school, special or resource class or in resource/learning support role during my ITE	39.3	31.1	.8	14.8	13.9

### Sources of support for NQTs

When asked about what they found helpful in effective inclusive teaching as an NQT, almost 90% cited their experience of teaching pupils in school as significant or very significant. Similar proportions indicated advice from other teachers (92%) or senior teachers in school (88%). Other sources of support that were cited as helpful to a significant or very significant extent for inclusive teaching were: advice from senior staff including the SENCO (84%); on-line resources (71%); advice from other NQTs (70%); and advice from the school principal (67%). These are detailed in Table 13.

**Table 13: What helps effective teaching as an NQT?**

Thinking overall, to what extent do the following help you in effective inclusive teaching as an NQT? (N= 120)	To a very Significant extent (%)	To a significant extent (%)	To some extent (%)	To a limited extent (%)	To a very limited extent or not at all (%)
Experience of working with pupils in school as an NQT	64.5	24.8	0.8	7.4	2.5
Advice from my peers – other teachers in my school	45.1	46.7	0	6.6	1.6
Advice from more senior teachers in my school	45.1	42.6	0	10.7	0.8
Advice from the School Principal	29.5	37.7	0	23.0	9.8
Advice from senior staff including SEN Coordinator	39.3	45.1	0	13.1	2.5
Advice from other NQTs	27.0	43.4	0	21.3	8.2
The National Induction Programme	5.8	31.7	0	40.8	21.7
My own network outside of school	19.0	41.3	0	28.1	11.6
Online resources	17.4	53.7	0.8	20.7	7.4
Things outside my professional experience such as discussions with family	14.8	49.3	0	23.0	13.1

Some 22% of NQTs indicated that their school was participating in the Droichead programme.

Nearly three-quarters of the NQTs who responded to our survey attended some or all of the National Induction Programme for Teachers workshops. The results were somewhat mixed, with a minority (37%) of respondents indicating that they found the NIPT workshops helpful for effective inclusive teaching, to a significant or very significant degree. Of those who found the workshops helpful, the items most frequently 'ticked' were developing positive attitudes, developing skills and knowledge, making links with other teachers and knowing where to go for help.

### 4.1.2 NQT Survey 2 characteristics and attributes

Thirty-eight respondents (all members of Cohort 1) completed the NQT 2 survey.

Seventeen (44.7%) were working in a primary school and 21 (55.3%) were working in a post-primary school.

Thirty-one (81.6%) were working full time and 7 (18.4%) were working part time.

Nine (23.7%) were working in a permanent teaching position in a school in Ireland, 27 (71.1%) were working in a temporary teaching position in a school in Ireland and 2 (5.3%) were working in a teaching position abroad. Twenty-two (57.9%) were working in the same school as their NQT year and 16 (42.1%) were not.

Table 14 shows the degree to which the sample had experience of working with diverse learners in the classroom in their second NQT year, with 79% indicating experience of teaching children with special educational needs to a significant or very significant extent:

**Table 14: Experience of working with children from diverse groups in the classroom**

To what extent have you had experience in the school at which you work now of teaching...	Very significant extent (%)	Significant extent (%)	Limited extent (%)	Very limited extent (%)
Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	28.9	26.3	28.9	15.8
Children with different levels of social disadvantage	34.3	28.9	23.7	13.2
Children with English as an Additional Language	28.9	23.7	18.4	28.9
Children with Special Educational Needs	42.1	36.8	28.4	2.6

### 4.1.3 NQT survey 1 and 2 open text responses

The NQT surveys included a number of open text response boxes (see Appendix 4 for the full surveys). We report here on each in turn.

#### NQT Survey 1

##### Experiences of teaching in a Resource Class

Around half of those NQTs who responded to the survey indicated that they 'had been allocated to a Resource or Special Class or to a Resource/Learning Support Role' either all or some of

the time.<sup>5</sup> In the open text responses, many of them offered descriptions of these experiences, from which a mixed picture emerges. Some noted little preparation for this role within ITE; others reported little support for starting in this role at school as an NQT. Their experiences seem to vary from working alone to working collaboratively and to refer to Resource Class teaching as both challenging and rewarding. Overall, most respondents described experience in a Resource Class positively as a learning opportunity for them as an NQT and, interestingly, as more of a collaborative experience than starting as a class teacher. Here are some examples of comments given on the survey, which illustrate these themes:

I find working in a learning support setting can be rewarding yet challenging. [Primary]

... best way to start in a school, you get to know all the staff so well, instead of being stuck in a classroom all the time and meeting nobody. [Primary]

I am team teaching with another teacher in a first-year resource class. This is useful as it allows for station teaching, where we can split the class up depending on what they would like to work on themselves, and we can take a group/individual student each to work with. [Post-Primary]

### Working with Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Many respondents to the NQT survey reported that they were not currently working with SNAs. Those that did tended to refer to the allocation of an SNA to a specific pupil, for example in relation to a particular disability or special educational need. Where details were given, the issues most commonly mentioned were autism spectrum conditions, ADHD or behaviour issues.

There seemed to be a distinction between those NQTs who emphasised a subordinate role for SNAs which was focused on organisational tasks to support the teacher or students, and others who described a more collaborative role. There was a substantial minority of NQTs who particularly valued the role of SNAs and recognised their more detailed knowledge of students' needs arising from their longer term relationships. Some described them as an asset to the whole class, enabling the teacher to work with a wider group of students. A few NQTs described involving SNAs in planning for particular students and in reflecting on the success of activities. Some examples are:

The SNA is the frontline worker with the children, even more so than the class teacher. They are the confidante, the first aid provider, the advice giver, the reassurance giver, the confidence booster, the extra mother/father figure (which is particularly relevant in my DEIS school). [Primary]

Central role. They assist my students with organisation. Ensure homework is appropriate and manageable. Also keep me informed on how the student is doing outside of academics i.e. home life, mood. [Post-Primary]

5 See Section 5.5 'Negotiating School Contexts' for a discussion of this issue. The context is a rapid expansion of special classes in Ireland in recent years, often initiated informally in post-primary schools. There remains a degree of inconsistency in the development of such provision, which is reflected in the terminology in use in schools. In our data, terms such as 'resource class' are frequently used by participants without clarifying the official status of the provision under discussion.

Invaluable, while staying away from the academics of the class they are very active with students not just the students who have the help but with others. Works great because no student feels that they are the one with the SNA. (Post-Primary)

The SNA in my class working in partnership with me throughout the day. She assists with four children in particular and helps them to fully engage and participate in lessons. She provides them with the additional support they need in terms of both care and educational needs. She also acts as a 2nd pair of eyes and ears in the classroom, we work together to come up with ideas that will help children in our class to reach their full potential. [Primary]

### School context for inclusive practice

A wide range of views were expressed in response to the question on the context for inclusive practice within the school (Q.26: 'In what ways does your school encourage or discourage inclusive practice?'). These ranged from NQTs highlighting selective admissions policies as exclusionary, to approaches apparently restricted to students with identified special educational needs, to potentially superficial celebrations of diversity. On the other hand, some NQTs enthusiastically referred to inclusive teaching as central to a school's culture and practice. A number referred to a culture of collaborative teaching and to opportunities for NQTs to observe more experienced teachers. Some quotes illustrating the range of comments are:

With such a diverse range of needs in the school, teachers are not encouraged to separate students based on ability or needs (apart from streaming for higher and ordinary level, where students in higher level can often be in the same class as those in ordinary level due to numbers). We are instead asked to boost students' confidence, which I find the mixed ability setting in most classes caters well for. Teachers are aware of students' needs, and are asked specifically to differentiate accordingly. [Post-Primary]

Encourages inclusive practice by assigning LSR teacher to class so that collaboration can be easily facilitated. The school brings in visitors from SESS and other organisations to speak with the staff about SEN and inclusion. There is a positive atmosphere in the school in regards to SEN and ensuring that each child is catered for and challenged appropriately. [Primary]

Examples of comments about school contexts that would be less favourable for developing inclusive teaching are:

The school I am working in strictly streams classes from entrance tests results. I am working with small junior classes (9 max students) in the lowest streams. This has been challenging in terms of behaviour, motivation and differentiation. They would be seen as the least desirable classes to teach in the school. In my opinion the label of the bottom class is damaging to the students, and mixed ability would be preferable. [Post-Primary]

Within my school, there is no learning support, there was a new school been built on site but it is still not ready. Due to this I have to find a classroom free each class. I work alone, with little help or direction from management. Mainstream teachers would often suggest new areas to look at or want specific student to come to me if they are excluded for practical subjects. [Post-Primary]

The most commonly mentioned source of learning for inclusive teaching is the experience of working as an NQT, particularly in relation to opportunities for collaboration and informal consultation with experienced teachers. Some NQTs referred to particular modules within ITE or to placement experiences within specialist settings. Others were able to draw on personal or volunteering experiences of disability, often in conjunction with ITE and NQT experience.

It is striking how the accounts of NQTs vary greatly within the same ITE provider.

A number highlighted a need for more opportunities for collaborative critical reflection on experiences within teaching placements. Some noted that 'Inspectors' on ITE placements (presumably referring to Placement Tutors) were not able to offer depth of advice on inclusive practices. Some indicative quotes are:

I felt like the inspectors for the ITE were not very comfortable engaging in conversations connecting to inclusion. Having this rectified would have been a significant step forward.  
[Post-Primary]

### **The National Induction Programme for Teachers**

Those NQTs from our follow-up cohort who chose to make comments on the NIPT workshops were divided in the views expressed. Some NQTs found the NIPT workshops useful, for example by reinforcing their learning from their ITE programme, providing opportunities for networking and reflecting with other NQTs, helping them broaden their approach or by signposting access to resources on-line:

Through being able to listen to and hear situations and advice from others, as well as sharing personal classroom stories and seeking advice from other teachers. [Primary]

It reinforced for me what I had learned in my degree, and also provided specific links and books to where I could go for more information or support. [Primary]

I have learnt how to maintain an inclusive classroom through methodologies shown in the workshops and have also been given some resources such as websites and literature that have helped me. [Post-Primary]

It has given me ideas on how to effectively include all pupils in my class that have different ethnic backgrounds to each other. [Primary]

Making me aware of websites and other resources which I was not previously aware of to help me in my inclusive teaching. [Primary]

They provided specific strategies in order to help me make my classroom a more inclusive place. [Primary]

However, others felt that the workshops seemed not to have taken into account their learning about inclusive teaching within the extended and reconceptualised ITE programmes, and that the workshop content added little if anything to their knowledge. Equally, the open-text responses raise the question of whether, or to what extent, the NIPT workshops reflected NQTs' experiences of teaching in resource classes or other settings. Some participants had hoped for more practical guidance during these sessions. Their survey responses tended to reflect a degree of disappointment arising from their experiences, with comments such as:

The NIPT workshops were unfortunately only a recap of what was covered on inclusion in my initial teacher training (which was disappointing). [Primary]

To be honest the training I received in [ITE] was by far miles more effective than these sessions. [Post-Primary]

I feel the NIPT workshops did not develop existing knowledge, as the PME is a two-year course inclusion is covered in depth. I felt the NIPT workshop merely rehashed material. [Post-Primary]

I don't think I learned anything from the inclusion workshop, it was just all repetition of what I had heard before which is mainly vague and has nothing to do with the classroom. For example there were no concrete examples of how to deal with SEN in the classroom, or strategies, or activities... If I have a bank of resources/approaches/ideas, I can use them & then see how and if they work. [Primary]

It helped us understand the need for inclusion but many workshops failed to identify the how, how to include children with varying needs or background experiences. [Primary]

The somewhat polarised responses to this question raises the possibility that NQTs' responses may vary in relation to their particular school contexts and experiences on ITE. It may be that there is a role for further self-assessment of CPD needs in this area, to guide NQTs in engaging with professional development opportunities and to further inform NIPT and other providers about NQTs' needs.

## **NQT Survey 2**

The NQT2 survey captured comments from 38 teachers in their second year of teaching, each of whom had completed our surveys both as a student teacher and as a newly qualified teacher in their first year of teaching. The survey was designed to elicit free text responses to a series of open questions probing key aspects of their experiences in relation to inclusive teaching; with the aim of supplementing the follow-up interviews with 22 teachers in their second year of teaching who had completed the newly extended ITE programmes. Our analysis of their comments is summarised in this section, alongside a selection of illustrative quotes.

### School contexts for inclusive teaching

The comments from second-year teachers given in open-text responses to our survey (NQT2), support our findings from the earlier survey and interview data from newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching, in relation to the primacy of the school context. New and early career teachers are working in a wide variety of school settings which they tend to see as a predominant influence on their capacity to develop as inclusive teachers. This influence extends beyond the school type and pupil demographics, to the cultures, policies and practices they experience within the school and those promoted by the school leadership.

As previously noted, our sample was small and likely to include new teachers with an interest in inclusive teaching as a reason for participating in the survey. As such, there were few if any reports of school cultures that were hostile to the development of inclusive teaching. However, a range of aspects of school context were highlighted, from the celebration of diverse cultures within the pupil population, to more embedded approaches to collaborative teaching.

A key element of the school context that was referred to frequently, was the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers. Where this was an established practice across a school, it seemed to reflect positive attitudes to collaboration:

Willingness and openness to collaborate, listen to others and share expertise is important. [Primary]

We are undertaking a big change to be more inclusive of needs and move from only withdrawal to a combination of withdrawal and in-class supports, we are attempting to provide more support at the preventative level throughout the school! [Primary]

We team teach between classrooms for 6 hours per week through station teaching in numeracy and literacy. [Primary]

*Experiences of teaching in 'resource' classes*

In the NQT2 survey, second-year teachers commented further on the positive and negative aspects of teaching in a resource class. The particular configuration of resource classes, both in terms of school practices as a whole and in terms of the composition of specific groups of pupils, were identified as key factors influencing the NQT experience of resource teaching. For some NQTs, resource teaching was a positive experience, both in terms of getting to know their pupils, and for opportunities for team teaching. Some NQTs reported that they wanted to introduce more team teaching methods than were usual in their schools, which is an interesting example of how new teachers could contribute as change agents. Others commented on more nuanced observations about how pupils behaved differently in resource and full class settings. Some examples are:

Being in the Resource 'loop' so to speak opened my eyes to new methodologies and programmes I might not have otherwise encountered. [Post-Primary]

Lots of team teaching and co cooperation with other teachers as well as one to one and small group teaching. [Primary]

Working in a resource team in a large school. We are all NQTs on the team, and mainly involved in withdrawal teaching of children with low incidence needs, on a one-to-one basis, we are eager to implement team teaching methods to complement this. [Primary]

I found it very interesting. I was able to get to know a lot of the children's educational needs very quickly and some of their social needs. However some social needs were not evident due to the smaller group setting. This differed on their return to the full class setting. [Primary]

Others had not been led to expect that as NQTs they might be timetabled for resource classes; and those who encountered more challenging classes felt they were not adequately prepared for dealing with severe behaviour issues.

I believe that the level of learning support is dependent on the school. Learning support is not as uniform as mainstream class teaching and often little guidance is given and available for teachers who find themselves in that position. [Primary]

Need more training in this area to feel comfortable in it. This is my second year and I still don't feel fully qualified to work in this area at times. Resource classes is where most teachers start, this is something I didn't know when I was an NQT. [Post-Primary]

While the school has a great support system, there are some moments where behaviour becomes extremely challenging and difficult to manage. [Primary]

A number of the comments given by these second-year teachers contain references to a seemingly routine use of a number of approaches that may be regarded as inclusive practices, such as team teaching, station teaching, group activities, visual timetables, support for 'sensory breaks', Individual Education Plans and mentoring. These and other comments about how new teachers felt they were effective in teaching pupils with special educational needs add to our evidence of the impact of ITE on promoting inclusive teaching.

### *Working with Special Needs Assistants*

Those working with Special Needs Assistants tended to see them as essential members of the team. SNAs were typically allocated to work with particular children and assisted in both care and teaching activities. Although the NQTs described the SNA role as implementing teacher-designed learning activities, there was a range of interpretations of this, including SNAs providing additional differentiation when pupils had difficulty with tasks. The following quote is typical of the descriptions offered:

SNAs enable the children to attend a mainstream class... They also assist the children with toileting, sensory breaks and in general with keeping the children focused on the work/task/activity that has been assigned to them. SNAs also help with creating the visual schedules each day and encouraging the children to follow these schedules. [Primary]

Such comments are much the same as the perspectives on SNAs from our earlier data, but perhaps indicate a greater level of comfort or confidence in working with SNAs. One respondent also framed the SNA role as an equality issue:

I find them invaluable, they enable students to access the curriculum in a fair way and their presence ensures the impact of their disability is negated. [Post-Primary]

### **Developing as an inclusive teacher**

#### *Support during the NQT year*

A very wide range of experiences was reported by second-year teachers, when asked to comment on how well supported they felt during their NQT year for developing as inclusive teachers. These varied from 'Very little support was offered to me', to 'Very well supported by principal and colleagues'. Once again, the dominant factor seems to have been the particular context, cultures and practices within each school. Where the induction of newly qualified teachers was prioritised by the school leadership, this was found to be especially helpful, for example:

We had a mentor system which was extremely beneficial and I was supported through links with two college lecturers and completing research with them. I was also very well supported by the Principal and Deputy Principal in my school and there were 7 NQTs so we supported each other. [Primary]

In some cases, there was a notable difference in how supported teachers felt in their second year, compared to their experience as NQTs, for example:

Not so much. I felt very alone, maybe it was my expectations of working life after college differed. My second year, this year, I feel valued and included by my colleagues. [Post-Primary]

Comments from second-year teachers in schools implementing the Droichead process were positive about the support offered, but not necessarily in terms of a particular focus on inclusive teaching, for example:

Currently doing Droichead which included a lot of support. Given a mentor to guide us through and regular meetings to see how we are getting on. [Primary]

I don't feel like the Droichead process focused on inclusion in any way or that the school made any special efforts with NQTs, it was just a fairly inclusive school and being immersed in that environment helped me settle in. [Post-Primary]

There is a sense in the data that in some schools support was available, but accessing this relied to some extent on new teachers being proactive in seeking it out, for example:

I feel I was supported as long as I was prepared to speak out for myself and go look for the support. [Primary]

### *Developing views on inclusive teaching*

There was a fairly even split between those who start by saying their views have not changed, and those who says their views have changed. However, on closer analysis it seems clear that those who say their views *have* changed are generally referring to a strengthening of their commitment or to a more nuanced understanding, related to developing greater confidence in their practice. They typically give brief examples to support this analysis. Respondents who say their views have not changed seem to be referring to their values, as many of them go on to give similar examples of their developing confidence with inclusive practices. In other words, respondents may have interpreted the question in different ways, but overwhelmingly they are indicating a continued or more developed commitment to inclusive teaching.

Remained the same and have strengthened as I believe that a solid teaching team needs to be in place in order to ensure inclusion takes place effectively.[Primary]

There were few who responded to this question by highlighting constraints on inclusive practice, related to levels of resourcing or learning needs. In terms of barriers to developing as an inclusive teacher, the most frequently cited issue was time constraints, followed by curriculum pressures. Interestingly, very few responded to this question by highlighting within-child deficits or levels of identified special educational needs or disabilities as a key barrier. Likewise, few concerns were raised about negative attitudes towards inclusion from colleagues.

*Reflecting on professional development*

When asked about how they saw their development as inclusive teachers, the comments indicate that many respondents are still at a relatively early stage of consolidating their skills for inclusive teaching, as second-year teachers. This alerts us to the need for caution, in relation to the expectations for new teachers' development at the beginning of their career. Some examples of comments that illustrate this are:

There are a lot of students (more than I thought) needing assistance... [Post-Primary]

I viewed being an inclusive teacher as one that helped weaker students, however I learned that a balance must be kept to include all children in the classroom who have a broad range of needs. [Post-Primary]

That what I was told to do in college was very black and white, but I've realised all students are different. The teacher often has to bend to suit individual needs. [Post-Primary]

Other comments showed more confidence and further development as an inclusive teacher:

I really enjoy working as an inclusive practitioner. [Post-Primary]

I think I have become more aware of signs that pupils demonstrate, that show their difficulty, so that I can address the issues as soon as possible. [Primary]

... To take my time and allow the children take their time to develop their understanding. [Primary]

*Advice for ITE Providers*

When asked to offer advice to ITE providers on developing programmes to support more inclusive teaching, the most commonly recommended approaches related to school placements and to taught modules. For school experience, new teachers suggested enabling student teachers to build more links with placement schools:

I think a relationship with the class teacher whose classes you are teaching, is probably the best support in the school. [Post-Primary] School – have a 'go to' person for each new teacher to the school whether NQT or not. Not to allow 'cliques' put new teachers off. [Post-Primary]

Other comments related to opportunities for critical reflection on school placements, and to the range of experiences available within schools:

Don't be afraid to allow students to talk about their experiences to the class and comparisons. [Post-Primary]

Resource classes could be a part of ITE. [Post-Primary]

Have NQTs sit in on support classes. Have them observe different groups and individual learners in a learning support class. [Post-Primary]

Most of the comments about the taught sessions within ITE programmes related to practical skills for inclusive teaching:

Give more practical advice on how to adequately differentiate in various subjects during initial teacher training. [Primary]

Show and tools only take you so far. Mandatory practice of tools better. [Post-Primary]

A more focused study of what type of challenges teachers face in large mixed abilities classrooms would greatly enhance teacher education. [Post-Primary]

#### 4.1.4 Understandings of inclusion: longitudinal analysis

##### Further Analysis of the Student Survey as a basis for longitudinal comparisons

The initial analysis of the student survey (see Appendix 3 for the survey, and the Phase 1 and 2 report (Hick *et al.*, 2018) for findings) involved a correlation analysis (measure of strength of the relationship between two variables) between a variety of demographic, background and course experience variables and individual survey response items on attitude, knowledge and skills related to inclusion – specifically the multiple items in Q21 and Q22 of the survey.

We have now undertaken a further analysis of these data using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). This involves identifying underlying themes or factors which the responses cluster around, and which can then be used to identify patterns within a group (e.g., if particular experiences correlate with particular types of answers in our survey) or to compare groups. In this case, we were interested to identify factors underlying students' responses to the items in Q21 and Q22, which focused on attitude, knowledge and skills related to inclusion. Having identified such factors, we were able to identify individual respondents' scores on each factor, and then test for relationships between these and other variables of interest, in this case those telling us about students' demographic details, their background (particularly their experience of disabilities, either personal or in work settings), and their ITE course experience.

Details of this analysis strategy are presented in Appendix 7. We present the key points of interest here.

Our analysis identified two key factors underlying students' responses to the statements contained in Q21 and Q22. Inspection of the questionnaire items contributing to each factor led us to label them as follows (for full details of the association of items with factors, refer to Appendix 7, Tables 20-22):

**Factor 1: Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching**

This factor comprised items concerning confidence in relation to:

- understanding of, and dealing with, the needs of different learners in the classroom
- how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds
- how to work with other professionals and parents/families
- how to develop further skills in the area

**Factor 2: Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching**

This factor comprised items concerning:

- the concept of a reflective and inclusive teacher
- recognising debates about labelling
- recognising concepts of inclusive education
- the meaning and importance of collaboration
- recognising the role of evidence

The initial analysis of the student survey also suggested a possible third factor, Negative Attitudes Towards Inclusion, which comprised two items concerning the limits of mixed ability classes. However, in the Cohort 1 NQT survey responses, the behaviour of this factor is different to its behaviour in the student survey, suggesting that it may well not be meaningful.

Focusing on Factor 1 and Factor 2, the most interesting finding in this analysis is that there is a pattern of moderate correlations between the diversity of students' classroom experience on placement and the incidence of positive responses concerning attitudes, knowledge and skills relating to inclusion. Similar patterns were also noted in the Phase 1 and 2 analysis (see Hick *et al.*, 2018). Thus students who reported more experience on school placement with particular categories of students tended to have higher (i.e. more positive) scores on Factor 1 (Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching) and, although associations are not quite as strong, on Factor 2 (Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching), as shown in Table 15. This shows the results of the Spearman's Rho test or R correlation test which measures the strength of association between two variables. Although there is no absolute standard in this area, for the purposes of this study we define a weak correlation (association) as a value less than 0.2, a moderate association as a value of 0.2 or more, and a strong association as a value of 0.4 or more.

Thus, for example, Table 15 shows a moderate (0.26) association between students reporting experience with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching'. In other words, students who reported more experience with students with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the classroom were moderately more likely to have higher scores on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching'.

**Table 15: Associations between experience and Factors 1 and 2.**

Reporting experience with...	Factor 1 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (Spearman's Rho value)	Factor 2 Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching (Spearman's Rho value)
Students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds	0.26	0.20
Students with different levels of social disadvantage	0.2	0.19
Students with EAL	0.24	0.16
Students with SEN	0.34	0.26

All these associations were significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

Employing factor analysis enables us to see other associations in the student survey data more clearly. Thus we see that:

- Post-primary student teachers score less highly on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores<sup>6</sup> = 0.21) and Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores = 0.23) when compared to primary student teachers, i.e. post-primary students report that they have less understanding and skills in relation to inclusion, and less positive attitudes towards inclusion.
- Male student teachers score less highly on Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores = 0.46) when compared to female student teachers. However, there is no difference between male and female students on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching'.

Other associations are:

- Student teachers who had more experience working with children with SEN before starting their course scored more highly on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (Sp Rho=0.14).
- Student teachers who have a friend or relative with SEN scored more highly on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores = 0.23) and Factor 2 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores = 0.19) compared to those who do not.
- Student teachers who had more experience of small group and 1-1 teaching score more highly on Factor 1 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (Sp Rho = 0.16) and Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching' (Sp Rho = 0.14).

6 For nominal or binomial data (that is data where the responses are not on any form of scale such as Yes/No or Gender (Male/Female)), we give the difference in the mean standardised scores which is broadly equivalent to the effect size when measuring the difference between the values (e.g. Male vs Female). Following Cohen (1988) we take 0.2 as a 'small' effect size, 0.5 as a 'medium' effect size and 0.8 as a 'large' effect size. Note that such 'effect sizes' can be greater than 1.0.

- Student teachers who had more experience of team teaching score more highly on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (Sp Rho = 0.14) but there is no significant association with Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching'.
- Student teachers who said that they wanted more input on inclusive education on school placement and/or in college teaching had lower scores on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores = 0.49) but there was no significant association with Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching'.
- Student teachers who said that they wanted more input on dealing with challenging behaviour and children's emotional needs on school placement and/or in college teaching had lower scores on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' (difference in mean standardised scores = 0.32) but there was no significant association with Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching'.

It should be noted that while our Phase 1 and 2 report on initial analysis of the student survey responses indicated some differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students in terms of associations between some items, this pattern was not borne out in this second wave of analysis.

Overall, it is clear that the extent of experience on placement with diverse groups of students is the most important correlating factor with both positive attitudes to inclusion and a sense of having the knowledge and skills needed to implement inclusion in the classroom.

### **Changes from ITE to the first year of teaching**

The factor analysis presents an opportunity to analyse change over time in terms of comparing student and NQT scores on the two factors. In order to ensure the robustness of such an analysis, we undertook a dropout analysis to explore whether, in the follow up sample, those who responded to the NQT survey had different characteristics to those who did not. This analysis suggested that our longitudinal sample of Cohort 1 respondents is broadly representative on most of the characteristics available. It should be noted that, of course, there may be other ways in which the longitudinal sample is unrepresentative in terms of unobserved or unobservable characteristics. See Appendix 7 for further details.

### **Changes over time**

Analysis of changes in factor scores from the Student Survey of Spring 2016 to the NQT Survey of Spring 2017 for Cohort 1 revealed that scores on Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching', were significantly lower for NQTs than for the same group when they were student teachers (mean standardised scores Time 1 = 0.02, mean standardised score Time 2 = -1.37, difference = 1.39,  $t = -19.77$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus students become significantly less confident in their understanding and skills in relation to inclusion when they progress into their NQT year, in fact declining by about one and one-third of standard deviations of the pre-test distribution.

Scores for Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching' were also significantly lower for NQTs than for student teachers (mean standardised scores T1 = 0.20, mean standardised scores T2 = -3.33, difference = 3.53  $t = -45.11$ ),  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus students have significantly less positive attitudes to inclusion when they progress in to their NQT year.

We also analysed the change in both factor scores associated with different levels of key characteristics. This allowed us to identify whether there is evidence of differential change in the scores associated with these characteristics, once we hold the other characteristics constant. This analysis indicated that most of the characteristics that we tested for had no interaction with Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching' or Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching' and time. In other words, the drop in Factor 1 and Factor 2 between the two time points does not differ in accordance with any particular characteristic, for example, for gender.

However, there was a significant difference in the rate of change of Factor scores for some characteristics. These were as follows:

*For Factor 1, 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching':*

Student teachers with SEN experience prior to starting their ITE programme had a greater reduction in Factor 1 scores over time when compared to student teachers with no prior SEN experience ( $p = 0.03$ , difference in differences in the standardised means = 0.37).

Student teachers with limited or very limited experience of teaching children with EAL on school placement in their ITE programme had a smaller reduction in Factor 1 scores over time when compared to student teachers with more experience of teaching children with EAL ( $p = 0.05$ ), difference in differences in the standardised means = 0.56.

*For Factor 2, 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching':*

Student teachers with SEN experience prior to starting their ITE programme had a greater reduction in Factor 2 scores over time when compared to student teachers with no prior SEN experience ( $p = 0.03$ ), difference in differences in the standardised means = 0.23.

Further details are given in Appendix 7.

## Summary

The analysis presented here has primarily focused on longitudinal changes in Cohort 1 in terms of the overall characteristics of this group, their attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion, and their perceptions of the impact of their ITE courses on their current teaching.

The key message from the analysis of the data is that:

1. Overall, the diversity of student teachers' classroom experience both in ITE and as NQTs is correlated with increased perceived understanding and skills and attitudes and beliefs for inclusive teaching.
2. There is a drop in perceived understanding, skills and attitudes towards inclusive teaching from the end of the ITE year to the end of the NQT year.
3. This drop across the NQT year is, overall, not dependent on other characteristics such as age, gender, or phase. It is also in general not dependent on the diversity of classroom experience, except in the case of experience with children with EAL for attitudes towards inclusive teaching. This result could of course be interpreted in two ways: a) there are no factors which make much difference to the way in which the novice teacher year experience impacts on NQT perceived understanding and attitudes about inclusive teaching, or there are such characteristics but they were not included in our model. Such characteristics might, for example, be measures of resilience.

Although the literature on praxis and reality shock suggests that measures of teacher confidence or self-efficacy might be expected to show a drop between the ITE and NQT phases, in fact there is relatively little quantitative empirical work on this. Searches on the SCOPUS and PSYCINFO databases using the terms 'pre-service', 'induction', 'novice' and 'longitudinal' identified only a few papers representing substantive longitudinal studies in this area. In Singapore, Chong (2011) demonstrated a drop in teachers' sense of self as a teacher from the beginning to end of their pre-service education, and then again at the end of the induction year (N=304).

Hoy and Spero (2005) tracked four measures of teacher self-efficacy with a group of 29 pre-service teachers at the start and end of their pre-service education, and then again at the end of their novice teacher year. On all four measures, self-efficacy significantly increased during the pre-service year. On three of the measures – general teacher efficacy and personal teacher efficacy from the Gibson and Dembo short form scale (1984), and the Bandura (1997) teacher self-efficacy scale – there was a significant drop in self-efficacy during the novice teacher year.

We could find no substantive longitudinal studies on teacher education for inclusion which crossed the ITE and NQT phases.

As such, our results seem to echo Hoy and Spero's findings on change from the ITE to NQT year, albeit using a wider conceptual measure of attitude, knowledge and skills than the specific self-efficacy measures used in Hoy and Spero.

## 4.2 NQT interviews

We first present the findings from the NQT interviews under headings drawn from the core values and areas of competence in the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers. The interpretative stance adopted in this analysis treats the profile as a reference source from which to develop points for discussion. Hence, these findings are neither exhaustive nor limited to the descriptors, although they take them as a starting point. We indicate where our analysis raises issues which differ from, or are additional to, the EASNIE descriptors. We present longitudinal aspects as captured by the views and experiences of participants during their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year as NQTs, which we indicate as NQT1 and NQT2. In the second part of this analysis we move to a consideration of longitudinal themes, returning to issues which emerged from our Phase 1 and 2 report.

When using quotes from interview transcripts within the text to support our analysis, we use codes to anonymise the identity of research participants. Within these codes, 'NQT1' refers to interviews from Phase 3 in the first year of teaching; and 'NQT2' refers to interviews from Phase 4 in the second year of teaching. The designation 'P' or 'PP' in brackets shows whether they are teaching in the primary or post-primary sectors respectively.

### The EASNIE Profile as a Lens

#### 4.2.1 Valuing learner diversity

##### Concepts of inclusive education

In this section, we explore how NQTs engage with concepts of inclusive education in their current practice. Our data show that their school context significantly influences their understandings of inclusive teaching. All the NQTs reflected on the characteristics of the student population that they work with and the challenges they faced when addressing differences between students. Responding to the learning needs of pupils with SEN appeared to be an aspect of inclusive practice for all NQTs, and many made reference to pupils with SEN when defining inclusive practice. For example, participant NQT1/E3S (PP) comments, 'I think like being in the school now...I think that like it's more to do with like SEN students and rather than like different cultures or anything.' The same NQT, reflecting on what influenced her development as an inclusive teacher, recognises that the main influence has been 'probably the students that I'm trying to include'.

Such a view suggests that although it is common for NQTs to conceptualise inclusive education in relation to SEN, this is related to the needs of the pupils they encounter in their classrooms. This conflation of inclusive teaching with addressing pupils' special educational needs can become strengthened through experience in practice. At the same time, it may be linked to a process of moving from theoretical descriptions of inclusive education to a more 'enacted' understanding, arising from their efforts to meet specific needs in their classroom.

This process is referred to by all NQTs as distinct from the experience of their student years, both at college and on school placements. It is clear that NQTs increasingly recognise and value the importance of inclusive education in relation to its impact on pupils' lives rather than simply as an ideological concept. NQT2/D2 (PP) explains:

I mean I always knew that it was, that's what you should be doing in your class, that you have to kind of include everybody and get everybody at different levels working together as much as you can, but I think I've kind of become more aware of it or more aware of the benefits of it, because I've seen it in practice and I've been able to kind of use things from inclusive education to kind of bring students on or you know when you actually see it working, it kind of brings it home for you... Um, so maybe I'm a bit more of an advocate for it now than I would've been just when I was doing the theory of it.

Generally, it seems that the characteristics of their school's student population guides NQTs' understandings of what inclusive practice entails.

Thus, understandings of inclusive teaching are contextualised within specific school settings. Our findings echo Hodkinson's (2006, p. 52) suggestion that 'the first year of teaching is very important for the formulation of what may be termed a pragmatic conceptualisation of inclusion'. This *pragmatic* view contrasts with a trainee focus on inclusive education as more of an ideological concept. Participant B8 (P) recognised as a first-year NQT the difference from her understanding as a student teacher, commenting on how she was developing an awareness of the impact of inclusive education:

Like sure we went through (in college) like inclusion is to make sure everyone's included and everyone's equal and this kind of thing, but it never really dawned on me how important it actually is for a child who needs it [...] So you know it was kind of just hearing about it in college but not really seeing the effect that it has.

As a second-year NQT she took the point further in recognising that 'I honestly wouldn't have seen the problem[...]not that I would turn a blind eye on it, but I definitely wouldn't have understood it if I didn't kind of experience it'. Thus, NQTs appear to become stronger advocates of inclusive education as they appreciate its value in relation to their own practice. Our data suggest that NQTs tend to strengthen their attitudes towards the value of inclusive teaching through their interactions with pupils identified with SEN, following their engagement as students with concepts of inclusive education as more a general pedagogical principle. So NQTs' comments indicate a shift towards recognising the complexity of practice within school contexts, from what they often describe as an 'idealised' way of thinking about inclusive education. The values and attitudes developed during their college learning can be transformed into inclusive education as a professional act of pedagogy, albeit one that is contingent on internal school factors.

Several researchers in the field (see Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hodkinson, 2006; A. McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006) have highlighted the importance of the school context in the development of the professional knowledge for early career teachers. In Ireland, a recent review of the Droichead process (Smyth *et al.*, 2016) highlights the importance of school culture and climate for new teachers, and notes the impact of various influences such as job satisfaction, motivation and emotion on beginning teachers. However, the ways in which the school context shapes NQTs' understanding of inclusive practice is not yet established. Notwithstanding the differences that can exist within as well as between schools (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Hattie, 2012), a powerful element contributing to the conceptualisation of inclusive practice was the overall school culture and the level of support and resources available within the school. First-year NQT interviewees seemed to strengthen or narrow their views of the feasibility of inclusive education in relation to the level of support and resources available, especially for pupils with SEN. For example, NQT1/S12's (PP) view of inclusive education illustrates this:

...it doesn't really matter who's there like you know as long as there's enough support, you know for the pupils and the teacher I think you know – then I think I'm all for inclusivity[ ...] think without support it becomes a really negative experience for everybody.

However, we noticed a subtle difference in the second-year NQT interviews, who whilst recognising the limitations that lack of resources can place on their practice, seem more resilient and ready to cope with these challenges. The EASNIE Profile suggests that inclusive teachers should be equipped to cope with and challenge less-supportive attitudes. It appears that for some NQTs, what they experience as unsupportive school environments can have a negative impact on their attitudes towards inclusive teaching. NQT2/S12 (PP) describes how she wants to work in classrooms with no major differences in pupils' 'ability', as in her first school a lack of support made her feel that she had to:

Just cope with kind of a ... in a sinking ship, that's what it felt like you know – so I was really annoyed with that and annoyed with the school and annoyed with the government, and annoyed with the just whole general educational system.

Preparing newly qualified teachers with coping strategies to navigate less inclusive school contexts may be an aspect of ITE or induction support for NQTs that is worthy of greater attention. This aspect is identified as a crucial skill by the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and it is not clear how NQTs are equipped to face these challenges. NQT2/B6 (P) highlights this as a change that they had to face:

I suppose the attitude used to be idealistic where you know anything that I'm supposed to be doing I will do and I will not have a problem doing it because the resources will be there, have changed to you know I recognise that there are so many different needs, but I also recognise that I'm limited in what I can do to meet those needs.

Another element of the school context which contributes to views of inclusive education was NQTs' experiences of collaboration (Anagnostopoulos, Smith, and Basmadjian, 2007). We explore this general theme in more detail below in relation to the 'Working with others' area of competence. However, it is worth noting here that NQTs' views of inclusive education tended to be more positive and confident when their school enabled collaboration and/or shared a collaborative school culture. There is a clear understanding that inclusive practice relies on a range of collaborations, but NQTs' experiences vary depending on their school's approach. There would also appear to be little intentionality among programme providers in supporting the development of collaborative skills during ITE. Likewise, the NIPT programme, while based on clusters of teachers, appears to have not given such skill development much consideration until recently.

Although they talked about inclusive education as involving others in a collective effort for meeting diverse needs, first-year NQTs tended to focus on collaboration primarily in terms of acquiring specific skills for responding to the needs of individual learners. However, second-year NQTs focused more on issues around ensuring the consistency and continuity of support provided for pupils who are withdrawn from the classroom. All NQTs identified collaboration between resource and classroom teachers as crucial. Major factors cited in relation to enabling inclusive practice were support from resource/learning support staff, participation in team teaching, ways of communication, and shared time for planning opportunities. One NQT described his experiences in a school with no support from SNAs as negative, and identified that working with a team teacher had an immediate impact on his teaching experience:

I suppose I was trying to be as inclusive as I could, and the experience I had mostly were schools that were well supplied in the school. I felt really out of my depth at times and really unprepared [...] and like the days that I had a team teacher in there with me were the best days you know. NQT1/S12V- PP

An interesting aspect is that NQTs, especially in their 1<sup>st</sup> year of teaching, recognise that team-teaching is 'invaluable for any teacher' (NQT1/D3 – PP), but they mainly focus on how it helps them to develop their skills, or supports them in their teaching. It is only later in their second-year that we get an insight, however limited, into a perception that team-teaching can advance learning for all learners and create learning environments that are more inclusive.

Another aspect of school context informing NQTs' understanding of inclusive practice is the level of participation and the withdrawal of pupils with identified SEN from the mainstream classroom. Norwich (2008) suggested that this *location* dilemma is one of the questions that the implementation of inclusive education raises alongside dilemmas in identification of SEN and the appropriateness of curriculum. Our data indicated that this dilemma was apparent in NQTs' thinking about their own inclusive practice and that of the school and its accordance with their beliefs of what inclusive education is. NQT1/B6 (P) comments:

But yeah you know I suppose that's the main discussion or point of discussion in inclusive education you know – withdrawal for the benefit of the child, but you're taking them out of their class so they're not really included. I suppose it is a dilemma for me as well, but I can really see how all the children I take out on their own really benefit from that...

However, it has to be noted that this dilemma was not so apparent in the second-year interviews. This may in part be a result of second-year NQTs now having a greater say in how additional support is provided. In addition to local school factors, our participants recognised that they operate as professionals within the broader context and values of the education system as a whole. This also presented them with dilemmas about the nature of and possibilities for inclusive education. Indeed, for those in post-primary settings, constraints in the form of curriculum and exam demands were very evident:

Well, being in an actual school, the curriculum is kind of dictating your pace a lot, whereas you want to do more inclusive activities, you're constantly working against a backdrop of getting the course covered in time say for the exam classes. (NQT, E6S – PP)

For a limited number of post-primary NQTs, their experience caused them to question the extent to which they could accommodate diversity in their classroom. Interestingly, this reflects Hodkinson's (2006) finding, albeit with a small sample, that some NQTs who were initially in favour of inclusive education as student teachers started to question its guiding principles in light of their NQT experience. An interesting aspect identified by a participant describing his attempts to promote group work as an inclusive practice was that the resistance came from students under pressure to be successful in exams:

... some of the students in 5th year are weighing up points already on their own 'I have to learn this stuff, I have to learn this stuff' and they're caught in the regurgitating system for learning off answers. But yet it works like a dream with the first years and second years. Third years – kind of half and half with the exam, and then the 5th years and 6th years aren't as into it at all, but they'll do a bit of pair work all right for you, yeah. (NQT, E6S – PP)

An overall finding is that all participants recognised that the school context shapes not only their professional practice but also their overall development as inclusive teachers, for example:

Well I think that I've kind of realised that there are a little bit more parameters and more barriers to inclusive education. And that also I suppose that I've really realised... that it depends on the set-up of the school you're in and whether inclusive education can be facilitated or not. So I suppose I would just hope personally to try and ensure that I teach in a school that has resources available so that I can kind of fulfil my own personal learning or teaching kind of philosophy. (NQT, S9V)

Thus NQTs take a *future perspective* in their development as inclusive teachers, described by Kelchtermans (2009, p. 263) as 'the result of an ongoing interactive process of sense-making and construction'. It appears that new teachers' engagement with the notion of inclusive education is influenced by their previous knowledge and present experience in the light of their expectations for their professional future.

## The teacher's view of learner difference

The area of competence of 'teachers' views of learner difference', as outlined by the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers, centres on the principle of viewing students' differences as a resource and an asset in promoting education for all. Our findings suggest that NQTs largely shared the view that learner difference is an asset to education, within two main strands of thinking: **that differences in the classroom reflect and support diversity in society; and that diverse learners have a positive impact on how teachers teach.**

Within the first strand, NQTs appear to believe that inclusive classrooms contribute to the development of social understanding and relevant skills for respecting and living with difference both within and outside the school, now and in the future. All participants saw the opportunities that diverse classrooms offered pupils, with one NQT noting that pupils 'become more tolerant... they can help each other rather than you know just focusing on themselves all the time' (NQT1/A3 – PP). Our Phase 2 data showed that student teachers recognise the value of learner differences for promoting social understanding amongst all pupils. However, the NQT interviews indicated the development of a more specific and evidenced appreciation of learner differences and what diversity brings to the classroom as a learning experience for all. For example, NQT1/E3S (PP) describes how the whole classroom benefits from the contribution that pupils with SEN make in the classroom:

...other learners actually learn from them [pupils with SEN] and their kind of ... their way of thinking [...] Which I think is a great thing then for other students to kind of hear how somebody else would approach a topic or [...] there's one or two students who are SEN that I have, and I've noticed that their creativity and everything is fantastic, whereas they might not be great academically ... but they do bring that kind of aspect into the classroom, which I try to work on.

In addition, we identified a development in the second-year NQTs' views of learners' diversity, as they tend to recognise more the complexity of learning needs and the nature of learning difficulties. More specifically, it appears that second-year NQTs, as they come to know their learners better, move towards considering difficulties in learning as learning differences and not simply as additional needs. *NQT2, S12V (PP)* comments:

I mean it is about you know happy mistakes and accidents – creativity should be about that. So it's a good place – the Art room is a good place to allow students to kind of find new methods, and having a learning difficulty can be a good way to do that...

It has to be noted that these views are more apparent when NQTs reflect on the value of learners' differences in subject areas that are not traditionally viewed as 'academic'.

However, while NQTs recognised the benefits that learners' differences can bring to the classroom, they did not talk about drawing on such opportunities in a planned way in their teaching: it is more by chance than design that such insights emerge. Thus they do not show evidence of the ways in which individual differences are incorporated within inclusive practices by experienced inclusive teachers (Florian, 2012), whose practice focuses on extending what is available for the whole class rather than trying to accommodate particular learners' differences. Unsurprisingly, our NQTs did not report this kind of practice, but there is an awareness of the need to develop this. As NQT1/S9V (P) explains:

I suppose there's probably areas that I plan for inclusion and I don't realise that they're helping other children... and I probably still don't realise it I'm sure. Maybe in years to come they might be helping the other children that I don't realise about. So I suppose that's one aspect of diverse learning needs that helps every child.

Although such inclusive practice may develop with experience, our data indicate limitations in the ways that learners' differences are perceived and used by beginning teachers as a *resource* for teaching and learning for all.

One underlying theme of NQTs' views on difference and diversity is an understanding that an inclusive education system should reflect social reality and create a place of belonging for all; although they do not view inclusive education as a lever of societal reform. Understanding inclusive education as a change process within a social justice framework runs throughout the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and is advocated by many scholars in the field (Ainscow *et al.*, 2006; Barton, 1997; Booth *et al.*, 2002; Norwich, 2008; Slee, 2010a). However NQTs do not appear to question how education can challenge and remove the social restrictions that those at risk of not learning or being marginalised might face. This is commensurate with their overall responses at this stage, in which their professional understanding of the value of learners' differences is contextualised within the remits of the established school setting and not seen as an educational act for change.

The second strand of NQTs' thinking about learner diversity concerns their perception of it as an opportunity for advancement in their teaching practice and continuous professional improvement and competence. As NQT1/S12V (PP) comments:

...if you're challenged more you're going to deliver more exciting lessons that are, you know paced well, and include varied activities and are aimed at...different abilities and are more interesting. So you want that ultimately. Some days you don't, but ultimately you do want to be challenged as a teacher.

Where the school leadership clearly communicates a respect for learner differences, this enables NQTs to develop their skills within this area of competence. NQT2/B2 (P) explains:

I feel that the principal focuses on the fact that not everyone is academic, which in itself is a bit weird considering ... you know nearly because it's a principal ... but he's just very much aware that there's all kind of learners, and I think that's very important. And I think that allows me then to do what I need to do for the kids.

Our second-year interview data indicates that new teachers' views of learner differences begins to influence their professional identity as inclusive teachers as well as their practice, in slightly different or additional ways than are evident from their accounts as first-year NQTs. We suggest that NQTs may increasingly see teaching and planning for a diverse classroom as part of a developing professional identity in becoming inclusive teachers. Boylan and Woolsey (2015) identify two main features of the formation of teacher identity in teacher education: inquiry and discomfort. Our findings imply that beginning teachers continue to inquire and be challenged when dealing with learner difference, and they recognise that process as part of their professional role. This reflects Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, and Bransford's (2005, pp 383-384) suggestion that the ways in which teachers construct their professional identities also guides 'how they seek out professional development opportunities'. We return to this connection below, in relation to the Personal Professional Development area of competence within the EASNIE profile.

## 4.2.2 Supporting all learners

The EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers describes 'Supporting All Learners' as being associated with teachers having high expectations for all learners. The areas of competence within this core value relate to:

Promoting the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners;

Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes.

Teachers' expectations, and the promotion of effective learning and teaching in heterogeneous classes, are not uniform either in practice or in our findings as set out here. Contradictions abound, and below we seek to set out examples of overall patterns as they appear in the data.

### **Promoting the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners**

It should be noted that participants focused more on their approaches to developing effective teaching practice in heterogeneous classes and less on the interplay of academic, practical, social and emotional learning of learners. Overall, our findings indicate that a greater alignment of these two dimensions of this 'area of competence' is worth exploring, in supporting all teachers to support all learners. This is not to suggest that NQTs do not recognise the importance of promoting social and emotional learning. On the contrary, NQT1/S9V elaborates:

I'm in perhaps a disadvantaged area – again academic mightn't be the priority, there might be other needs that are actually more important. And especially I suppose I've found that in the Irish curriculum, social and communication skills aren't standardised in a way...so therefore there isn't a lot of emphasis put on them. But yet in my...I suppose in my own professional opinion, I think communication and social skills are top of the list priority-wise. So I've been trying to like put a lot of emphasis on those, even though on paper it's not viewed as relevant.

This quote highlights the view that social and communication skills are sometimes perceived as isolated and less-valued components of the curriculum, rather than an integral dimension to how teachers teach and students learn. However, what appears to be a consistent finding is that NQTs do not perceive 'the curriculum as a tool for inclusion that supports access to learning' (EADSNE, 2012: 14) and/or feel confident to address 'diversity issues in curriculum development processes' (ibid, p. 15) which are identified as crucial skills for this area of competence. On the contrary, participants view curriculum structures mostly as a barrier for promoting inclusive practices.

### **Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes**

Systemic constraints were also identified by NQTs in assessment processes. In general, the use of standardised assessment was seen as not serving inclusive purposes. NQT2, B6 (P) comments:

I know that a lot of assessments are standardised but I don't think that worked last year for me. Like...random numbers, like let's say the highest in the class was a 6 and she got a 2, that 2 was then amazing for her, you know. And to kind of voice my opinion on that it was kind of hard, cos a lot of things are focused on numbers and scores ... it shouldn't be that way, you know.

Our data suggested that NQTs found it difficult to articulate clearly the purpose of different assessment approaches in terms of inclusive teaching. The EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers stresses the use of assessment with a focus on independent learning and autonomy. We noted differentiation in assessment in our data, where participants mentioned the use of different techniques and differentiation of learning outcomes, but there is no clear indication of the purpose of the various assessment approaches. It seems that different assessment approaches are dictated by different learning needs, having more of a reactive rather than a proactive character. In our NQT interview data, the use of assessment practices for promoting inclusive learning appears to be relatively weak.

Overall, our findings suggest that some NQTs do feel confident using a range of teaching approaches for promoting learning and participation, such as adapting their communication strategies with pupils. Collaborative and flexible groupings also seem to be identified by NQTs as inclusive practices in their teaching approaches; contrary to suggestions that NQTs may tend to abandon learner-centred teaching approaches developed during their pre-service programs (see Strom, 2015). The following quotes exemplify such views:

I've tried definitely to maybe slow down my speech and have a lot more visual references.  
NQT2, D2 (PP)

You have to be really really flexible and adapt to whatever way they're learning. NQT2, B8 (P)

You have to take into account the different abilities of learners. But also not only the abilities, the process ... and some people even though they're well able to say process information differently, so I'm conscious of how they get the information from me ... so I try to be clear and concise. NQT2, B2 (P)

Our data suggest that NQTs' beliefs about the importance of including all pupils in classroom activities, shaped during their student years, can continue to influence their practice in a powerful way. For example, NQT1/B6 (P) describes how she made teaching decisions based on her views that some pupils were not feeling part of the classroom:

So the first few weeks I wasn't really prepared for that so I had them doing (SEN learners) other activities while the other children were doing the class spellings... felt that was ... you know that wasn't a nice way of including them in the class, So I decided then on a Thursday night I would prepare their test copies with activities relating to their own spellings [...] So they were kind of quite clear on you know we're all doing our tests now and I'm no different, kind of thing.

All NQTs referred to the need to differentiate to enable pupils identified with SEN to participate in classroom activities. NQT2/B3 (P) expresses her confidence in her teaching approach by saying that '...from differentiating spellings and making flashcards and doing whatever I can – if I can help any child in any way I will'.

Our data indicate that NQTs in the beginning of their teaching career feel that they dedicate a lot of their planning and preparation time to differentiating resources and learning activities, implying that this might be seen as something *different* or *additional* to the common practice. Our second-year interview data suggested a change in their approach, with more emphasis on the time available within the classroom to support individual learners as a key constraint, rather than difficulties in managing time for planning learning.

Florian and Linklater (2010, p. 370) contend that inclusive pedagogy is developed as an approach to teaching and learning by 'extending what is ordinarily available as part of the routine of classroom life as a way of responding to differences between learners rather than specifically individualizing for some'. Our data presents a picture of NQTs as striving to promote participation and create meaningful learning activities for all, whilst gaining confidence in their exploration of different ways of supporting learners.

Another area that all NQTs referred to as important for them in relation to inclusive practice is that of behaviour management. NQT1/B10 (P) recognises that college prepared her to some extent to deal with behaviour issues in her practice, but sees these skills as necessarily being developed through the experience of teaching:

I don't think anyone really anticipates how much of your time is spent like managing behaviour and you know different incidents. So I think...you know that's a big part of inclusion as well, you know like how the children get along together and like are there arguments, are there fights in the yard every day, like you know how are they treating each other. So I think...you know the college can only prepare you so much I guess because you do have to really be doing it to learn, you have to kind of learn on your feet I think.

In her 2<sup>nd</sup> year, she can see a development in her classroom management skills and a change in her attitude towards that:

I think now I do enjoy like having my own class, having you know my reward system and my kind of way of encouraging the children and I think I feel a lot more confident just with my classroom management. Whereas as a student I just think it's kind of one of those things where it's really hard to be good at it until you're actually in the job I think.

Similarly, NQT1/B6 identifies behaviour management as a challenge for her as an NQT commenting that '*it was just a constant thing with behaviour that you know I was struggling with as a newly qualified teacher*'. An interesting development in the second-year NQT interviews is an emerging critical consideration of what constitutes a behavioural problem in the classroom. The same participant (NQT2/B6) describes her second-year experience:

You know there's only one child in my class who's been diagnosed with any sort of kind of behavioural ... and it's not really behaviour, it's more to do with kind of sensory things. But I can see now from just watching children in the class, there are two more children in the class who definitely have sensory issues. And to try and be mindful of that you know if there's a child who needs to move the whole time and to allow that to a point, even if it's annoying or distracting me, to allow that to a point where it's not distracting other children.

These findings are in accordance with broader research on the first years of teaching, where novice teachers often identify behaviour management as an area of concern. Fenwick (2011, p. 333) suggested that it is 'frequently linked to relational aspects of their school environment such as the amount of support received from senior staff'. It appears that the influence of classroom realities on understanding behaviour and developing concomitant practices of classroom management, is stronger for NQTs than ITE course content and placement experience. Cook (2009, p. 282) identified this aspect of NQTs' practice as a negotiation not only between pupils and teacher, but also between teacher and self, as: 'perhaps one of the more difficult roles that first-year teachers have to play is that of an adult authority figure'.

### 4.2.3 Working with others

This core value highlights the importance of collaboration and teamwork for inclusive teaching in two areas of competence: working with parents and families; and working with a range of other educational professionals.

#### Working with parents and families

Our interview data suggest that newly qualified teachers do develop an understanding of the importance of working with parents to support inclusive learning for pupils. The belief that parents are 'an essential resource for a learner's learning' (EADSNE 2012, p.13) appears to strengthen amongst second-year NQTs, with more references – albeit somewhat limited – to working with parents and families. For example:

Speaking with the teachers that are there, speaking with parents, support teachers ... they're the most important people in terms of promoting inclusivity (NQT2,S1V – PP).

This recognition that parents have an important role in contributing to the learning process was expressed both as a resource for developing inclusive teaching, and as a potential barrier if teachers were unable to establish common ground. For example, one interviewee observed that parents may also be in need of support:

No matter what kind of inclusivity that was set up in the classroom there was no way they were going to be supported (the pupils) – the parents had to be supported first'. NQT2,S9V (P)

This links to our finding from the interview data that both student teachers and NQTs alike felt that they were not well-equipped to work with parents effectively. This was supported by our survey data and by our documentary analysis, which showed that working with parents was an area that received less coverage in ITE programmes. Likewise, in the review of the Droichead Pilot, Smyth *et al.* (2016) found that NQTs were critical of their ITE preparation for working with parents, and that school principals also felt that NQTs were not well prepared to fulfil this role.

Overall however, the references to home-school collaboration for inclusive teaching were somewhat limited in our NQT interview data. This is not to suggest that NQTs do not interact with parents but, rather, that they may not acknowledge the aspects of these interactions that add value to their inclusive practice, and/or they do not feel that they participate confidently in building such interactions. NQT1/S11V (P) commented on the lack of preparation for working with parents:

Talking with parents who are coming to you really stressed out with whatever is going on you know...that's been where I suppose I don't feel as prepared, but sure you learn as you go on I suppose.

On a similar note NQT2, B10 (P) identifies this as an area where NQTs need support from the school:

...especially like around certain times that they haven't experienced before, like the first parent/teacher meetings can be quite nerve-wracking...

At the same time, we identified a few instances of recognition of 'the importance of positive inter-personal skills' (EASNIE, p.15). The same participant explains:

I know the class quite well and I think you know making an effort with parents has been really helpful as well, because I do feel like parents find me approachable or like I hope they do anyway, but I think that's quite important.

It may be that NQTs in their 1<sup>st</sup> year in the profession and student teachers are given few opportunities to participate and recognise the contribution that parents' involvement can make in building an inclusive learning environment. However, the nature of our data cannot determine to what extent the lack of confidence expressed by NQTs might be due to a lack of opportunities or support in schools.

### **Working with a range of other educational professionals**

The second area of collaborative work for inclusive teaching focuses on working with other professionals in teams. Our data suggest that this is recognised by all NQTs in terms of working with school colleagues and is one of the most important aspects of their experience in enabling them to develop and implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. There is a clear consensus amongst NQTs that inclusive teaching relies on collaboration, but their experiences vary depending on the school approach. The idea that inclusive teaching is collaborative becomes a realisation of practice, rather than an abstract recognition of collaboration as a working principle.

Our findings suggest that, in their first year of teaching, the focus and level of collaboration for NQTs was mostly around acquiring specific skills for responding to the needs of individual learners and/or solving particular problems in their classrooms. It appears that this interaction with colleagues is perceived by NQTs as an action of collaborative problem-solving with other colleagues, taking place within or outside the classroom. In the second-year interview data this focus became extended more towards the importance of collaboration for supporting learners with additional needs in the classroom. In general, NQTs identified opportunities for co-planning with support teachers, collaborating with SNAs, and team-teaching opportunities as crucial and they see their skills and knowledge in inclusive practice as developed through peer collaboration.

It should be noted that three out of the five first-year NQTs in primary settings in our sample taught in resource classrooms. Two of them had chosen a special education specialisation route as part of their preparation programme, while the other has personal experience with disability. Although this is only a small sample, it appears that, although they valued the experience they gain in resource settings, they also experienced difficulties in developing their role in collaborating for inclusive teaching. NQT1/B10 (P) describes the problems:

I'm in resource this year, so ... it's a good way to start I think your teaching career because you get to you know work with different age groups and see what different teachers do. But then it's challenging as well to like know what your role is, especially with you know...like a lot of the time I think I find myself kind of following the teacher's lead on... So I think it is hard when you're working with like you know people who have different opinions of what inclusion is.

This aspect of collaboration appears to be more difficult for NQTs to handle when they found themselves in schools that do not actively promote collaboration across teams. Johnson & Teacher (2004), in their Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, stressed the need for a supportive school culture and they note that some schools have professional cultures aligned to novices, that were high energy or 'youthful' and allowed for support from other teachers. Equally, it may be that NQTs who operate in resource settings recognise the importance of exercising a kind of leadership and/or coordinating skills, but feel that they cannot do so, either because of their course preparation or because of their NQT role and status in the school. NQT1/S11V (P) felt that the relevant skills were not fully addressed in her college learning:

A lot of the sort of inclusive education that we learnt has been useful. But again when you're just learning it from a PowerPoint presentation in college it doesn't really prepare you for I suppose the skills like 1working with other staff to make sure that you're including people to the best of your abilities, you don't really practise that [...] And that's another thing I would say that my initial teacher education didn't really teach us much about working with SNAs, and SNAs can be your best help.

However, as second-year NQTs develop in their role as classroom teachers they reported a change in how confident they feel to engage in productive collaborations. NQT2, E3S (PP) comments:

I think they've changed [views on inclusive practice] slightly in that now I feel better able to include the learners that have certain needs and requirements and I think that's come through peer collaboration and just that little bit more experience.

Another area of collaboration in our data was in relation to working with outside school professionals. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers proposes that new teachers should be familiar with 'the language/terminology and basic working concepts and perspectives of other professionals involved in education', and have the ability to draw on the support of external resources (EADSNE 2012, p.16). Our findings suggest that NQTs appear to have limited opportunities and knowledge of the system to access external professionals and to work with them. Many NQTs commented that they do not feel confident and that they lack knowledge of the processes for communicating with external professionals. NQT2, S9V (P) identifies this as a gap during her course preparation:

When you're going on placement you're not really you know ... you're not expected to delve into things. Like you see yourself the practice that's taking place, but paperwork and forms and ... nothing like that, like I wasn't prepared for any of that.

This lack of confidence was clearly articulated, and impacted on their practice. The following quotes exemplify this finding:

Like we're trying to get resources for the kids with you know severe dyslexia, so I just...a lot of that is applying for stuff and going through all these different government bodies, and I wouldn't feel confident of that yet, so I wouldn't deal with that a lot. NQT2, S11 (P)

When you're working with like say non-verbal autism you don't really get all that much training on that or how to deal with resources. And even the paperwork side of it, like working with psychologists and psychiatrists, trying to transfer schools, classes etc. – you really don't have any training for that, you're learning as you go like. So that would be the main thing. NQT2, B4 (P)

Sometimes when NQTs referred to instances of communicating with other professionals such as occupational therapists and psychologists, it seemed that they mostly participated by providing information without fully understanding how their information was used. NQT1, ES2 (PP) said:

I mean like every Friday I'm filling in a report on how you know the dyscalculia ADHD girl was doing and how her behaviour has been in the week... the psychologist has asked us to do a weekly report and we're doing that.

Another area that all NQTs commented was on aspects of working with SNAs, and they identified their role as important for promoting inclusion. However, on many occasions NQTs' accounts revealed that it was not clear to them how SNAs might be deployed for effective inclusive teaching in the classroom. For example, NQT1/B2 (P) commented on how an SNA enabled her to manage behaviour in the classroom more effectively:

And in a particular class that I was in for 3 months I had senior infants and there was a child, and he was very demanding...and if I hadn't have had her there I would have been lost, like really really would have been lost. And not only that, but it would have taken from me teaching the other children.

At the same time her account of this suggests a view that managing behaviour is something that disrupts her teaching, and may be part of the SNA's role. Similarly, NQT1/D2 (PP) views the SNA in her class as understanding SEN pupils' needs better than her, and as being the judge as to whether to withdraw pupils from the lesson:

...the SNA would know them (pupils) better than I would. So if they recommended then I would always leave them opt out just for the day, cos you don't know what's going on with them individually.

These data imply that NQTs do not always take responsibility for all learners in their classrooms, attributing that role to SNAs for some SEN pupils. It should be noted that internationally, there is ambiguity about what is the role of support staff in relation to inclusive education for pupils with SEN (see Blatchford, Russell, & Webster, 2012 for a relevant discussion). Our data indicated that it was not clear to NQTs how they might deploy SNAs and for what purposes. Our data suggest that NQTs' understandings of what inclusive practice is and what it entails includes working with SNAs, but they enter the profession with a degree of uncertainty about how they can work effectively with SNAs in developing inclusive practice in their classrooms.<sup>7</sup>

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7 It should be noted that the role of Teaching Assistants in England, which was the focus of Blatchford *et al.* (2012), is not directly comparable with that of Special Needs Assistants in Ireland, who have a care role. This is the subject of policy advice from NCSE arising from the recently completed Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme, which is available at: <https://ncse.ie/policy-advice>

Donnelly (2011, p. 65) argues that 'interpersonal skills and an understanding of the nature of collaboration are essential to work with others including professionals and parents who contribute to a full understanding of learners' needs'. Our data suggest that NQTs begin to understand the major role of collaboration in creating inclusive classrooms. However, for them, collaboration is restricted within the boundaries of their schools and we do not have evidence of collaboration with external professionals. Our findings indicate that NQTs move from *private* to *collective* practice as an important step in developing their inclusive pedagogy, but the extent to which they 'see themselves as contributing to the complementary skills of the whole school community' (ibid, p.66) remains unclear and such a contribution was not strongly depicted in their narratives of working with others.

#### 4.2.4 Personal Professional Development

##### Teacher as a reflective practitioner

The EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers highlights the need for teacher education to engage teachers in both study and reflective practice for developing their understanding, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching. Reflective practice is seen as part of their personal professional development. Similarly, the Teaching Council stresses the need for teachers to be reflective practitioners, by emphasising the use of inquiry for developing and enhancing their teaching practice (Teaching Council, 2016). More specifically, the Teaching Council's strategic plan (2015-17) identifies three 'pillars' that support the teaching profession in providing the best educational experience for all pupils, those of Reflective practice, Research, and Relationships. Our interview data provided evidence regarding the engagement of NQTs with each of these three areas.

With regard to reflective practice, the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers portrays reflective practitioners as engaging in evaluating their own practice in a systematic way by recognising teaching as a problem-solving situation. As discussed earlier, NQTs do reflect on their practice and collaborate with others for solving specific problems in their classrooms, so that reflective qualities are evident in their thinking and practice. In our interview data it was clear that they recognised and valued the importance of reflective practice for supporting their learners and to improve their practice. The following quotes exemplify this:

We've just had the Christmas tests and now I realise what I was doing for maybe one or two individuals mightn't actually have been 100% what they needed, so I need to go and look at that again now and change my approach towards those students and see what happens. NQT2, E3S (PP)

You have to keep monitoring it [your work], you have to keep changing it as much as you can, keep assessing your own work...as much as possible to see that you're getting (results)... NQT2, S1V (PP)

In Phases 1 and 2 of this project, we found that student teachers referred to reflective practice in a systematic and organised way by engaging in a range of reflective activities (such as journal entries, teaching observations, portfolios, discussions etc.). However, our NQT interview data did not provide evidence of systematic reflective practice that was specifically related to inclusive teaching. NQTs do identify areas where they feel they need to develop, and look for appropriate CPD opportunities, although this is mostly directed towards particular skills, rather than at a systematic level of reflecting upon practice and evaluating performance.

With regard to the Teaching Council's 'second pillar' of teachers' engagement with research to support learning and practice (Teaching Council, 2016), we found little evidence, at an individual or collective level, of the promotion of an inquiry-based or action research focus to support NQT's own development or that of the school. As referenced previously, team teaching practices offer possibilities for professional reflection and action, and this is recognised by NQT1, E3 (PP):

There's a lot of team teaching goes on. And I think that's a great way to kind of include students, and I think from what I've seen as you know the main class teacher and then being the team teacher, it kind of makes me think twice.

However, such collective practices are for the most part *ad hoc* and not part of a systematic approach to support reflective teaching for NQTs or the wider school community. Indeed the notion of the school as a site for inquiry would appear to be underdeveloped for NQTs and within their experience of the NIPT process. However, we did find one telling example where a second-year NQT highlighted her engagement in a research project on reflection, which was led by her ITE provider. She shared:

I was involved in a research project alongside [anonymised info], which looked at our reflection on our practice within the classroom. And so it looked at ... it was unlocking leadership or inclusion within your classroom and also within the school. And we used visual ethnography to capture pictures of things, or our lived experience within the classroom and how we were being inclusive teachers. So that definitely helped. NQT2, B3 (P)

Our interpretation of the data is that, whilst NQTs value the importance of reflective practice, they often lack opportunities to be involved in such processes in a systematic way. Such opportunities would support them in developing their skills around specific methods and strategies for evaluating their work and in employing action research methods in their professional practice (EADSNE, 2012).

The third 'pillar' of the Teaching Council's strategic plan for supporting teachers' professional development is positive and constructive relationships (Teaching Council, 2016). With reference to the teacher as a reflective practitioner, we consider this as an aspect of participating and 'contributing to the development of the school as a learning community' (EADSNE 2012: 17). Overall, our findings do not support the view that NQTs typically experience schools as a learning community; rather, they point to uneven levels of participation in school life.

The concept of community to promote and develop inclusive practices in schools has been suggested by several scholars (Ainscow, 2005; Kugelmass, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1994). Ainscow (2005) employed the notion of 'communities of practice' as described by Wenger (1998) to highlight the need for such a construct in promoting inclusive education. More specifically, Wenger defines such communities as 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger, 2009, p. 1). He uses this theoretical construct as an analytical framework to explore how knowing and learning occurs in organisations. From this perspective, the notion of community appears to be an integral element in the development of NQTs as inclusive teachers. One NQT gave an interesting example of participating in a professional group outside school:

The only thing I feel now that's really helping me develop is the community of practice that I'm in, which is at the moment we're focusing a lot on reflecting on...we kind of picked one issue each that we're focusing on, and it's helping me really reflect on that side of my teaching at the moment. NQT2, B6 (P)

We suggest that the concept of 'community of practice' may be an area worthy of further consideration for NQTs' development of reflective practice.

There are, however, many instances of reflection on values and beliefs about what is educationally worthwhile and on NQTs' roles in the educational system. Such reflection can be seen in relation to constructing their professional identity in ways that go beyond the 'practicalities' of teaching practice. NQT1, S9V (P) reflects:

And then establishing what education is to see if what you're teaching them is actually relevant for their life. Yeah so the big challenge was actually trying to figure out in my own head what education is and how that should be realised for each child, and how like education is different for you know some children who have very specific learning needs, and that like academic mightn't be actually their main priority.

In her review of relevant studies about the construction of student teachers' identity, Izadinia (2013, p. 699) argued that 'all studies suggest that having student teachers reflect upon their own values, beliefs, feelings and teaching practices and experiences helps shape their professional identity'. Maclure (1993, p. 320) described the process of identity formation captured in teachers' autobiographical accounts as a form of argument developed by individuals in their efforts 'to find order and consistency in the journey from past to present', and from this point of view such changes can be indicative of NQTs' journey. Overall, our data draws attention to the need for further exploration of the role of reflection and its organisation as a critical process in the identity construction of inclusive teachers.

### **Initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development**

Within the context of this research, NQTs clearly see their initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning and development, which supports being responsible for all learners' learning and is in keeping with the EASNIE profile. Overall, there is an appreciation and a recognition of both the importance and limitations of initial teacher education as commented on by NQT1/S1V (PP):

Um ... I think it was pretty good ((ITE programme)...I think there's only so much you can try and...in initial teacher education you can't fully learn until you actually do it because every situation is different, everyone's child's needs are different. So I think it can ... it prepares you well, but only to a point because it's further developed once you actually start teaching them.

NQT1/A3 (PP) comments similarly on the role of classroom experience:

I don't know if there's a lot they (ITE programmes) could do more about inclusive education because it predominantly comes down to...you're actually in the classroom after you've qualified where I think you learn the most.

NQTs recognise the importance of engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities, reflecting the view that 'change and development is constant in inclusive education' (EADSNE, 2012, p. 17). It seems that some NQTs hold strong views about the importance of continuing professional development in relation to inclusive practice. One respondent NQT1/B2 (P) suggested that such a process should become mandatory:

I know we're encouraged to do CPD and stuff like that and whatever, but I also think it should be mandatory, specially when it comes to inclusivity that you do...do maybe a course you know. I just think it's imperative because like you could have for example a teacher that okay they might have experience for 20 years in the school, but things have changed in that 20 years and they need to be kept up to speed.

In our interview data, the shared professional learning opportunities that might be explored by PSTs are rarely mentioned by NQTs. It seems that the role of a 'significant other' supporting ongoing professional learning for NQTs ranges from the informal, but powerful, engagement with SNAs, to more focused engagement with senior teachers. The support offered by class teachers and/or subject department coordinators may be less formally planned, but nonetheless seems to provide effective engagement in promoting inclusive teaching. As discussed earlier, one potential area for mutual professional learning between established teachers and NQTs lies in the development of team teaching.

There would also appear to be a link between the employment status in which students find themselves and their choices for CPD, emphasising the need to develop their knowledge and skills for specific contexts. Some NQTs conveyed a sense of uncertainty in relation to future employment as an influential factor in accessing further professional learning opportunities. The context in which they find themselves – or expect to find themselves – is a significant factor in determining the type of professional learning they seek to access. NQT1/S11V (P) explains:

Next year I'll have 5th class and 6th class again, and it's going to be a lot more SEN heavy, so I do feel like I'll need more help with that sort of side of things. And I suppose just continually pushing myself to be better that way, like sometimes it's easier just to aim at the middle section of the room for differentiation and just hope that it gets to the others. But you know just pushing yourself to sort of go beyond that, and I suppose yeah it's a bit of training as well probably will help me.

In her second-year of teaching in the same school, she identifies learning opportunities within and outside school:

Also one of my partner teachers has done a course on dyslexia and she's actually going to be sort of presenting to the school, so I'll be learning about that. So that's going to hopefully include or improve my English teaching in that area. Yeah and just sort of looking up on stuff in general, you know trying to get involved in as many sort of CPD opportunities as I have time for. NQT2, S11V (P)

All interviewees seem to appreciate the concept of lifelong learning at a formal postgraduate level or in the context of online courses. However, what NQTs perceive as the role of school in that learning process is not clear. Cosán<sup>8</sup> introduces teachers' professional learning as legitimising work-place learning. The calibration of on-site and off-site learning and/or in-class and in-school learning is only emerging in the context, but appears to be an important aspect in supporting teachers' developing inclusive practices. Where in-school support is referenced, NQTs are generally of the view that it adds a contextual dimension to the learning experience and offers the possibility of a continuum of engagement and problem-solving, notwithstanding little reference to best or indeed any research practices.

Our data indicate that, in general terms, the value of NIPT workshops was recognised in principle, but NQTs questioned their relevance and timing in relation to their specific needs. NQT2, B10 (P) explains:

The workshops I found, some of them I found helpful, but then a lot of it say was about mainstream planning and having your own class and I wasn't doing that last year, so I felt some of it didn't really apply to me as much at the time.

Overall, there was a consensus among NQTs in favour of the Droichead programme over NIPT workshops that appeared to be attributed to the element of mentorship involved in Droichead. NQT2, D2 (PP) shares her positive experience:

I have been so lucky in the fact that this is my first school, there is a very strong mix of experienced and new enough teachers. I mean there's four of us undergoing the Droichead classes in my school at the minute, and as well as that now the head of the Maths department has been in this school for 8 years you know so he knows the ins and outs. You know I honestly have to say that I don't believe I could be more supported.

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8 See Glossary.

The perceived interaction between NIPT workshops and the school personnel – be they involved in Droichead or not – was not clear in NQTs' accounts. Both NQTs and principals commented on the importance of the school culture and a structure of support for developing NQTs' inclusive knowledge and practice, but NQTs appear to view their development as contingent on a pre-existing inclusive school culture. As stated earlier, the context in which the NQT finds themselves plays a key role in supporting and enacting the concept of lifelong learning. Such a finding clearly directs our attention to the need for orchestrating the support that NQTs receive for developing their inclusive pedagogy, having built a foundational learning through their college, as there is evidence that unsupportive school cultures can have a washout effect on pre-professional learning (K. M. Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

The role of a 'support team' devoted to promoting inclusive practice is frequently mentioned, and appears for the most part to be a positive experience for participants. The concept of lifelong learning being a daily activity combined with episodic engagement with courses is recognised by some NQTs:

Well with school more experienced teachers would have the experience and they would have the methodologies and they would be able to deal with it more effectively than I would. And basically the people that are around me, they are the first port of call, and they're the people I would go to, and they're most reliable in terms of their information. Because NIPT meetings are more...it's not specific to their situation because all are there in different schools, they're in different circumstances, whereas the in support staff are seen day in day out. NQT, S1V (PP)

Drawing on research evidence from several European countries, Donnelly (2011) identified that NQTs' introduction to the profession is uneven, taking place through both formal and non-formal learning processes. She argued for the need of a 'systematic induction of teacher educators and their continuing professional development, particularly in relation to meeting diverse needs in classrooms' (ibid, p.45). Although in the specific research context, the continuum of teacher education is well-documented (Coolahan, 2007), our findings indicated that there is a fluctuating focus on stages along that continuum rather than a fluid understanding of a clear progression route. Our data indicated a sense of unfulfilled potential with regard to the interplay of NIPT, schools and HEIs in supporting both the concept and actions associated with lifelong learning.

Finally, Strom (2015, p. 1) argues that the connection between pre-service professional learning and first-year classroom practice is not linear. She joins her voice with other scholars (see Marilyn Cochran-Smith, 2013; Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Ell, Ludlow, Grudnoff, & Aitken, 2014), arguing that 'the type of linear thinking bolstering popular accountability reforms is a major barrier to understanding how to prepare and support teachers in increasingly diverse and complex educational settings'. Such a view has important implications for the way that we interpret and understand the meaning of NQTs' experience in developing their understanding of inclusive education. Our data supports the view that the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed for effective inclusive teaching emerge in complex ways in the novice teacher year, influenced by factors from ITE, induction support, school context, developing teacher identity, positioning within the school and the wider context of school resourcing and accountability.

## Longitudinal themes – student learning revisited

### 4.2.5 The content and value of ITE courses: critically reviewing the experience

All the NQTs we interviewed identified their placement learning, irrespective of the setting, as a crucial element in their ITE in preparation for inclusive teaching. NQT1/S9V (P) described her course as 'a little bit too out of context and too theory based, but in general it gave me a good foundation', but she felt that:

...the placements, the teaching placements, they gave me a lot of I suppose initial training and experience to allow me to kind of bring those skills that I learnt in those placements into the classroom that I'm teaching in at the moment.

In a similar vein, in reflecting back on her course preparation, NQT1/A1 (PP) identified placement as the most valuable aspect of her learning journey:

The learnings and the experience on the teacher placement...I had the theory in mind, however I feel that it's the placement that I learnt the most when it comes to the dealings of inclusivity and child development or educational development. So while I did gain most of my experience in school, the course allowed me or enabled me to have the background knowledge and theory ready and there to be used whenever it needed to be.

In general, NQTs appeared to value their ITE preparation courses for implementing inclusive practices, several identifying their engagement with SEN during the course as important. Many NQTs commented on how their ITE preparation enabled them to think about inclusion for all pupils by reflecting on the needs of pupils with SEN, and they suggested the need for such a content to be more embedded throughout their ITE. NQT2,B10 (P) explains:

Just I think it (SEN) should be more...interwoven into the course, so that it's more seamless rather than just be like now we're going to talk about inclusion. I think it should just be something that comes up all the time, because it is in classrooms. Like you know any class you're going to have children with special needs, you're going to have children who are going to need more help in certain areas, so I think it just makes sense really.

A small minority of NQTs who as students had taken a specialist pathway in SEN or inclusive education, felt that they were better equipped to deal with the challenges they faced in schools as aspiring inclusive teachers. NQT1,B10 (P) comments on the benefits of the additional time spent in studying inclusive education in comparison to other routes:

I definitely do feel that we were more prepared – the people who did the specialism in inclusive education. Like...cos I know from talking to people who didn't, especially if they're in resource this year, they feel totally unprepared. Because you know there was only a special education module in first year and in fourth year.

Such specialist pathways were seen as enabling them to develop a broader view of inclusive education, not only in relation to SEN. It seems that such pathways are valued in terms of the development of their understanding about the role of an inclusive teacher and what an inclusive classroom is about. A realisation that this is not just about skills, but about broader understanding and attitudes is evident in this quote:

Really what I see is that the Special and Inclusive Education specialism really really helped prepare me for the way of thinking that is going to be useful to me as a teacher when it comes to inclusion. If I hadn't had that experience I think I would be very much on the other side in terms of where's the quick fix for this, where's the quick fix for that you know... whereas now it's much more thinking about the big picture for that child. NQT2, B6 (P)

The stronger focus on aspects of inclusive teaching within such specialist pathways gives NQTs greater confidence to participate in decision-making about organising appropriate support at a school level. This association became more apparent in the second-year interviews and it implies a connection with the development of NQTs' professional identity in relation to their role and their participation in the school community. NQT2, B3 (P) comments:

I don't know if I didn't complete the major if I would be as confident with you know trusting in my thoughts or my ideas or my opinions on a child. But I do think on the major (focused on) different educational needs throughout the major, and I think that really did help me and kind of give me confidence in my opinions, and I'm confident telling you know what I think, or asking even.'

Such views indicate a link between special educational needs and the ways that NQTs experience, conceptualise and respond to the challenges they face in their classrooms for implementing inclusive teaching and ensuring learning for all. Our data also suggest that NQTs value the experience gained from specialist settings during their placements and feel that their learning from this is transferable to mainstream settings, for example:

So like last year I had...worked in a special needs school for my placement. So this year yeah I kind of have that integrated into my school, so I have a mix of mainstream and special educational needs. NQT1/S14V (PP)

I really liked the fact they had a special needs placement, it was really important I think. NQT2S11V (P)

The only thing I would ... if I was improving it would be the special ed block, you know it was just two weeks of all of the school placement ... I think you know that there's so many different special settings that people could go to you know from learning support...I think it would be beneficial to see more special educational settings than just one.

Finally, some NQTs identified that their engagement with elective research projects focused on inclusive teaching was important. NQT1/E3S (PP) expressed this view explicitly in relation to her ITE course:

I think to a certain extent it's (the course) prepared me quite well. I did my thesis on it (IE), so I think through more kind of research into the topic myself I think I kind of helped myself understand it a bit better.

Moving to how NQTs are supported in their novice year, we found that NQTs continue to place a value on their ITE programmes as a source of on-going support. There was a sense of transformation of college from a site of learning to a supportive network for continuous professional development for NQTs. Some NQTs commented on the emotional and relational dimension of their college system as support at this stage of their teaching careers. NQT1/B6 (P) comments:

You know I couldn't say that I have been in touch with outside people, but I would feel that I have a good support network kind of from the people I went to college with and my lecturers on that course as well who would have a lot of knowledge and kind of you know be able to point me in the right direction more than anything.

It appears that when college remains a part of NQTs' professional life it provides them with a sense of security and belonging that shapes their professional identities. Moreover, the same participant recognises that having a relationship with her university gives her access to research informed practice:

...I would ask questions to my lecturers from that course which I'm still in touch with because they're doing research (...) as well. So kind of joining back with people from college as well to kind of see...you know cos I would feel that they're the most up to date on what's going on in research...

Our data suggested that even when NQTs are not actually accessing the opportunities provided by the college for further support, they feel supported in an emotional sense, as NQT1/B10 (P) reflects:

I'm in touch with [ITE tutor] and they're really great, and I know I could go to them if I needed. I haven't...I just kind of...cos you're in the school, like you know if you have people here you can talk to, like you don't always need to go to someone else, but I know that they would be really helpful, and like that department of [department name] is really really good.

As Donnelly (2011) pointed out regarding the Irish context, it appears that some institutions work informally with returning graduates to contextualise their pre-service education in the light of their NQT year and share their challenges and experiences. Our data suggest that such an informal practice is valued by NQTs for developing their inclusive practice.

### 4.2.6 Agents of change

The view that the development and implementation of inclusive education is a change process that connotes a move from an existing system towards a more inclusive one is a view shared by many scholars in the field (see Ainscow *et al.*, 2006; Booth *et al.*, 2002; Norwich, 2008; Slee, 2010a). This connection has been illustrated across our data. Student teachers were often depicted as change agents in programme documents, and this was also captured in student interviews where the idea was voiced of bringing change to a school system that was quite often perceived as relatively conservative and exclusive (Hick *et al.*, 2018).

However, the reality was not quite as straightforward. One student teacher anticipated: 'if I was a paid member of staff and they were my peers, I would try my hardest to make my classes inclusive and make sure that I'm meeting all their needs'. However, as a first-year NQT she found that her views had changed about how much impact she could have:

You know I find it very disheartening because I hate to hear this kind of hardened view of 'Well she (SEN pupil) shouldn't be here' and I would hate to think that that will be me in like 20 years' time. But also I kind of feel disappointed that I am not catering for these students, because I did have such an enthusiasm and I was all about inclusiveness. NQT1/D1 (PP)

It appears that this NQT has adjusted her views, with less resilience in her aspiration to support and promote change. In their evaluation of the Driochead pilot, Smyth *et al.* (2016) suggest that the extent to which teachers maintain their motivation and resilience is connected to both their personal attributes and the context within which they teach (see also Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011). Similarly in our data, it seems that external system pressures for compliance influence the extent to which NQTs see themselves as successful change agents.

Fullan (2007) argues for the importance of the individual meaning that school agents attach to any process of educational change. However, it is not clear what is the nature of change that ITE providers envisage that NQTs will bring into the profession, and what are the meanings that NQTs ascribe to a change process, to the extent that they recognise their role in such a process. It is evident that their positive attitudes towards inclusive teaching informs their practice; however, our data suggest that the extent to which their practice and values influence school practice as a community is somewhat limited.

Some of the student interviewees identified leadership skills as important in order for them to act as change agents when entering the profession. For example, student participant B10 (P) had commented:

we did a leadership for inclusion module which...was the most helpful thing I did...it was basically teaching us to be leaders in inclusive education so the one in the staffroom who might say 'Oh well maybe we should be doing something more for...'... the one who's standing up for the people...they were just encouraging us to be the good example rather than just going along and agreeing in the conversation.

It appears that NQTs come to realise that it is not only leadership skills that are needed, but also leadership action at school level, if they are to be enabled to operate as inclusive teachers. It can be argued that NQTs still engage with their role as potential change agents, but within the realms of collaborative rather than personal action. NQT1/S9V explains how the practice of inclusive education is restricted without adequate support from leadership:

I don't know, like it comes from a management issue, but maybe it needs to be brought up with principals that...specially NQTs, but any teacher really, that there needs to be probably more team teaching, more work, and that support needs to come from the government and finance. So yeah that's just probably a major issue, and until I suppose that's kind of fulfilled or provided for it's very difficult to provide for this ... the inclusive education that we're learning about.

Clearly, the practice of exercising influence is primarily a leadership issue, and it is actualised when 'agents' are enabled to participate in the process of change by attributing their own meanings to the concept of inclusive practice. From that perspective, we observed that in some school settings NQTs felt that they participated in such a process, and in that way they contributed to the advancement of inclusive practice in their schools. NQT2, S13V (P) shares:

I think I do (contribute) ... because I was a member of the diversity committee, because it's something that I have an interest in, then we'd take like ...we'd divide up the calendar of religious events and the cultures in the school and we've actually taken on ... we've started to do like a language of the month, we did it last year, but this year like the children of that culture come in and they bring like food and they sing a song and dance in their traditional dress. ...And for the assembly yeah, so it's trying to do things that like ... that do take time but that would be beneficial to the kids of that culture. So I suppose helping in the organisation of all those things.

It was apparent that when NQTs have the opportunity to collaborate in engaging with practices that they feel are meaningful for inclusive teaching, they begin to see themselves as contributing to promoting change. It seems that it is through such activities that NQTs come to develop a view of their role as 'change agents', rather than by differentiating themselves from 'older' practices that might represent a more limited view of what constitutes inclusive practice. First-year NQTs were more likely to seek to differentiate themselves from older generations of teachers that they may perceive as more conventional in their approach. However, an absence of such views in the second-year interviews suggests a shift in their understanding of how they act and develop their inclusive teaching in relation to the school environment. NQT2, S11 (P) reflects on the development of her inclusive teaching:

I think I'm developing all the time. Like a lot of it comes from the sort of environment I'm in as a teacher, like I sort of have to. And I see myself ... I'm in like with other teachers who've been in this environment for a while so like they help as well. So yeah I think it is that's helping, the environment is helping me as well.

Hence, NQTs appear to develop their skills through collaboration and sharing of experience. NQT1/V1S (PP) explains:

I think just more experience is the key. I think cooperating and just integrating more with the other class teachers, seeing the methodologies they use, and see how effectively they can integrate and include everybody the best they can, that's (...) to be one situation where ... in years to come where I can include as many children as I can with minimal difficulties or minimal obstacles forthcoming.

However, it is clear that they see that collaboration is only feasible to the extent that they share values, attitudes and understandings of the notion of inclusive education. NQT1/S9V (P) describes the difference as a matter of education:

I also think that I suppose coming from the top down, there is that mentality, there's an education in the staff, like the higher up staff would have all been educated about inclusive education, so they knew a lot of the things that as NQTs I was bringing into the classroom – they knew about them and they were really open to any new suggestions.

Thus, NQTs feel that they bring inclusive attitudes into their schools which can be translated into practice only to the extent that they are shared within the school environment, and then they can build their skills by gaining from the experience of others. At the same time, they recognise the need to keep up with changes and educate themselves constantly in order not to lose their motivation for inclusive practice. NQT1/S9V (P) continues:

And also I think that I'd like to maybe do further education in the future so that I can you know keep up to date with new developments and just ensure that I continue having an open mind and kind of progressive education.

Finally, their role as change agents is closely connected to their actual involvement in the decision-making process. Our data in this area is explicit that NQTs do not feel that they are engaged in decision-making processes at school level, but at the same time, they do not feel confident and ready for doing that. The following quote reflects a general view of NQTs stance:

I don't feel qualified or confident yet to be a decision-maker, but definitely to be a decision influencer with my opinions on it and my experience to date and my knowledge from college. But I also do realise as I have been working in this school for nearly a year now that there's so much more to it than just making the right decision by the book. There's so much else playing a part in all those decisions I suppose. I feel that I need a lot more experience before I'm kind of qualified to be part of that decision-making process in terms of being a decision-maker myself. NQT2,B6 (P)

A recent guide published by UNESCO (2017, p. 35) for ensuring inclusion and equity in education states that being explicit about the four core values in the EASNIE profile 'helps to establish the potential of teacher education to be a high-leverage activity in bringing about change'. However, how new teachers can act as agents of change in a system in which they have limited influence and/or leadership is a question that we need to explore critically. It has to be acknowledged that this view of 'change agency' takes place within the limitations of existing policy and

systemic constraints. Failing to recognise this risks positioning NQTs as responsible for change management and 'impl[ies] that educational cultures are radically changeable if only teachers would change themselves and their practice' (Done & Murphy, 2018, p. 151). These issues are more than a theoretical discussion, but are real concerns for NQTs' professional role. NQT2, SE4 (PP) shares:

So the thing is really you know teachers don't have to be all that qualified to achieve what the state is actually looking for. So they probably need to prioritise whether they want education or they want people who can follow an exam brief.

It seems that NQTs see that their role as change agents depends upon the space that they have to act with others in a community of practice to contribute to change, rather than guiding and managing a change process. In our view, the process of change cannot be seen as an NQTs' professional responsibility given that their institutional and actual role in the system does not allow them to exercise such an influence. It appears to be a question of whether the change that can be initiated by teacher education programmes is combined with the school system in ways that utilise the values, knowledge and skills that the new generation of NQTs bring to their schools.

#### **4.2.7 The conceptual development of NQTs' inclusive practice**

In our analysis of student interviews, we identified a perceived mismatch between theory and practice in its interplay in the way that teaching practice is understood and 'performed'. We revisited the theme of this relationship in our analysis of the NQT interviews. We found that NQTs were not only less likely to talk about mismatch, but also perceived the relationship in terms of a more complex interrelationship that takes place not only between theory and practice contradictions, but also in the way that teaching and learning correspond in an inclusive environment.

For example, NQT1/E4S (PP) felt that his ITE course was '...far too theoretical to be as practical as required', but he also felt that it was 'a lot easier to put in practice than to imagine...easier to actually do than I thought'. As an NQT2, he reflects on how teaching is presented in theory and how it is interpreted in practice:

It's not just teaching practice, it's a bit more onus, a bit more responsibility, and that's so that they can get a more ... an even more realistic view of the teaching role on teacher training. And you just feel getting an ideal view of it...and so it can still ...it's still a bubble. NQT2/E4S (PP)

The view that teaching practice is presented as 'ideal' during their course preparation was a common theme, especially in NQT2 accounts which questioned the concept of exercising total control over practice in a way that might prevent them from fully understanding what inclusive teaching entails in relation to being responsive to learners' needs, and allowing time to get to know learners and follow their pace. NQT2,B8 (P) explains how she feels that a 'rigid' way to handle your teaching is not an inclusive pedagogical approach:

*All situations aren't the same, like as in you could be teaching something as simple ... you know like a simple story or whatever, but you know that mightn't suit this one child, so straight away on your feet you have to change it. And I found like in college it was very like 'this is what we're going to do ... introduce the lesson, this is what we're going to do in the middle of the lesson...' and it was so rigid, like you have to be able to just flick a switch straight away.*

This is not to suggest that NQTs questioned the value of theoretical knowledge and a focus on teaching practice. On the contrary, it was apparent that they started to recognise that the boundaries between theory and practice are more blurred and nuanced. NQT1/B10 (P) reflects on the relationship:

*I think there's always going to be a bit of like you know theory versus reality in these kind of situations [...] It's definitely more complicated than I thought, but I mean...I'm sure it's the same for a lot...like any degree that you do in college you might think 'Oh yeah it's really black and white' and then when you get out there you're actually doing it, so you realise how like complex it is.*

It seems that NQTs come to realise that the relationship between theory and practice is not one of oppositional aspects of teaching. Rather, they understand that theory cannot be directly translated into practice. This re-conceptualisation can be seen as an important step in the ways that NQTs develop their professional practice for inclusion as they develop new ways for drawing on their theoretical knowledge in action. Such an interpretation brings an optimism to our understanding in terms of recognising that NQTs can critically explore opportunities 'to exert their judgment about what is educationally desirable in particular situations' as they develop value-driven, decision-making in educational practice Biesta (2007, p. 20). So, for example, NQT1/A3 (PP) comes to understand her professional practice in a productive relation with the theoretical knowledge that she acquired in her course:

*You know in initial teacher education they try and give you as many hypothetical situations as they can, but in reality until you're in the classroom working with particular students, you're not really sure of what will work.*

In our analysis we tried to identify what NQTs feel is happening in their classrooms that directs them to adapt and change their teaching, and how they understand this not only as a skill for differentiation, but in terms of their conceptual understanding of inclusive practice. It was a 'revealing' finding to see that NQTs locate the development of their inclusive practice in a change in their focus. NQT2, B6 (P) articulates this in a clear way:

*I suppose my focus has shifted from what I do in the classroom to what the children do... And that's something that I've only noticed recently that I'm relaxed enough about what I'm doing and I'm prepared enough in myself that I can shift the focus to the children and, I suppose between everything you know learning behaviours and things like that and focusing on that for the children and teaching them to be good learners rather than trying to just be a good teacher. It's a huge thing.*

This sense of a developing confidence in their teaching practice that was shared by all NQT2s resulted in a re-conceptualisation of what constitutes good teaching practice, not in relation to their skills, but in relation to the learning incurred. It was interesting that this view emerged strongly in NQT2s' views but was not apparent in previous phases, at least not in such a clear way. Our interpretation of this shift from teaching to learning as a crucial stage in the development of NQTs' inclusive practice was somehow 'verified' even through cases of NQTs who recognised that they have probably not reached that stage yet. For example, NQT2, S12V (PP) felt

Like I'm still kind of busy trying to become a good teacher and do it like you know ... figure out what I'm doing half the time, like how to teach something. I'm not at the stage yet where I'm so confident in my subject and so confident at teaching it that I can put loads of energy into inclusivity yet you know.

Such a finding might suggest that NQTs did not have the experience to explore and establish a tight connection between teaching and learning during their ITE preparation stage, due to the 'rigidness' of the course content as they referred to. NQT2, B8 (P) talks about her teaching practice as a student teacher as 'you just do it, you don't even think about what you're doing because you're so busy trying to you know be a good teacher'. Nonetheless, our interpretative stance acknowledges that this move from the ideal of 'good teaching' to 'good learning' might be a crucial stage in the journey of NQTs' professional development that requires 'experience and confidence in their practice in order to reflect upon, and (re)define their professional role as educators. In that sense, we witnessed a development of NQTs' understanding of inclusive practice through different channels while they move from a 'student' to a 'professional' attitude.

#### 4.2.8 Summary

Analysis of the NQT interviews underlines the centrality of the school in which they are teaching in shaping how NQTs develop their understandings of inclusive teaching in practice. Whilst this clearly builds on the ideas they are exposed to during their Initial Teacher Education programme, the developing meanings they attach to these are strongly influenced by the context, culture and practices within the school in which they find themselves, and the development of their confidence for their teaching practice.

Key factors evident within the interviews include the level and approaches to providing support for school students identified with special educational needs. For example, the practices adopted within the school in relation to withdrawing students from their class can be seen as a key contextual factor. At the post-primary level in particular, NQTs tended to highlight curriculum constraints as a strong influence on how far they felt able to develop more inclusive practices. Longitudinal analysis suggests that NQTs find their potential role as agents of change also heavily dependent on context, and as needing to be part of collective responses.

The importance of being part of collaborative teams is a strong theme in the interviews, both in terms of developing specific skills but also a powerful medium for early professional development in relation to inclusive teaching. While opportunities for reflection are not formalised, NQTs are future-oriented when it comes to their professional development as inclusive teachers.

## 4.3 Principal interviews

The 21 principal interviews (including 2 deputy principals) were analysed through the lens of the EASNIE profile, and the findings presented below use the broad outline of the profile as a guiding framework. The findings then move beyond the profile in order to point to other emergent areas such as: principal perspectives on ITE; perceptions of a mismatch between theory and practice; Principals' views on factors hindering the inclusive practices of NQTs; NQTs, Droichead, mentoring and the continuum of teacher education.

### The EASNIE Profile as a lens

#### 4.3.1 Valuing Diversity

##### Concepts of inclusive education

The schools in which NQTs find themselves mediate and co-construct their experiences of inclusive practice. Therefore, the context of the school plays a very significant role in the construction of attitudes, skills and knowledge amongst NQTs. This section explores the centrality of the school context through the principal interview data.

##### The importance of context

Many of the principals, particularly those in settings where there may be more diverse learner populations in terms of learning English as an additional language, (non) religious background, and migrant students, referred to the importance of context to inclusive practice and the experiences of NQTs. These principals expressed a nuanced and broad conceptualisation of inclusive education. The principals interviewed here were keen to emphasise the inclusive culture of their schools. As one primary principal (G2) of an Educate Together School stated, 'inclusion is everything...diversity is celebrated, difference is celebrated'. Educate Together, as this principal recognised, is founded most particularly on the concept of inclusive practice and this is emphasised throughout both interviews with principals from this sector (S11,G2).

DEIS school contexts were frequently mentioned as particular sites of learning and experience for NQTs in relation to inclusive practices. For instance, this primary principal (S9) offers a view of the diverse context of the school where:

The NQTs that we have here in the school, there'll be children in their classes with emotional behavioural disturbances, specific speech and language impairments, children on the autistic spectrum, non-nationals, ethnic minorities – and they're all engaged really really well within the classrooms with the NQTs, which is great to see.

This principal described the diversity of the setting whilst also emphasising the skilled nature of the NQTs' engagement with the class. Several of the other principals also focused on the positive experiences available to NQTs in culturally and economically diverse settings. Nevertheless, a noticeable feature of the principal interviews is the emphasis placed upon the significance of school context and how inclusion is constructed within that setting. Principal (S9) also referred to the fact that:

We often talk about maybe within the community that there's a poverty of aspiration, that the bar isn't set very high for the children outside of school.

There is some evidence for the view of the community surrounding this DEIS school as one suffused with a narrative of failure, cyclical poverty and culturally constructed stereotypes where not only the pupils but their families, neighbours and friends are implicated in a perceived lack of ambition. This essentialised view of the marginalised community can serve to put further distance between the pupil and an upward learning trajectory. Another post-primary principal (S14V) referenced the 'small gene pool' of the locality of the school as an explanation for difficulties. On the one hand there is the narrative of the NQT full of idealistic aspiration for the pupils whilst the 'we' of the wider professional community of the school have constructed a very definite ceiling in terms of the 'poverty of aspiration' and the 'bar that isn't set very high for the students' outside of school. Another post-primary principal (F3) made a similar point where clear lines between 'them' and 'us' were drawn:

And I think for some teachers it's a huge learning curve – it's how to teach students who are disengaged and who don't value education in the same way that those of us in education do. And their parents as well have no concept of how second-level works, and the fact that there are state exams and all of that, because many of them are illiterate and many of them have never experienced secondary school themselves.

The problem with this narrow view of the issue around the disparity in educational achievement based on social class position is far more nuanced than the view expressed here. Schools may also need to think beyond the perceived deficits in the community by refocusing on how the school meets the educational requirements of its cohort. Smyth, McCoy, and Kingston (2015) also make reference to the wider context of DEIS schools where the structural influences of poverty have a significant impact on the experiences of children at school. Perry and Francis (2010) specifically address this point and note that it is deeply problematic to locate aspiration (and underachievement) in the individual and their family when the reasons are far more likely to be structural issues referring to the unequal distribution of wealth, cultural and social resources that are the bedrocks of educational achievement. Despite the stereotypes that exist internationally, and in Ireland, research has described how, 'despite "deficit" versions of working classness', young people have enacted 'engaging school identities fully capable and at times intent upon social mobility' (Cahill, 2016, p. 2). Egan (2013) recognised similar deficit discourses, most particularly in relation to the intersections between diagnosed special educational needs and socio-economic status.

These views also raise the issue of what is available to be learned by the NQT in any particular context. Some schools, by the nature of their diversity, offer richer experiences for NQTs (and indeed student teachers) and therefore there is more opportunity for teachers in these contexts to be engaged with inclusive practices. This is not to suggest that some schools do not need to engage with inclusive education but, rather, that some contexts are more diverse in terms of demographics, learning cultures, marginalisation due to poverty and SEN diagnoses. As this primary principal (S9) stated:

So I think you know we've had little option but to ensure the school is all about inclusivity. Be it you know gender or race, disability ... to be fair I think we would be a school that would embrace all cultures or kids of all disability, and we would have a huge amount of children in the school now with varying levels of disability and need.

Similarly, primary principal (F4) referred to the religious diversity of their school context but did not construct difference as a negative issue:

I suppose really in terms of how do we ensure that their children will feel part of the school community and not feel isolated in terms of religious background you know. So that's something we work hard to ensure that it really isn't an issue, but it is an issue for the parents.

Here, there is a clear focus on inclusivity in terms of practice in the school where the school works towards positive attitudes and beliefs towards diversity; however, some schools run the risk of creating negative and damaging constructions of their students when they become too focused on deficits over valuing each student's individuality and uniqueness.

The context of the school also featured as important for a primary Gaelscoil principal (F10), who described his school as a largely inclusive place in terms of special educational needs. He did qualify this with two comments regarding diversity and enrolment:

Say if they had a specific language problem or the speech therapist recommended they would go elsewhere, so we would support that.

The principal seemed to be referring to an idea that children with language difficulties may not be best suited to the Gaelscoil environment. This point was expanded in relation to parental choice and children who had been diagnosed with a SEN:

Some parents then wouldn't be inclined to send kids with special needs to a Gaelscoil but I suppose a lot of ours would be more high functioning than what you would get in the English-speaking schools or DEIS schools but that would be due to parental choice as opposed to the school's enrolment policy.

Therefore, although the school is inclusive and welcoming in terms of its policies, there would seem to be some selection, by parents and professionals, with regard to the appropriateness of the Gaelscoil for children with special educational needs.

Overall, the principals interviewed here reported on school contexts that were largely inclusive either by design or through response to their student cohort. There are also deeper questions to be asked regarding the construction of deficit views of particular school contexts as well as the othering of students around such characteristics as gender, race/ethnicity, (dis)ability and social class. Context was sometimes reported in terms of deficit and marginalisation as opposed to being fully descriptive of the school cohort. Principals would point to percentages regarding SEN, ethnicity, race, language and poverty in terms of a process of othering as opposed to presenting the breadth of the cohort. For instance, no principals referred to the white-Irish cohort of students or those coming from middle-class backgrounds. This would appear to be assumed as 'normal', whilst anyone different then becomes constructed as other than normal. Devine (2005, 2013) points to similar constructions of normality and 'othering' in Irish schooling with regard to issues of ethnicity and faith that are equally applicable to all indicators of difference being referred to in this study. Indeed, the idea of othering and students with special educational needs has always been part of the dilemmatic nature of education provision (Norwich, 2013).

### **Teachers' views on learner differences**

Many of the principals in this study reported a noticeable openness amongst NQTs to learner difference that is most especially characterised by an awareness of the uniqueness of the pupil as well as a belief in the capability and potential of individual learners. For example, this primary principal of an Educate Together school (S11) commented that:

They all seem to take children on an individual basis, and like I said they know or recognise that no child with the same diagnosis has the same needs and the same strengths and the same weaknesses. I think they're very very open to the individual child and know that differentiation is a huge part of what they need to do on a daily basis whether the child has special needs or not.

This principal noticed a nuanced approach to students where their unique characteristics are not just conceptualised in terms of weakness or deficit but strengths are also noticed. There is also a very positive focus on the child as child as opposed to the child with particular traits, characteristics or diagnoses. Similarly, this primary principal (S9) refers to the open views of NQTs on learner abilities:

The bar isn't set very high for the children outside of school. But just to see even with the NQTs how ... they've pushed children with additional needs like way out of their comfort zone, and how those kids have engaged, embraced, the initiatives that they've been involved in – phenomenal, really really good.

This principal is effusive in terms of the learner-centredness displayed by NQTs and how they have been looking outwards and upwards in relation to the abilities of children described as having 'additional needs'.

The overall sense of the principal interviews is that schools are open and inclusive in terms of how teachers view learner difference.

### 4.3.2 Supporting all learners

Many of the principals in this research offered opinions on NQTs' knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to inclusive practices in both primary and post-primary schools. Frequently, principals would offer supporting statements about how there was an overall satisfaction with the nature of NQT engagement with diverse learners in mainstream classrooms, and in some instances principals were able to provide specific examples of what they considered to be generative inclusive practices in classrooms.

#### Promoting learning for all learners

The NQT principal interviews revealed strong recognition that NQTs were displaying more open views regarding learner difference. Many of the principals reported observing positively-oriented cultures of teaching and learning amongst NQTs where more malleable and learner-focused interactions between teachers and all learners were in evidence.

Some principals of DEIS schools focused particularly on cultures of care in their schools. For instance, principal D2 (post-primary) commented that:

I suppose our mission is to create a caring school, and that comes across in our mission statement, and to care for all students, no matter what their abilities are. We work well together, there's a good atmosphere between students and teachers within the school, so the students are free to come to teachers to talk to them, and teachers are willing to help no matter what the issue is. So it's a very open kind of an ethos that we operate in the school.

This statement characterised the view of the principals on the context of the schools that NQTs were entering, that they were largely supportive and 'open' in terms of inclusive practices.

There was a possible disparity between the beliefs and attitudes prevalent in their school and the necessary skills or knowledge to enact elements of inclusive practice (referred to later under challenges for NQTs in DEIS schools). A post-primary principal (F2) stated that:

We are doing our best to make sure that we have the skills, but to make sure that our students are included .... in a caring way. And that's all very good and great and we get recommended by the inspection report as a very caring school. But what actual skills do we have that we know are evidence based to ensure like ... how do we know that our students know? You know, what skills do we have ... that are appropriate to the issues of inclusion in our classroom, what actual skills can we identify in teachers?

This principal is very focused on encouraging a culture of learning and moving beyond care towards learning. The same principal outlined some concerns in terms of attitudes, skills and knowledge regarding inclusive practices:

Suppose some teachers... somehow they still see that it isn't their job to ensure everybody is included, they feel that their job is to deliver the curriculum. Now they will make some inroads, but they really don't have the full kind of insight or education or knowledge as to how to do that. (F2)

This principal, who was notably post-primary, did also recognise some resistance amongst existing school staff to inclusive practice. He pointed to a focus on curriculum delivery as the main reason for this attitude as well as some inconsistency in their knowledge and skills in this regard. This hints at the tension that is perceived by some between the goal of inclusion and high academic/curriculum outcomes (Florian, Black-Hawkins and Rouse, 2017). The tension exists mainly in the framing of educational outcomes through narrow performance measures such as grades and league tables. Unlike other countries, narrow measures such as league tables of results are not entirely dominant on the Irish landscape. They do not exist at primary level but there are media-produced league tables of higher education entry statistics that do hold some influence in terms of the framing of school success and can contribute to the production of elites through schooling (O. McCormack, Lynch, & Hennessy, 2015).

### **Effective teaching in heterogeneous classes and the NQT**

Collaborative practices such as team teaching and various school-based interventions around literacy and numeracy featured strongly among the accounts of effective teaching in heterogeneous classes recognised in NQT practice by school principals. For instance, a post-primary principal (D2) recounted how:

We do this team teaching here in the school as well, I think that gives great support to probably the newly qualified teacher, and also to the students, because you have two teachers in there supporting the students.

An interesting point here is how team teaching is seen as a support to the teaching and learning process for students in the classroom but was also pointed out as a significant form of support for the NQT in their development as practitioners in the classroom. Similarly, a primary principal of an Educate Together school (S11) stated that:

You're pushing an open door with the NQTs, but I think again we've over the years developed a team teaching, station teaching model. So there's teachers in the classroom from day 1 ... not that I think it will be any issue, but they have no choice but to collaborate, you know. And it works really well, because I think for them as well coming into a new school would be quite daunting and knowing that there's a kind of a team approach, I think it definitely lightens the load.

The emphasis here is as much upon the supports provided to the NQT through collaborative classroom practice as it is upon the support provided to the pupils as learners in the classroom. This principal has outlined how a culture of collaborative practice has been instigated in the school and how it supports NQTs through the inherent difficulties of beginning their own professional practice.

A primary principal (F10) of a large Gaelscoil similarly commented on the collaborative nature of practice in his school in relation to access to the range of learners and strategies for supporting this range. He referred in particular to 'station teaching', an organisational pedagogic approach to supporting literacy in small groups whereby groups of learners move from station to station to focus on different skills of literacy and with a different teacher on each occasion. His point was

that NQTs have the opportunity to observe different teachers teach and engage with all learners in this situation, which he believes supports them in viewing teaching as a shared, collaborative enterprise. The collaborative culture he was trying to foster in his school sought to address the collective need to engage effectively with all learners. Similarly, Daly (2015) extolled the benefits of NQTs working with more experienced teachers in order to develop collaborative and inclusive practice. Again, there were clear connections being made between collaborative practice and the professional learning that is inherent in these team approaches to teaching and learning. This point will be discussed further in relation to mentoring practices and NQTs.

There was some disagreement among principals' views on differentiated classroom practice. Some principals pointed to NQTs as better prepared in terms of skills and knowledge for inclusive practice whilst others saw some gaps in terms of teacher development in this regard. A post-primary principal (D2) referred to the relevance of the ITE programme extension:

I suppose the fact that the programme is extended to two years, it gives teachers I would say more experience on the ground, and teachers need that experience within the schools, I suppose, to know what kind of special needs there are within schools and how to differentiate for the different learners within their class.

Principals tended to view the extension to programmes and the associated extension of placement experiences as positive with regard to the development of inclusive practices amongst NQTs. However, some principals did point to some disparity between teachers with inclusive attitudes and beliefs who may not have developed the requisite skills for inclusive practices (discussed in more detail below). The view was also expressed by at least one principal that much depends on the particular programme a student teacher experiences. For instance, one primary principal (Gaelscoil) was eager to point out that, in his experience, students who had completed 'a very thorough training on a conventional 4-year initial teacher education programme in a traditional college', where the standard of entry was very high, had 'greater knowledge, and were more skilled' in relation to special education than students who had taken a much shorter course. He noted that because learning about inclusion and SEN involved 'so many parts, so many attitudes and skills', an in-depth initial teacher education course is essential.

### 4.3.3 Working with others

The principals interviewed in this study made specific reference to aspects of the relationships between NQTs and parents and other professionals. Based on other datasets in this research (student data and ITE staff data), these areas of the EASNIE profile appear less developed than others. The principals do note many positives in the way NQTs have developed in terms of these relational aspects of their work, with some exceptions. It is important to note that relational aspects of work may not be as easily classified in terms of attitudes, skills and knowledge, as there are elements of school cultures and personal characteristics of the teachers that may feature in this aspect of their work. The evidence from the principal interviews attests that building good working relations with parents is often a challenge for the NQT and an area with which many have had limited experience while on school placements. This is confirmed by other ongoing research being conducted by members of the research team and would suggest the likely need for greater attention to this at ITE and induction levels.

## Working with parents and families

Nevertheless, principals generally reported the development of positive professional relationships between NQTs and parents. For example, this principal (S9) noticed that:

It can be quite daunting for newly qualified teachers to work with parents ... with DEIS school we have a home school community liaison coordinator, so we'd run an awful lot of parent initiatives. Like all of the NQTs would have had a family reading session in the class where parents would have come in, the teacher would have read a story, and there would have been an art activity done – and that can be very difficult for a teacher bringing 15, 20 parents into a classroom and you're on show – that's tough for anybody, you know ... and they've all stepped up to the plate.

This principal has recognised the challenges presented by working with parents in school settings. In this instance, in a DEIS school, the principal recognises that there are more opportunities to engage with parents than there might be in other settings, given the structure of various initiatives around attendance, literacy, numeracy and engaging parents that may be running in the school. This provides a challenge for the NQT but it also provides opportunities for experience and forging practice with parents that may not necessarily exist in other school settings. The same principal continued to state that:

In DEIS schools you know if we don't have parents engaged we're not going to enable these kids to fulfil their potential... I can see with the NQTs you're definitely pushing an open door. But I think in terms of teacher education there's a huge amount of work that's required just for people to acknowledge and then for it to be highlighted just the importance of it.

Here the principal made it clear that there is a powerful and important role for teacher education to place an emphasis on the requisite attitudes, skills and knowledge to develop the cooperative cultures between teachers and parents in all school settings. The development of these skills needs to occur across the continuum of teacher education. Another primary principal (F10) observed that regardless of the type of school one teaches in, engaging with parents of children with SEN is always a complex task and one that is developed with experience. As he notes, more generally 'dealing with challenging parents knocks them (NQTs) hugely'. For this reason, NQTs in his school were rarely allocated to classes with a relatively high incidence of learners with SEN. This is interesting too in that this particular principal described his own school as having mostly 'high functioning' learners with 'fewer than normal' having SEN.

It is noteworthy that some of our principal interviewees, while adopting a broad definition of inclusion, that is to say, to involve more than the concept of SEN, tended to refer more to learners with SEN when they offered examples or illustrated practices in their school. That is a point we return to more generally in this study as it bears on a fundamental dimension of definition, values, and citizenship.

## Working with other professionals

Many of the principals interviewed here recounted the strong links and support provided through the support networks of professional colleagues within the school. Principals reported that NQTs access learning about inclusive education and practice through accessing informal collegial relationships in their schools, collaborating with colleagues on specific interventions, discussing practice with specialist colleagues, and consulting with those in management roles in the school.

Informal collegial relationships featured as an influential point of learning in relation to inclusive education practices for NQTs. Principal (S9) commented that:

Yeah we would have mentoring and like our vice principal would mentor the NQTs. But I think there's the formal process, but I think what's more important for them is the informal. I think within the staff there would be a good dynamic, there would be a lot of support there for them.

This principal placed a strong emphasis on the cultural, relational and day-to-day aspects of providing informal support to NQTs in their developing practice. Such dynamics work in tandem with some of the more formal mentoring interventions outlined below. Similarly, this primary school principal (S11) stated that:

All the NQTs we've ever had in the school, they're always very very open, we would have very much an open door policy within the school – if you need help just ask for it. I think as long as NQTs have the confidence and the maturity to be able to seek guidance... then they can develop the skills quite quickly... but I suppose if the NQT was quite a closed book or someone who was afraid to ask for help they would really struggle.

The salient point here in relation to the learning opportunities made available for NQTs is that the professional learning and collegiality context of the school can set an important tone. As stated here, that depends on the confidence of the NQT in terms of asking for help and guidance. Sometimes NQTs may, depending on the particular position they hold in the school (temporary, substitute, permanent, etc.), be more or less vulnerable to showing a lack of knowledge or skills out of a fear that it could impact negatively on their future prospects within the school. For example, a post-primary principal (F4) commented that:

I think for too long in terms of mentoring, an NQT would have felt oh God I will not admit now to having a problem because the principal might view me in a particular way. But I actually view the teacher who asks all the questions as the best type of teacher, and if you can create that atmosphere and environment for the young teacher to learn and ask questions then their attitude will develop.

Again, this principal emphasised the importance of creating open and collegial relationships to support NQTs in their professional learning, very much along the lines of the effective practice we noted in our literature review for this study. The emphasis is upon the importance of creating a school culture that is conducive to professional learning. This principal also signalled the importance of the relationship between the NQT and school management where showing some vulnerability in terms of skills and knowledge could be perceived as problematic for the NQT. This principal dismissed that view and expressed favour for the questioning NQT.

Another primary school principal (B2) made a further point about NQTs and displays of knowledge and understanding:

The difference between our generation of when we were young teachers starting off and the new NQTs coming out is – it was cooperation, not competition which served us. Now it's competition – they all want to be the best, they want to be the best for the principal, and they want to be the best for the parents. You know they want to be the best friend of the child... which will not serve them well. At the end of the day you know you can't do without your colleagues and knocking on everybody's door....

This principal pointed to a cultural shift in the teaching profession towards an overt culture of competition amongst teachers where NQTs are portrayed as wanting to be the best and how this has had an impact upon collegiality and co-operation within the school. The two principals quoted above provide contrasting views of how NQTs interact with colleagues in schools. Both focus on the importance of interaction but the first principal (S11) focused upon confidence in a positive sense where NQTs would engage with other school staff in order to develop their skills and knowledge. The second principal (B2) was less positive about the presence of openness to cooperation, citing the prevalence of a competitive culture of performance and popularity as a significant issue within this school's experience of NQTs.

Crucially, collaborative practices in the classroom emphasise the position of pupils as learners but also that of teachers as learners in the school community. Our data pointed to the usefulness of colleagues collaborating with NQTs on specific interventions within the school, particularly team approaches to literacy and numeracy through various initiatives such as Literacy Lift-Off and other station teaching interventions. This point was emphasised by principal (S9) who commented that:

We would do an awful lot of peer teaching, station teaching, so in all of the NQT classes they would be doing station teaching with more experienced teachers in both numeracy and literacy. So that would happen 5 days a week, so there would be a minimum of two other teachers in the class from each of the NQTs doing numeracy and literacy, so again it gives them a great opportunity as well to learn and upskill.

This principal emphasised the situated learning that can occur when teachers are put into collaborative situations where there is interaction and collaboration between colleagues.

All of the principals interviewed here referred to the importance of communication and collaboration with specialist colleagues such as those working within the special education team in the school. This principal (S11) emphasised the availability of support and the interactions with specialist colleagues:

We would have been a Droichead school... and we would have the NIPT programmes.... the NQTs appointed their own individual mentor. And then they would have support meetings with me then as well just to make sure everything's okay, and then they'd have SEN team meetings and IEP meetings... they're very very strongly supported, they have a team within their class level and then within their general age group as well. There's a lot of support there, but I suppose in a school like ours where it's quite demanding with the high percentages of SEN and EAL that you would need that level of support to be fair.

This excerpt describes the systematic nature of engagement of the NQT with inclusive practice in this school, particularly in the area of SEN but also in relation to EAL. Support is provided through the SEN team, through collaboration in individual education planning (IEP) meetings as well as access to the specialist team and the principal in the setting. Another principal (D2), this time at post-primary level, described how NQTs access information:

Yeah I'd say in our school – subject department, and then definitely the SEN team. We have a strong SEN team in the school so we'd probably have 7 or 8 teachers on the SEN team, and they're the people that have the information on the special needs students and then on the strategies that you can use to teach those special needs students.

A primary principal of a Gaelscoil emphasised the role of the 'special education teachers' as a support not just for the school as a whole but particularly for the NQTs, 'coaching them' and 'showing them how they construct IEPs' and describing for them the strategies they deploy to support those with SEN. In his words 'NQTs are looked after very well' by the staff in the school.

Throughout the principal interviews, there was recognition of the importance of collaborative practice with professionals within the school and also with professionals from outside the school. Principals emphasised the importance of developing teacher skills and knowledge throughout their careers. Team teaching and collaborative planning emerged throughout the principal interviews as visible forms of collaboration with other professionals within the school. Principal (S11) commented that:

Because we would have a big kind of team teaching policy within the school the collaboration happens every day, so like within our [CPD] hours we have an hour set aside every fortnight for team planning and stuff like that where the SEN teachers and the partner class teachers sit down as part of their [CPD] and plan together collaboratively... that works really well here in the school, and the NQTs have got on board with that and adapted to it very quickly.

This principal emphasised the importance of providing opportunities for collaborative planning between specialist teachers and mainstream classroom teachers. Time for this (an additional 33 hours per annum of planning and CPD time added to teaching contracts at primary and post-primary level<sup>9</sup>) was represented as useful and necessary in terms of facilitating collaborative work in this context.

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9 Under the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) teachers now provide 36 additional hours at primary level and 33 additional hours at post-primary level. These hours are non-pupil contact hours where teachers engage in meetings, CPD and school planning.

## Working with SNAs

Collaborative working with others is emphasised in policy and practice, given the increasing recognition of teaching as a complex professional activity. At one level, arguably, collaboration, sharing and teamwork operate to mitigate any personal anxiety and overwhelming sense of responsibility that an individual NQT, or indeed established teacher, may experience. On the other hand, teamwork and collective responsibility may in some cases diminish the agency and sense of autonomy experienced by some individuals. Getting an appropriate balance across individual and collective sharing is not a simple process for a school or a principal or teachers in general to accommodate for sometimes power struggles and status are the heart of such negotiation. One area that our study highlights as very important but challenging for some NQTs is the necessary boundary negotiation with SNAs. For one principal (B2), the area of NQTs and interacting with Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) is an area worthy of further attention in terms of developing practice. The following extract from the principal interview pointed to specific skills gap in terms of working with SNAs in this particular school:

In my experience... they [NQTs] don't like having them in the room, they find them an interference. Now sometimes it can be a matter that the SNA for the want of a better word, please excuse it, doesn't know the boundaries, you know. And that's experience again you know, if you're good at handling people you'd be good at laying down the boundaries for the SNA ... so that's another area – experience brings that I know.

This principal emphasised the importance of working with SNAs and the fact that experience is also an important element of developing practice. In this school principal's experience, NQTs do not engage well with the SNA and this was seen as an area worthy of further attention in terms of developing the skillset of the NQT. Similarly, a primary principal (F4) noted the issue of working with SNAs as an area worthy of further attention in ITE:

The role is that... the SNA works under the direction of the class teacher. Sometimes it can be a challenge for a newly qualified teacher to actually manage that particular relationship. So if I was to make a suggestion in terms of initial teacher education, then how to go about working in those relationships with SNAs would be something.

Not every NQT, teacher or student teacher would have the opportunity to work with an SNA in the room, but it is certainly an important area of collaborative practice at both primary and post-primary level. Other research has also pointed to the importance of developing the collaborative aspects of practice between SNAs and teachers (Logan, 2006; NCSE, 2015).

### 4.3.4 Personal Professional Development

#### Teachers as reflective practitioners: ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional development

As evidenced in earlier phases of this study, and most particularly data used for documentary analysis, ITE staff interviews and staff surveys, we know that reflective practice is a bedrock of initial teacher education in Ireland. Interestingly, the focus that emerged here through the principal interviews was the demanding and constrained nature of reflection. For instance, a post-primary principal (F1) commented that:

I guess part of that is you know that the amount of time that NQTs can actually spend understanding their own skillset is very very challenging.

Here the principal is referencing the fact that time for reflection, most especially upon their own developing 'skillset' can be difficult in the NQT phase.

The principals interviewed in this study were forthright in their support of CPD cultures amongst teachers and the recognition of learning as a lifelong engagement for teachers. For example, this post-primary principal (D2) stated that:

I know the Teaching Council are talking about Cosán and continuing professional development, like that is important, and bringing that kind of mindset in to teachers when they are training that it's just not going to finish within the two years, it is a lifelong learning process for the teacher as well as for the students.

The principal homed in on how the Teaching Council and the Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning support the centrality of teachers as lifelong learners who are continuously engaged in processes of formal and informal professional and personal development. Another principal (S9) focused more particularly on CPD and inclusive education:

I just think the more CPD we can get where we're broadening their horizons in terms of engaging with other support services, disability services, other agencies, I just think it's huge, I think that's how we do it. I've seen it with teachers here that are engaged with psychologists, OTs, speech therapists... some of the refugee services... doesn't matter... I think teachers lap it up, they soak up the information, they really enjoy it.

This principal focused on the importance of learning from other agencies in order to support inclusive practice within the school. This comment also demonstrates the breadth of engagement that some schools generate in terms of supporting teacher learning and the development of inclusive practice.

Another primary principal (F2) recognised the importance of providing focused provision of professional development:

I suppose specific areas and specific topics that they'd like get further qualified in. And also the PDST... there are loads... we just need to streamline, it's more in making it more accessible and we need to actually have a pathway. At the moment it's a bit of everything. We need to have a specific pathway that we know will complement skills that we have presently and not to be jumping all over the place.

This principal recognised the importance of providing a '€ pathway' in order to build specific professional interests and requirements through ongoing professional development which again aligns with the Cosán framework. It must also be recognised that teacher learning is not a linear process and periods of transition, such as that experienced in the teacher induction phase, are best understood as dynamic and undulating experiences where NQTs learn through experiencing the undulations of professional life (Simmie, de Paor, Liston, & O'Shea, 2017).

## Further themes

We focus here on areas that emerged through the coding process which move beyond the competencies of the EASNIE profile and are worthy of further consideration in the wider context of the research questions. Specifically, this section addresses principal perspectives on ITE, and principals' views on factors hindering the inclusive practices of NQTs.

### 4.3.5 Principal perspectives on ITE

The principals in this research showed significant awareness around the importance of ITE, and the recent changes within it, to the developing inclusive practices of NQTs at both primary and post-primary levels. Specifically, principals made reference to evidence of the impact of theory of education modules, subject-specific methodology modules, SEN modules and module content, placement modules, and the overall philosophy and approach of the ITE programme.

This primary school principal (S9) stated that:

But I do think with the current NQTs that the theory that's underpinning what it is they're doing is very sound. They have a very clear understanding of why they're doing particular things in a particular way. And definitely I think inclusivity is something that they're very very aware of.

There is a confidence in this statement that NQTs have had useful and informative experiences of ITE. This principal recognised that clear connection between theoretical perspectives from ITE experiences were now being enacted within the NQT classroom. The principal continued:

it's not something that they've had to acquire over the last 6 months – absolutely it's developed and it's evolved and it's been refined ... they were very very aware of coming.

The evidence points to the important, and tangible, impact that an engagement with theoretical perspectives of inclusive education in ITE has on the inclusive practices of NQTs in the early months of their professional teaching careers.

This post-primary school principal referred to the value of the knowledge and skills generated by the ITE programmes:

The different skills that you do learn through the teacher education programme... they do fit in with the school, because nowadays the initial teacher education programme is preparing teachers... for the new junior cycle. There's different types of teaching methodologies... more group work, so more collaborative learning. And I think those skills seem to come out in the newly qualified teachers that come out of the school.

Specifically, this principal referred to inclusive teaching methodologies in terms of collaborative learning and similarly pointed to collaborative learning on the level of teachers working with teachers. There is also a recognition here of how ITE prepares student teachers for curriculum change. The reference here is important in terms of the recent history of junior cycle reform in Ireland, where the movement to a new curriculum and assessment process, the Framework for Junior Cycle (DES, 2015a), has proven to be politically controversial and subject to substantial delay in implementation. In the context of this research, the salient point is that ITE has provided at least some exposure and experience of the new system for student teachers and NQTs who may have otherwise been unable to access professional development for the Framework for Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2015).

Throughout the principal interviews, there was support for programme extensions as being positive in terms of the development of inclusive practices amongst NQTs. For instance, this primary principal (F4) commented:

I think when they come out of the training colleges now with the extra qualifications that they have, then I think the children who have special educational needs are benefiting for two reasons, one because of the options that the teachers have chosen in college which could well have prepared them very well for dealing with children with special educational needs, but also I think the extra year experience that they have before coming into the teaching profession prepares them very well for dealing with children with special educational needs.

This principal recognised that the extra time spent in ITE is proving beneficial, whilst also recognising that the provision of specialist pathways (as is available through some primary programmes) has proven useful also. It is worth noting that these specialist pathways do not provide an 'extra qualification' (as stated in the excerpt above) but rather they provide students with the opportunity of pursuing additional elective modules in inclusive and special education. In general, our principal interviewees were very appreciative of the extended period of study and believed that it paid dividends in terms of competence of NQTs to deal with the diversity of classrooms and an illustration of the value of the extended period of training would appear to be the opportunity to experience more diverse school settings through school placement. One primary principal (F10) commented in relation to the extended period of ITE and possible directions for how ITE might develop in future:

I'm very rooted in my own situation here (having been here for 34 years) and it's important that student teachers understand the diversity of experience in different schools.

Of course, many teacher education programmes have developed diversity of placements as an intrinsic element of their work and these principals reinforced the value of these experiences as well as emphasising the necessity to keep these experiences at the forefront of the initial teacher education experience. Overall, the principals were very positive about the impact of recent changes to ITE and their contribution to developing inclusive practice, as they interpreted it, amongst the NQT cohort. Post-primary principal (G6) commented that NQTs are:

... a breath of fresh air... and they teach the present staff, [they are] so well trained...

Overarchingly, the principals interviewed in this study saw recent changes to ITE programmes as beneficial and positive in terms of the NQTs that were now joining their schools whilst remaining aware that the NQTs were still learning and needed considerable support through induction and beyond.

### **SEN Placement**

Some principals referred to the importance of exposing teachers to SEN placements. For instance, one primary principal (S11) referred to some gaps around skill development in this area for NQTs:

I know they're doing the SEN placements now but a lot of the time they're just monitoring and shadowing the SEN teachers, but they have no experience of writing IEPs or no experience of writing continuous support plans. And I suppose just getting the practical things of it is something that would be really beneficial for them I think.

This extract refers specifically to the fact that student teachers may often be exposed to some form of SEN placement but that this placement is often focused on observational learning and could be developed further by providing opportunities to engage with specific skills such as individual education planning and the preparation and monitoring of documents, such as those associated with the continuum of support. Furthermore, as a post-primary principal (G10) alluded to, many student teachers may now be assigned additional classes with smaller groups in order to provide support in a withdrawal setting. The principal commented that perhaps ITE could consider assessing students on these types of classroom engagements as well as on whole class mainstream teaching. This is an interesting point as there would appear to be a growing trend of assigning student teachers to withdrawal groups in post-primary schools. The motivations may be two-fold, to provide useful experience to the NQT but perhaps also to create more flexibility in the school timetable by releasing another member of staff from withdrawal duty.

A special school principal (F11) pointed to the importance of placements within the special school sector in order to provide opportunities to both student teachers and indeed NQTs:

All teachers now come across children with special education needs in their classroom, and I think for the most part they are ill prepared for it... I mean they said at that meeting that there wasn't enough special schools to place teachers for a special school placement, an obligatory special school placement, but I still think that like say all trainee teachers need to be in a special placement of some kind.

This principal referred specifically to providing opportunities within ITE to access special school and special class placement experience. The principal felt that such opportunities would open up new avenues of experience for student teachers and, in turn, special schools might be far more likely to get NQTs in their settings. It was made clear throughout this interview that very few NQTs found themselves in special schools and that this was partly due to their lack of skills and knowledge in the area from ITE.

Similarly, some post-primary principals commented on opportunities for developing mandatory engagement with SEN during ITE school placement modules. For example, a post-primary principal (G4) commented that:

A little bit more experience, or mandatory experience in perhaps an ASD unit. That they be involved in the ASD unit would form part of the qualification, and perhaps with the NQT teachers that a certain quantum of hours needs to be perhaps in an SEN setting, and that they gain experience of teaching, of inclusive teaching in that regard.

Certainly, this would appear to be a difference in the school placement module, depending on the programme, and more often depending on the programme being primary or post-primary. Post-primary principals seemed to recognise the need for more formal engagement with SEN in school placement modules. It would seem, as has been found elsewhere (Mullaney, 2017), that dedicated SEN placements can have a significant impact on teacher attitudes and learning regarding inclusive practices; although internationally there is very little literature on special school placements.

#### **4.3.6 Principals' views on factors hindering the inclusive practices of NQTs**

The principals interviewed here described some constraints on the development of inclusive practices amongst NQTs. The issues that emerged through the interviews related to time for organisation and planning, difficulties with differentiation, skills associated with pedagogy, behaviour management and constraints created by the withdrawal model of provision in schools with diverse student cohorts.

Principal (S11) commented on the complexity of planning required for students with SEN classroom:

I suppose if you know different children present with different needs and no child with the same diagnosis presents the same way, then it can be very hard for NQTs just to find the time to read up and kind of invest time in one particular child when there's so much time to spend doing everything else that they're required to do – it can be quite time demanding, to put a good systematic programme in place for the child.

This principal takes the view that diverse classrooms make demands upon teachers' time in terms of research and planning for students. Principles around Education for All and Universal Design for Learning appear absent from many of the principal interviews where the complexity of differentiation is foregrounded as a constraint on the development of inclusive education. Differentiation is often presented as the addition to teaching that enacts inclusive practices. While this may be commendable at one level, this view also perpetuates the idea of doing things differently for those who are different in place of developing holistically inclusive practices through curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment.

### **The challenge of differentiation**

Interestingly, when differentiation was addressed, it was used almost entirely in terms of broaching difficulties stemming from an SEN perspective. A perspective on differentiation from broader perspectives such as the cultural and the social was notably absent (as already mentioned in relation to the NQT interviews). Nevertheless, many of the principals pointed to differentiation for students with SEN as a significant challenge for NQTs (and for all teachers). A post-primary principal articulated this idea succinctly when he stated:

That's a huge challenge for any teacher regardless of how long you're in the career... to meet the learning needs of all students all the time is a really difficult challenge... for us in our school, but [also] in the profession and within ITE to be able to address that. Differentiation and differentiated practice where you know how we assess learning and how we scaffold learning in our classrooms with all, for most, for some, where everybody is being appropriately challenged... (F1)

This principal points to the challenges of developing the skills he associates with differentiation. His response draws on some theory to develop this idea. The response here resonates with the National Educational Psychological Service policy, *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support* (DES, 2007), whilst also invoking some Vygotskian theory (drawing on the zone of proximal development) through Senninger's (2000) 'learning zones' theory, popularised through Geoff Colvin's *Talent is Overrated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers from Everybody Else* (Colvin, 2008), to emphasise the skills he associates with differentiation.

Similarly, another post-primary principal (F2) focuses on some apparent disparity between the attitudes and beliefs displayed by NQTs towards inclusive practice and their pedagogical practices:

I'd like to see a much more defined teaching and learning framework used... that we know exactly what skills that newly qualified teachers are coming with and that there's evidence there to show that they have got specific skills developed... teaching can be more technical at times and we need to appreciate that element of our profession and to make sure that our young teachers are aware that this is an expectation of them and it's not just about the right attitude, they have the right skills as well.

These principals represent a view that NQTs seem to display an appropriate attitude to inclusion as a concept but that the profession (across developmental phases) ought to continue to emphasise the centrality of pedagogy to the development of inclusive practices in schools.

## Managing behaviour

As well as time for planning, differentiation and pedagogy, behaviour management emerged as an area where many of these principals see opportunities for development within ITE. Importantly though, the implicit connections being made by these principals between inclusion and issues around student behaviour also portrays an underlying sense of inclusive practice as problematic and challenging (as opposed to part of the diversity of humanity) as it is implicit in discussions around behaviour that student cohorts associated with the inclusive practices of the school are those that provide the challenges.

This post-primary principal (F3) makes the point that behaviour management and SEN are two areas that need further attention in ITE. He stated that:

If I was to... highlight the two main areas that teachers new to the profession struggle in, I would say it's in behaviour management and it's managing children with special educational needs. But when I say struggle I don't mean they fail, it just means that they need to do an extra bit of thinking about how to manage it.

This point was mentioned by several of the principals, for instance this primary principal (F8) commented that 'dealing with parents around challenging behaviour' is an area where they do a lot of work with NQTs and he also emphasised the importance of time and experience in learning about how to manage 'challenging behaviour, it takes a while [for NQTs]'. This primary principal (F4) emphasised this idea also:

One of the biggest challenges... that newly qualified teachers will have is... managing behaviour of children who come... to us from homes that would be less than functional.

A post-primary principal (F1) made some interesting points about NQTs and behaviour management. This principal made a distinction between what he termed 'command and control' as opposed to 'climate control' that the school would see as more beneficial. He stated that:

And part of it comes down to a person's own personal competencies facing a group of young people and classroom management can take the forefront a lot in terms of the instructional practice...so their focus [is] on command and control.

This principal is pointing to the sense of NQTs as very focused in terms of maintaining control from a behaviour perspective. He continued:

Maybe that's the way they're trained... Whereas the ethos that we would like to develop amongst our new teachers is climate control, which is really around establishing a learning community.

It is evident from these principal interviews that behaviour management is an area of concern for principals and schools in relation to the practices of NQTs and in relation to the ongoing professional development of teachers at ITE stage and throughout the continuum of teacher education.

## Models of providing additional support

The model of providing additional support in some school settings was presented as constraining by this principal (B2):

The big challenge is dealing with the amount of children that are coming out of each class and the constant interruptions... You know that in a period of half an hour you might have five knocks on the door, and they find that frustrating.

This principal is arguing that the continued dominance of the withdrawal model of support is disruptive to the learning of all students. The focus upon diagnosis and its connection to withdrawal was also a feature of this interview. Interestingly, it always appears to be the child going to the teacher (withdrawal) rather than the teacher coming to the child (in-class support). Many of the principals at primary and post-primary level expressed considerable satisfaction with movements towards in-class models of support. For example, post-primary principal (G6) commented that:

Some of our NQTs would get the opportunity to work with a mainstream teacher who's experienced... they both work together with the class and they're both responsible...

Like this principal, many others favoured a movement towards in-class support through team teaching where NQTs, and the pupils being taught, received greater levels of support in terms of their learning and development. The literature would suggest that this shift augurs well for the development of in-class support as a means to more inclusive school practices (Ó Murchú and Conway, 2017).

A particular emergent issue at post-primary level appears to be the challenge presented by developing inclusive practices through a curriculum that is heavily content-driven (and by association, assessment-driven). For instance, this post-primary principal (F1) noted that:

The volume of material that I have to cover doesn't allow me to... differentiate around a particular concept, I just have to teach the concept and make sure that they grapple with it and move on, because otherwise I won't get courses covered. So for an NQT that's a really big challenge, for most teachers it's a real challenge.

This principal points to the demands of curriculum as something that can constrain and challenge the NQT (and all teachers). This is an important point to consider and one that may be alleviated through current reform to the junior cycle curriculum (DES, 2015).

### 4.3.7 NQTs as agents of change

Many of the principals interviewed here expressed their satisfaction with the quality, motivation, attitudes, skills and knowledge of NQTs. They saw the possibilities, and enactment, of the NQT as an agent of change in their school setting. Principals commented on the skills and knowledge the NQTs were bringing to their school. Primary principal (G3) said:

We're kind of almost leaning on them a little bit for what training they've received in university... and it just brings them more to the middle of the team.

This sentiment was repeated by other principals who saw the NQT as an enactor and carrier of a professional 'coming with the newest ideas' (Principal G6). Indeed, there were some instances reported where NQTs took central roles in providing CPD for colleagues. Post-primary principal (G4) recounted how two NQTs made significant contributions to a school-based CPD event where colleagues presented to each other (and invited guests from other schools) on successful methodologies they were enacting in their classrooms. He commented that:

We've had NQT teachers present at these 'TeachMeets' as well, but I don't think they would... unless they saw the culture that we have... they know that they're... going to have 40 to 50 people in front of them presenting... that's what's powerful about inclusivity of NQTs... giving them the platform to thrive and... an opportunity to excel.

In this instance, the NQT was central to the school-based teach-meet structure where teachers gathered and presented to each other on issues impacting on teaching and learning in their school. Generally, the principals found NQTs to be very positive influences in terms of developing inclusive practice in their schools through the innovation, motivation, engagement and knowledge they were bringing to the school. Principals tended to refer to NQT practice in broad terms as opposed to specifically in relation to specific examples relating to inclusive education, democratic values or social justice issues. They were more likely to refer to creating opportunities for participation amongst pupils as examples of inclusive practice, as is reflected elsewhere in the literature relating to teacher agency (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015).

### 4.3.8 Summary

The NQT principal interviews analysed here revealed that there is an awareness around inclusive education and the developing practice of NQTs in primary and post-primary settings. Largely, principals reported satisfaction with the skills, knowledge and attitudes of NQTs and recognised the benefits of ITE programme extensions and re-structuring. They also demonstrated awareness of the developmental nature of teaching and recognised that support was still required through CPD, mentoring and experiential development in their school contexts. This agrees with the international literature around teacher induction generally in that it has become increasingly important to recognise the developmental nature of teaching (Aitken & Harford, 2011; O'Sullivan & Conway, 2016). An area where principals felt more attention could be paid was in relation to preparing teachers for specific SEN provision in schools, such as withdrawal settings and special class teaching. This also featured in the NQT survey and is important to note given that 50 per cent of NQTs find themselves providing SEN support some or all of the time.

Significantly, school principals reported noticeable strengths in terms of developing opportunities to learn for all learners as well as improving mentoring practices, formally and informally, in their respective school settings. Throughout the principal data, the importance of context shone through the data. Different school contexts and cultures provided differing opportunities to engage with and develop inclusive practice. For instance, the diverse nature of DEIS settings emerged as a noticeable difference in the data. Indeed, it is the case that throughout the literature on induction, particular concerns are evidenced in relation to induction in socio-economically marginalised settings where demands on the NQT may be even greater than in other environments (Burns, 2016). The value of practical experience, allied with strong theoretical knowledge of inclusive practice emerged throughout these principal interviews. In terms of inclusive practice in classrooms, team-teaching and collaborative planning were emphasised by the principals as important both in terms of supporting all learners but also in terms of supporting NQTs in their professional development. This aligns well with similar findings for the NQT interviews where collaboration was widely valued as an opportunity to learn.

The processes of formal and informal mentoring of NQTs were noted by each of the principals as significant elements in the development of the NQT. Their views supported the developments occurring under Droichead, the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) as well as some awareness around the value that the Teaching Council's Cosán framework will bring to the structure of teacher learning throughout the continuum of teacher education. Principals certainly showed an awareness of the unfinished nature of teacher development and remained aware of the necessity to support both student teachers and NQTs on their journey. Principals also recognised the centrality of CPD to the development of inclusive practice amongst NQTs and the wider teaching force. There was recognition in this data that NQTs co-operated well with other professionals within the school, although some dissenting opinion was noted in relation to SNAs. Several of the principals noted the importance of developing good practice when working with parents, noting in particular the importance of developing more pastoral relationships and a willingness to engage with parents, despite the challenges provided by some contexts. Similar challenges were noted in Smyth *et al.* (2016).

Significant points worth noting also relate to some vagueness around actual inclusive practices. In many cases, the rhetoric is stronger than the examples of practice provided. This could suggest that, using the EASNIE profile as a lens, that NQTs are stronger on attitudes and values than they are on skills and knowledge. For example, some principals tended to focus on personalities and innate abilities as opposed to providing any specificity around pedagogies, approaches and observed practices. There was a tendency for some principals to assume a deficit perspective on diversity where the challenge of children with needs or with challenging home/social circumstances were presented as difficult as opposed to the inclusion of children in terms of a rights/citizenship perspective. Some tensions, as mentioned above, emerged between theory/'college-based' work and the 'real' world of the school which sometimes reduced inclusive education to a dichotomy between the value of classroom practice/experience and the 'theoretical' world of the ITE programme. Principals also referred to addressing issues such as: mental health, differentiation for pupils identified as requiring additional support, managing behaviour, and developing skills around models of provision deployed across the continuum of support were seen as important.

In sum, the main message emanating from this line of inquiry is that principals value the skill and attitudinal set of the NQTs, and are appreciative of what they bring in terms of enhancing the inclusive culture of their schools. While there are aspects that clearly merit further consideration as identified in this conclusion, the evidence overall would suggest that NQTs are a positive, inclusive force in schools given their initial teacher education. Their schools would appear to offer them supportive environment in which to further develop. Yet, what also comes across from the interviews is the complexity, challenge, tension and even contradictory nature of the task of genuinely supporting the diversity of learners in schools. There is collaboration and sharing, but there is also the element of competition – among NQTs for employment which pushes against collaboration. There is a perceived tension between maximising inclusion and promoting high standards of coverage in exam subjects, especially in post-primary schools. There is as we noted the lingering outmoded emphasis on deficit as opposed to difference as an integral part of the human condition and society. There is too the definitional issue as to what inclusion is. It is more than SEN and 'within child' factors: structural and socially-constructed dimensions also play a part; the broader aspect of inclusion needs more attention. Tentatively, we conclude that the NQT would appear to be well placed to be an effective, inclusive teacher with the proviso that ongoing professional development opportunities are provided to invite discussion on the themes identified here. The data suggests that principals perceive the recent changes to ITE as having a significant impact on the readiness of NQTs regarding inclusive practice whilst also acknowledging the non-linear nature of teacher learning and development.

#### 4.4 Summary of the Phase 3 and 4 findings

This section on the research findings forms the single most substantial component of this report. We have presented in detail our interpretation of the data for each individual data set to formulate our initial findings.

In the following section, we draw the findings together across the various data sources to discuss them further and present them in relation to the Research Questions.

##### NQT Surveys

Nearly three-quarters of first-year NQTs had found employment as a teacher in Ireland, but only in temporary positions. Relatively few had secured permanent teaching positions; with a similar proportion working in a teaching position abroad or working in a role outside of education. However a significant minority were still seeking employment as a teacher, nearly a year after completing their Initial Teacher Education programme. Of those employed as teachers in Ireland, nearly half were in primary schools and a similar proportion were in post-primary school. There were no NQTs employed in special schools; however 22% indicated that they were working in a DEIS school.

First-year NQTs varied in terms of their experience in allocation to teaching duties. Over 50% had been allocated to a resource or special class or equivalent role some or all of the time, while nearly 70% had significant or very significant experience of teaching children with SEN. Nearly 60% of NQTs had significant or very significant experience of teaching children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds or with different levels of social disadvantage, but experience of teaching children with EAL was far less. A mixed picture emerges in the free-text comments. Some noted little preparation within ITE for this role in special or resource classes; others reported little support for starting in this role at school as an NQT. Their experiences seem to vary from working alone to working collaboratively and many refer to resource class teaching as both challenging and rewarding. Overall, most respondents described experience in a resource class positively as a learning opportunity for them as an NQT and, interestingly, as more of a collaborative experience than starting as a class teacher.

Looking back to their ITE programmes, over 60% of first-year NQTs reported that subject-specific and general input on inclusion was helpful to a significant or very significant extent. At least 70% felt that placement experiences were significant, with special or resource school or class experiences more likely to be seen as very significant. In the free-text responses, it is striking how the accounts of students/NQTs vary greatly within the same ITE provider. For example, one student at Case Study site C praises their experience, whilst another on a different programme complains they had only one session on inclusion. A number highlighted a need for more opportunities for collaborative critical reflection on experiences within teaching placements.

We now turn to our analysis of longitudinal changes for those participants who completed both the student teacher survey and the first-year NQT survey. We looked in particular at the overall characteristics of this group, their attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusive teaching, and their perceptions of the impact of their ITE courses on their teaching as NQTs.

The key message from our longitudinal analysis of this data is that:

1. Overall, the diversity of student teachers' classroom experience both in ITE and as NQTs is correlated with an increase in both perceived understanding and skills and in positive attitudes and beliefs for inclusive teaching.
2. **There is a drop in perceived understanding, skills and attitudes for inclusive teaching from the end of the ITE year to the end of the first NQT year.**
3. This drop across the NQT year is, overall, not dependent on other characteristics such as age, gender, or phase. It is also in general not dependent on the diversity of classroom experience.

When asked about what they found helpful in effective inclusive teaching as an NQT, almost 90% cited their experience of teaching pupils in school as significant or very significant. Similar proportions indicated advice from other teachers (92%) or senior teachers in school (88%). Other sources of support that were cited as helpful to a significant or very significant extent for inclusive teaching were: advice from senior staff including the SENCO (84%); on-line resources (71%); advice from other NQTs (70%); and advice from the school principal (67%).

New and early career teachers are working in a wide variety of school settings which they tend to see as a predominant influence on their capacity to develop as inclusive teachers. This influence extends beyond the school type and pupil demographics, to the cultures, policies and practices they experience within the school and those promoted by the school leadership. Comments on schools as a context for inclusive practice, ranged from NQTs highlighting selective admissions policies as exclusionary, to approaches apparently restricted to students with identified special educational needs, to potentially superficial celebrations of diversity. On the other hand, some NQTs enthusiastically referred to inclusive teaching as central to a school's culture and practice. A number referred to a culture of collaborative teaching and to opportunities for NQTs to observe more experienced teachers.

Many respondents reported that they were not currently working with SNAs. Those that did tended to refer to the allocation of an SNA to a specific pupil, for example in relation to a particular disability or special educational need. There seemed to be a distinction between those NQTs who emphasised a subordinate role for SNAs which was focused on organisational tasks to support the teacher or students, and others who described a more collaborative role. There was a substantial minority of NQTs who particularly valued the role of SNAs and recognised their more detailed knowledge of students' needs arising from their longer term relationships.

In terms of experiences of induction processes, some 22% of NQTs indicated that their school was participating in the Droichead programme. Nearly three-quarters of the NQTs who responded to our survey attended some or all of the National Induction Programme for Teachers workshops. The results were somewhat mixed, with a minority of respondents (37%) indicating that they found the NIPT workshops helpful for effective inclusive teaching, to a significant or very significant degree. Of those who found the workshops helpful, the items most frequently 'ticked' were developing positive attitudes, developing skills and knowledge, making links with other teachers and knowing where to go for help. However, others felt that the workshops seemed not to have taken into account their learning about inclusive teaching within the extended and reconceptualised ITE programmes, and that the workshop content added little if anything to their knowledge.

### **NQT Interviews**

The interview data provides more in-depth accounts of NQTs' experiences and allows us to draw more nuanced inferences. A key finding is that following the overall drop in perceived understanding, attitudes and skills for inclusive teaching over the first year as NQTs in the survey data, our second-year NQT interviews provide evidence of a strengthening commitment to inclusive teaching.

Analysis of the NQT interviews underlines the centrality of the school in which they are teaching in shaping how NQTs develop their understandings of inclusive teaching in practice. Whilst this clearly builds on the ideas they are exposed to during their Initial Teacher Education programme, the developing meanings they attach to these are strongly influenced by the context, culture and practices within the school in which they find themselves, and the development of their confidence for their teaching practice.

In our data, NQTs tend to strengthen their views on the value of inclusive teaching through their interactions with pupils with particular learning needs. Our findings suggest that NQTs largely shared the view that learner difference is an asset to education, in the sense that differences in the classroom reflect and support diversity in society; and that diverse learners have a positive impact on how teachers teach.

Key factors evident within the interviews include the level and approaches to providing support for school students identified with special educational needs. For example, the practices adopted within the school in relation to withdrawing students from their class can be seen as a key contextual factor. At the post-primary level in particular, NQTs tended to highlight curriculum constraints as a strong influence on how far they felt able to develop more inclusive practices. In our NQT interview data, the use of assessment practices for promoting inclusive learning appears to be relatively weak. Overall, our findings suggest that some NQTs do feel confident using a range of teaching approaches for promoting learning and participation, such as adapting their communication strategies with pupils.

Collaborative and flexible groupings are also identified by NQTs as inclusive practices within their teaching. In the first-year interviews, NQTs emphasised time as a constraint for planning differentiated teaching as a key constraint, whereas in the second-year interviews, they were more concerned with the time available within the classroom to support individual learners. There was a recognition that parents have an important role in contributing to their children's learning, however both student teachers and NQTs alike felt that they were not well-equipped to work with parents effectively. Our data suggests that NQTs' understandings of inclusive teaching includes working with SNAs, but they enter the profession with a degree of uncertainty about how they can work effectively with SNAs in developing inclusive practice in their classrooms.

Longitudinal analysis of the interview data suggests that NQTs find their potential role as agents of change is heavily dependent on context, and as needing to be part of collective responses. NQTs tend to see their role as change agents as acting with others in a community of practice, rather than as leading a change process. The importance of being part of collaborative teams is a strong theme in the interviews, both in terms of developing specific skills but also a powerful medium for early professional development in relation to inclusive teaching. While opportunities for reflection are not formalised for many NQTs, they often engage in reflection for problem-solving through informal consultation with colleagues. In developing their professional identities as beginner teachers, we identified a shift in their attention from their own performance of teaching, towards focusing on their pupils as learners. Compared to their earlier narratives, the second-year interviewees showed a greater understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in their development as inclusive teachers. A further change was the development of a sense of transformation of college from a site of learning, to a supportive network for continuous professional development for NQTs.

## Principal Interviews

The principal interviews proved to be a rich source of data, confirming the importance of involving school principals in planning for developing ITE and NQT support for inclusive teaching.

Largely, principals reported satisfaction with the skills, knowledge and attitudes of NQTs and recognised the benefits of ITE programme extensions and re-structuring. They also demonstrated awareness of the developmental nature of teaching and recognised that support was still required through CPD, mentoring and experiential development in their school contexts. An area where principals felt more attention could be paid was in relation to preparing teachers for specific SEN provision in schools, such as withdrawal settings and special class teaching. This also featured in the NQT survey and is important to note given that 50 per cent of NQTs find themselves providing SEN support some or all of the time.

Significantly, school principals reported noticeable strengths in terms of developing opportunities to learn for all learners as well as improving mentoring practices, formally and informally, in their respective school settings. Throughout the principal interviews, the importance of context shone through the data. Different school contexts and cultures provided differing opportunities to engage with and develop inclusive practice. For instance, the diverse nature of DEIS settings emerged as a noticeable difference in the data. The value of practical experience, allied with strong theoretical knowledge of inclusive practice, emerged throughout these principal interviews. In terms of inclusive practice in classrooms, team-teaching and collaborative planning were emphasised by the principals as important both in terms of supporting all learners but also in terms of supporting NQTs in their professional development. This aligns well with similar findings for the NQT interviews where collaboration was widely valued as an opportunity to learn.

The processes of formal and informal mentoring of NQTs were noted by each of the principals as significant elements in the development of the NQT. Principals certainly showed an awareness of the unfinished nature of teacher development and remained aware of the necessity to support both student teachers and NQTs on their journey. Principals also recognised the centrality of CPD to the development of inclusive practice amongst NQTs and the wider teaching force. There was recognition in this data that NQTs co-operated well with other professionals within the school, although some dissenting opinion was noted in relation to SNAs. Several of the principals noted the importance of developing good practice when working with parents, noting in particular the importance of developing more pastoral relationships and a willingness to engage with parents, despite the challenges provided by some contexts.

Significant points worth noting also relate to some vagueness around actual inclusive practices. In many cases, the rhetoric is stronger than the examples of practice provided. This could suggest that, using the EASNIE Profile as a lens, NQTs are stronger on attitudes and values than they are on skills and knowledge. For example, some principals tended to focus on personalities and innate abilities as opposed to providing any specificity around pedagogies, approaches and observed practices. There was a tendency for some principals to assume a deficit perspective on diversity where the challenge of children with needs or with challenging home/social circumstances were presented as difficult as opposed to the inclusion of children in terms of a rights/citizenship perspective. Some tensions, as mentioned above, emerged between theory/'college-based' work and the 'real' world of the school which sometimes reduced inclusive education to a dichotomy between the value of classroom practice/experience and the 'theoretical' world of the ITE programme. Principals also referred to addressing issues such as: mental health, differentiation for pupils identified as requiring additional support, managing behaviour, and developing skills around models of provision deployed across the continuum of support were seen as important.

In sum, the main message emanating from this line of inquiry is that principals value the skill and attitudinal set of the NQTs, and are appreciative of what they bring in terms of enhancing the inclusive culture of their schools. While there are aspects that clearly merit further consideration as identified in this conclusion, the evidence overall would suggest that NQTs are a positive, inclusive force in schools given their initial teacher education. Their schools would appear to offer them a supportive environment in which to further develop.

Yet, what also comes across from the interviews is the complexity, challenge, tension and even contradictory nature of the task of genuinely supporting the diversity of learners in schools. There is collaboration and sharing, but there is also the element of competition among NQTs for employment which pushes against collaboration. There is a perceived tension between maximising inclusion and promoting high standards of coverage in exam subjects, especially in post-primary schools. There is as we noted the lingering outmoded emphasis on deficit as opposed to difference as an integral part of the human condition and society. There is too the definitional issue as to what inclusion is. It is more than SEN and 'within child' factors: structural and socially-constructed dimensions also play a part; the broader aspect of inclusion needs more attention. The data suggest that principals perceive the recent changes to ITE as having a significant impact on the readiness of NQTs regarding inclusive practice whilst also acknowledging the non-linear nature of teacher learning and development.

## 5. Understanding progression from ITE to NQT: revisiting the research questions

In this section, we revisit the initial research questions and bring our findings from the various sources of data together. This enables us to bring a longitudinal perspective to bear in our commentary, in understanding new teachers' journey of professional development from student teachers to newly qualified and early career teachers. We respond to the research questions through the key themes which have emerged from our analysis of the data, indicating which data source(s) our findings are derived from.

### 5.1 What are the components of ITE programmes for inclusive teaching?

The components of Initial Teacher Education can be viewed as the ways in which the curriculum is specified in programme documents, and this section summarises our findings from analysis of this data. However, the curriculum can also be understood both in terms of how it is enacted in practice by teacher educators, and of how it is experienced by student teachers; our data from these perspectives is drawn on in later sections.

#### Overall commitment to inclusive education

Acknowledgement of the diversity of society and therefore the diversity of learners in schools is a common theme in all programmes. Diversity is variously described in terms of special educational needs, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, language, ability, religion and so on, and it is mainly related to the understanding of difference and the development of an informed and ethical professional response to diverse educational needs. Evidence would point implicitly in the documentation to the need to develop empathy in student teachers in this regard and also to encouraging democratic schools and classrooms where learners are respected and engaged with as individuals where it is indeed 'normal to be different' (EADSNE, 2012, p.12). Thus, in broad terms there is recognition of and commitment to inclusion in line with the thrust of the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers.

Differentiation, as in the need to deploy differentiated pedagogic, organisational and curricular strategies in classroom teaching, to maximize the accessibility of learning for pupils, features strongly in the documentation while a moral commitment towards others is undoubtedly an explicit and implicit feature throughout programmes. Some programmes display a strong sociological perspective on the diversity of learners, whereas other programmes embrace and value diversity without articulating a specific theoretical orientation. The language of psychology and needs is frequently interwoven within the rhetoric on diversity.

The titles and descriptors of modules provide an insight into the focus and content of curriculum on offer and of course point to the emphasis on inclusive education. The theme of SEN remains a central plank of all provision across our case study sites with all programmes having several modules incorporating that term in its descriptor. There are also modules with titles such as English as an additional language, global development education, education for social justice, and education for diversity.

We also note that variation in theoretical orientation is evident, not just across providers in the case study sites, but within different programmes and within institutions. Some programmes take relatively broad approaches, rooted in a social justice framework. Other programmes are relatively narrower in their view, and focus more specifically on special educational needs, reflecting a within-child or individual-deficit approach. However, the main message so far is that overall, in broad-brush terms, there is institutional and programmatic commitment to the vision of inclusive teaching outlined in the EASNIE Profile.

### **How commitment to inclusive teaching is reflected in programme documents**

Obviously there are the relevant module titles and descriptors, some of which we listed briefly above, to indicate something of the language and orientation to inclusion in the specified curriculum. Here however, we discuss some other very high profile ways in which inclusive education is evident in the specified curriculum that transcend specific modules. First, all programmes would appear to model inclusive practice for student teachers. The inclusive character of all the programmes is evident in the variety of teaching styles and assessment methods adopted and in the explicit acknowledgement and attention to students' past and present experiences, especially schooling memories and experiences. Students' own voices are given status through tutorials, group workshops and seminars, and through reflective assignments inviting autobiographical accounts linked to new professional and academic issues. Student teacher agency, meaning-making and personal experience are all highly valued in the specified curriculum and in the stated intentions of how the provision is expected to be enacted.

The commitment to inclusive education is especially evidenced through the range of school placement experiences provided for student teachers (discussed further below). In all programmes it is clearly stated that student teachers need to have experience of teaching in at least two contrasting school settings. Some concurrent programmes explicitly state that students should gain experience in special schools or 'resource teaching' settings.

It is implicitly assumed that the modelling of inclusive practice with its respect for diversity, individuality and personal experience and meaning-making impacts student teachers' identities in a manner that encourages them to bring such values and approaches with them into their own professional practice and value system.

The commitment to inclusive education is mirrored in two key related perspectives: the notion of the teacher as reflective practitioner and the notion of the teacher as agent of change, with the former being especially privileged across all programmes and all providers, without exception.

The importance placed on the development of the future teacher as a reflective practitioner offers an insight into how teaching is conceptualised in the programmes, with specific reference to inclusion. Our evidence on this would support the claim that it extends the vision of the Profile of Inclusive Teachers in adding a further element that speaks to matters of inclusion. In the EASNIE Profile, the core competence of reflective practice is mostly articulated around teaching as a 'problem-solving activity', by stressing the skills of reflection on practice and of metacognitive and research skills as tools for personal and professional development (EASNIE, 2012, p. 16/17).

However, our analysis reveals that the articulation of reflective practice in the documentation takes a broader view by stressing the need for the future teacher to reflect not only on their own practice, learning, attitudes and beliefs, but also on the beliefs and practices of others, on curriculum and assessment policy, on school and local and national policies and so on. The implicit message in the documentation is that initial teacher education has to prepare the teacher for a career-long commitment to reflection on and active engagement with practice and policy (now a feature of the Teaching Council's policy on teachers as learners throughout their careers). There is a strong emphasis therefore on a critical perspective, inviting the would-be teacher to appraise and challenge the content and process of knowledge and policy production. The main skills for performing such a role are presented as the development of critical thinking and research skills, and in some cases active involvement with political debates.

There is an evident link between reflective practice and social justice rhetoric with the teacher seen as an advocate of pupils' rights. Such a stance indicates a strong political view of the role of the teacher which, although not exclusively related to inclusive education, echoes themes that the international literature identifies in relation to the meaning and implementation of inclusive education. The idea of an empowered teacher who acts as a change agent and as an advocate for pupils' rights coincides with the view of many scholars that the development of an inclusive education system constitutes a change process of the schooling system (see for example Ainscow, Dyson *et al.*, 2006; Barton, 1997; Norwich, 2008; Slee, 2006, 2010a).

The research orientation in the documentation tends to privilege the development of action research dispositions and skills, whereby the future teacher, as noted, is seen as a reflective practitioner who subjects practice to critical scrutiny and review in the interests of making changes for the improvement of practice at classroom and school level and at levels beyond, e.g. to inform debates at national level. The documents typically acknowledge the reality of constant change and the need for the teacher to develop the necessary skills and knowledge in order to respond to change. This is presented in the context of the diversity of learners' needs with the role of the teacher as a change agent assumed to have the potential to bring about societal and educational inclusion.

The twin elements of reflective practitioner and agent of change are viewed as part and parcel of what it means to be a professional educator in the twenty-first century. It is highly reasonable to conclude that the extension of the period of initial teacher education and especially the elevation of post-graduate programmes to masters degree level facilitated this in Ireland.

It is important however to acknowledge the complexity, tensions and even contradictions that can be found in some of the programme documentation. Our analysis detects an uneasy relationship sometimes between the desire to maximise inclusion in principle and in practice. This was made manifest in the form of a tension between a changing society on the one hand and more traditional notions of Irish culture and identity (ethnic, cultural, religious) on the other. The data revealed that there is a concern regarding views of teacher identity and national identity, which might imply some tacit contradictions, at least tensions, of more inclusive approaches. The use of words such as 'challenge' in relation to the traditional Irish character of education is also interesting as it suggests opposition and debate concerning outside influences on a normalised Irish primary school teacher identity.

In some documents, this tension is explicitly revealed in strong statements regarding the preservation of a particular version of Irish identity and culture, and the implicit assumption that there is a challenge to the traditional Irish identity. However, this theme will need further exploration in terms of how the contextual characteristics and dynamics act together in the conceptualisations of inclusive education for specific contexts. We mention it here to highlight the complexity, even within what could be understood as straightforward portrayal of curricular plans for educating teachers.

### **The organisation of inclusive education content: discrete or permeated approaches?**

Programmes vary in terms of both the modules that address issues of inclusive education and the extent to which inclusive education is stressed as an overall approach. This is an important finding arising from our analysis and is worthy of some further discussion, hence this sub-section. This finding was confirmed in our analysis of the open text responses in the staff survey. Interestingly, the Teaching Council's analysis of the content of the proformas (for primary programmes) in terms of weighting, prevalence, rationale and content of 'inclusive education' modules drew a similar conclusion.

The area of SEN has high visibility in the specified curriculum. In all programmes there are modules explicitly focused on various topics in SEN. In other words, there are easily identifiable and dedicated SEN modules. Modules specifically and discretely dedicated to inclusion are far less common. We found that, in sum, the number of dedicated SEN modules is greater than the number dedicated to inclusive education per se. Thus we claim that the evidence points to a more specialist, dedicated approach to SEN while the broader area of inclusion is assumed to permeate across programmes without explicit reference. There is a strong psychological underpinning to the SEN modules, in the sense of a focus on a within-child, individual-deficit approach. On the other hand, references to inclusive teaching within more generic modules – such as multicultural education – tend to be more strongly framed by sociological concepts like inequality and social justice.

However, to reiterate points made above, all programmes seek to embed inclusion across provision as is especially evident in the accounts of conceptual frameworks that programme providers submitted to the Teaching Council for accreditation purposes. Thus, a deep commitment to inclusive education is expressed. While the rhetoric of programmes overall is one of undeniable belief and commitment to inclusion as a bedrock of ITE, this same status and commitment does not always translate to the detail within module descriptors, demonstrating something of a disconnect between philosophy and module content, at least in the language used to describe provision.

This is especially the case with respect to modules on School Placement and subject-specific methodology modules. In this regard the interviews with HEI tutors facilitated a deeper understanding of this in that staff frequently reported high awareness of the need to obtain better permeation and mapping of inclusion themes into all modules and especially into School Placement and subject-specific modules. This suggests that the traditionally termed 'foundation areas' such as history, sociology, philosophy and psychology of education modules may in future

become more applied and linked to practice, more inclusion-focused and possibly more thematic. This is a process that HEI tutor interviewees would suggest has already begun. They reported that a number of the programmes had already developed permeated content on inclusive education throughout their curricula, with some moving away from distinctively traditional module names towards more hybridised modules where foundation studies modules in particular would become more explicitly linked to practice.

At the risk of undue duplication of points to be more fully addressed below, it is noteworthy in this context of discrete and permeated provision that there are a number of complicated factors to be considered. As one HEI tutor metaphorically expressed her concern about permeation: *if it's everyone's responsibility to feed the dog, the dog is starving*. And as several tutors observed adopting a permeated approach requires development over time, including especially the need for staff development (see further discussion later on gaps).

### **School placement**

The vast majority of student teachers in our survey reported that school experience is vital in shaping their understandings and skills in relation to inclusive education. We note this at the outset of the discussion in this section about how School Placement is represented in the documentation. The modules entitled School Placement on the ITE programmes are central to the formation of beliefs about and attitudes towards inclusion and its pivotal role in the development of pedagogic competence for enacting the principles of inclusion effectively in schools and classrooms.

The documentary evidence attests to the significance of school placement through the large amount of time and the proportion of time overall on the ITE programme that student teachers spend on placement and in preparing for it. School Placement has a significant associated credit weighting. It is clear that the specifications around school placement signal its contribution to the formation of the teacher professional identity also through the several other aspects. It occurs in at least two contrasting settings/schools. It is formatively and summatively assessed and, because of its credit weighting, it impacts the degree classification ultimately awarded to the student. It is conceptualized in the documentation as a module that is extremely well placed, even uniquely placed, to bridge theory and practice and to integrate all elements of the ITE programme. It is certainly viewed as a means of extending opportunities to understand diversity, inclusion and SEN.

Again the documentary evidence demonstrates a range of quality assurance mechanisms to build public confidence in its quality, especially the quality of its assessment. Moderation processes of its performative assessment and multiple visits by tutors to observe students teach and monitor their preparation feature heavily in all programme documentation. For their extended school placement students have visits from more than one tutor.

The School Placement modules are vital for learning about all aspects of inclusion. Indeed students themselves and their tutors uniformly recognise this. However, there are a number of important issues that merit further attention in School Placement with reference to inclusion.

First and foremost students' learning about inclusion on school placement is inevitably and appropriately bound up with what is available to be learned in those placement settings.

There is recognition that there may be tensions between the ideal of inclusion as presented in modules and observed and experienced practice in school placement settings. This highlights the importance of opportunities for students to engage in critical discussion that helps them understand constraints and influencing factors on teachers' practices and how to address them in their professional lives as individuals and as part of school communities. While our documentary evidence shows space for such professional dialogue, there are features that require greater attention with reference to School Placement. We did not, for instance, locate evidence of in-depth planning which related theory and practice and college and school placement elements of programmes from the perspective of inclusive teaching. Thus, the question of how the ITE curriculum and school experiences are *aligned* is emerging as an issue. (We discuss this theory to practice gap in relation to Research Question 4 later in the Report).

The theme of working with others, working with parents and families seems to be limited and rather too dependent on the school placement module in terms of coverage and emphasis. According to our analysis this whole theme is somewhat misaligned with the EASNIE profile. While 'valuing learner diversity' is accorded high emphasis in the documentation, the subsequent emphasis on skills and professional competences associated with its enactment in school placement modules is not in proportion.

In the HEI tutor survey respondents indicated that a variety of constraints and process issues had meant that, in their perception, the extension of programmes had not led to an increased impact on inclusion and diversity. While the programme extension had allowed for the provision of contrasting school placements that definitely enabled student teachers to experience more diversity in terms of pupil cohorts, they noted difficulties of locating quality placements and ensuring placement diversity. This they attributed to the increased pressure to locate school placements that comply with the new arrangements of the extended programmes. Some respondents in the staff interviews also reported that the additional requirement to increase school placements had impacted negatively on the time available for programme content related to inclusive education.

It is clear from our documentary analysis that undergraduate primary concurrent programmes have more elective flexibility and therefore are more able to provide elective routes to particular specialisms such as inclusive education. Some programmes could offer as many as five elective modules to students over four years where a specialist interest could be developed. Postgraduate consecutive programmes at primary and post-primary appear to be far more constrained in terms of contact time, and therefore find it difficult to allow for many, if any, elective modules. In one instance, it is worth noting, the introduction of the two-year consecutive model at primary level has in fact resulted in a reduction of content coverage around inclusive education because of larger commitments to school placement and other mandatory elements of the programme.

### **Experiences of the ITE curriculum for inclusive teaching**

The ITE curriculum as represented in programme documentation can only offer a partial account of how inclusive education is supported and promoted in the formation of the beginner teacher. For a fuller account we now turn attention to practices and experiences of the recipients of the programmes. Future sections also further unpack and extend the documentary evidence with reference to HEI tutor experiences and perspectives.

To conclude this section we claim that the documentary evidence overall aligns broadly with the four core values noted in the EASNIE profile: valuing diversity, supporting all learners, working with others, and professional development. Some aspects are especially well catered for such as professional development in relation to the teacher as researcher and reflective practitioner while the aspect working with others merits further documentary attention and more scrutiny in practice.

We also claim that a key challenge going forward is obtaining a better permeation of inclusive education across all programmes. This is especially pertinent in connection with School Placement, with particular reference to experiencing a diversity of placements including those involving learners with SEN. Ideally such placements should also be assessed in the regular way students are assessed on school placement. Better permeation is also recommended within subject-specific modules. There are implications of this for the staff development of teacher educators, especially those associated with those modules.

## **5.2 The impact of Initial Teacher Education on preparation for inclusive teaching**

In this section we address the themes identified within the initial research questions on how well the reconceptualised and extended ITE programmes prepare NQTs to be inclusive, and whether student teachers and NQTs feel their learning during ITE helps them make an impact on outcome for pupils with SEN.

### **The impact of ITE**

Our data provides insights from a longitudinal perspective on how graduates from the revised ITE programmes engage with inclusive teaching as newly qualified teachers. Clearly as we do not have data from the situation with ITE prior to the changes referenced, we cannot make direct comparisons. However, we are able to draw on the NQT survey and interviews, together with the interviews with school principals in addressing this question, and in particular can focus on the impact of the current programmes on how well prepared NQTs feel to be inclusive teachers.

Overall, our analysis of the ITE programmes, as reported in the Phase 1 and 2 report, indicates that these programmes broadly provide a good foundation for student teachers to develop a clear understanding of the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to be an effective inclusive teacher. In the first-year NQT survey, most respondents indicated that the following key elements of their ITE programmes were helpful for 'effective inclusive teaching as an NQT... to a significant or very significant extent':

- Input on inclusion in subject specific modules in the academic classes of my ITE programme (67.7%)
- Input on inclusion across the academic classes of my ITE programme (63.2%)
- Experience on school placement in general on my ITE programme (76.6%)
- Experience in a special school, special or resource class or in resource/learning support role during my ITE (70.4%)<sup>10</sup>

### **The NQT Year**

The NQT interview data and the Principal interview data also indicated that ITE provided a good foundation for the NQT year. It is the case that we saw evidence of praxis and 'reality shock', most forcefully shown by the significant drop in perceived attitude, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching in the survey data. The NQT and Principal interview data suggest that this may be due to factors including:

- Greater understanding of the complexity of the relationship between theory and practice in the NQT year, which may make beginning teachers more aware of the complexity of the task of achieving effective inclusion
- For some students, the 'reality shock' of the challenges of achieving effective inclusion may decrease their overall motivation to be inclusive teachers, particularly for post-primary teachers
- The challenge of behaviour management
- The challenge of establishing their role or identity as a teacher in their class or school

These findings echo much of the international literature on reality and praxis shock, and to some extent are to be expected as novice teachers meet the significant challenges of the classroom in their NQT year. They do not in themselves indicate that the current provision in ITE is not meeting their needs. What they do suggest is that the expectations for what ITE can achieve should be carefully calibrated, alongside more broadly what can realistically be expected in terms of teacher development in the ITE and NQT phases. The rhetoric on agents of change that we identify in the literature review is an important goal to have in mind, but our data suggests that the capacity of many, although not all, beginning teachers to take on such a role in their NQT year and indeed in the first two years of teaching may be limited. In particular, it is the specific context of the school in which they find themselves that is the dominant factor in enabling or constraining the development of their inclusive teaching and their opportunity to contribute as change agents.

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<sup>10</sup> The revised terminology in Circular No 0013/2017 refers to Special Education Teacher posts (DES, 2017b).

That is not to say that we did not see clear evidence of development. When compared to student teachers, NQTs understood more about the complexity of how theory relates to practice, understanding that this is a complex, messy and often uneasy relationship. They also had gone further in their ability to think about the needs of specific learners, although they still had a way to go in many cases, in reframing difference as a positive resource. Likewise for understanding how they could, in the terms set out by Florian, Rouse, and Black-Hawkins (2017) think about meeting the needs of all learners, as opposed to employing what could be regarded as more limiting forms of differentiation. Having said that, both the NQTs themselves and the principals discussed how NQTs are aware of the principles of inclusion from their ITE experience and their admirable commitment, in many instances, to developing their understanding through ongoing professional development.

### **The second year of teaching**

The NQT2 survey of second-year teachers similarly paints a picture of new teachers who are at the stage of developing their understanding of and ability to engage in effective inclusive practice. The free text responses are generally referring to a strengthening of their commitment or to a more nuanced understanding, related to developing greater confidence in their practice, showing a continuing trajectory from their ITE year. However, the responses indicate that many are still at a relatively early stage of consolidating their skills for inclusive teaching, as second-year NQTs. In other words, second-year NQTs clearly are making use of and valuing the foundation provided by ITE, but typically still have some way to go in consolidating their knowledge and skills.

The NQT survey responses indicated that most NQTs feel that their ITE programme made a difference to the academic outcomes for their pupils, and to their social and emotional development (65% agree or strongly agree in each case). Most of these NQTs report having had experience of pupils with special educational needs in the school at which they were teaching, to a significant or very significant extent (67%). In this sense, it can be inferred from the survey responses that, in general, most NQTs are likely to perceive that their learning during initial teacher education does make an impact on outcomes for students with special educational needs. However, it would not be possible to make any more specific inferences from our data.

It is also clear from the NQT surveys and interview data, that the most important element of experience in terms of the development of inclusive teachers is their experience in school, both as student teachers and as NQTs. The student and NQT surveys showed that the extent to which beginning teachers have experience of working with diverse groups within the classroom was moderately correlated with an increase in positive attitudes, knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching. The NQT interviews indicated that NQTs see their placement experience as being the most important element of their ITE experience, in terms of their development as inclusive teachers.

It was also clear from both the NQT and Principal interviews, that the ways in which the school approaches inclusion; the school culture in relation to supporting the developing identity of NQTs as teachers; and how they approached issues of equality, diversity and inclusion; made a key difference to the extent to which beginning teachers could effectively develop their identity as inclusive teachers. For ITE, the quality of support in relation to inclusive practice provided by the Placement Tutor, and for NQTs, the quality of mentoring support in general and specifically in relation to inclusion, were also very important. It was also clear from the data that there was considerable variation in all these elements across schools. Overall, it could be argued that the quality of school placement and the extent to which partnership between schools and ITE providers aligns the student experience in relation to inclusive practice, is as important as specific curriculum content or organisation.

### 5.3 The NQT experience

#### **How well prepared do NQTs feel to engage with inclusive practices?**

It is clear that a variety of approaches are adopted by ITE programmes for preparing student teachers for inclusive teaching. There is a range of combinations between discrete elements and 'permeated' approaches aiming to equip NQTs with the knowledge and skills needed for responding to diverse learning needs. Within that context, NQTs acknowledged the importance of inclusive education in principle and appeared to share inclusive values.

In general, NQTs valued their ITE courses for developing their knowledge for implementing inclusive practices. There was a consistent view that SEN components in ITE – either as a specialist pathway and/or as placement opportunities in specialist settings – were important for developing not only skills, but also a broader understanding of inclusive practice. So whilst NQTs' views of their preparation for inclusive teaching is linked to SEN, at the same time their SEN experience serves to develop NQTs' capacity to teach all learners, not only those with SEN.

At the same time, there are areas where NQTs tended to report feeling less well prepared for some key aspects of their role in relation to inclusive teaching. This was particularly the case for dealing with challenging behaviours, time demands for differentiation, working with Special Needs Assistants, with external professionals, and working collaboratively with parents. The difficulties that NQTs experienced in areas of behaviour and time management skills appeared to be overcome to a great extent with experience. However, the aspects of liaising with parents and external professionals was a consistent longitudinal finding across data sets. This would imply that these aspects need further emphasis within Initial Teacher Education, or better support during the induction process for NQTs.

It seems that when college remains part of NQTs' professional life it provides them with a sense of security and belonging that shapes their professional identities. NQTs reported a transformation of college from a site of learning to a supportive network for their continuous professional development. The post-qualification and indeed post-NQT relationship with HEI personnel offers potential in the context of schools and HEIs continuing to engage with one another in a manner that is mutually beneficial. In the context of our longitudinal study, this finding may offer insights into how HEI personnel can maintain or enhance their knowledge of inclusive practices, as informed by ongoing engagement with schools. Of note, the existing support services for schools in promoting learning for all, could adopt closer links with HEI personnel and draw on a reciprocal arrangement to support teacher professional learning. Similarly, the promotion of teachers' professional learning (Cosán, Teaching Council, 2016) offers a potential framework for such collaboration, reflection and action in schools.

### **How do NQTs see the fit between their experience of engaging with inclusive practices in ITE placement and their experience of learning about inclusive practices in their ITE college-based support sessions?**

The NQT interview data provide strong evidence that NQTs identified their experience on school placement as the key source of learning from their ITE programme in terms of preparation for inclusive teaching. This seems to be the case irrespective of the setting, although, as mentioned, those who had placements in more specialist settings did tend to attribute particular learning to such experiences. The survey data indicated that the extent of experience on placement with diverse groups of students tended to be correlated with both positive attitudes to inclusion and a sense of having the knowledge and skills needed to implement inclusive teaching in the classroom. NQTs also referred to the importance of their individual research projects as a source of learning during initial teacher education.

When interviewed during their ITE programme, student teachers tended to identify a perceived mismatch between the theoretical and practical elements of their learning. However when interviewed again as NQTs, this issue was not referred to so frequently, and our analysis suggests that their accounts of this notion of a 'theory/practice divide' were more complex and nuanced, and were influenced by their early professional practice.

In the second-year NQT interviews, the manner in which ITE school placement is framed and conducted was perceived with a strong focus on teaching as a 'teaching perfect' practice. The pressure to conform to HEI protocols and practices seems to overly focus ITE students' attention on themselves and their teaching. It appeared that NQTs felt that they did not have the opportunity to explore and establish a tight connection between teaching and learning during their ITE preparation stage, due to the 'rigidness' of the course content. There is evidence to suggest that the NQT phase of the career seems, within collaborative and supportive school cultures, more accommodating of the contextual constraints that may be encountered by NQTs. It seems as if without the imposition of external interpretations from ITE, and with increased discussions and collaboration with colleagues, an emerging emphasis on the learners occurs over that of the teacher.

### **How does school context influence NQT engagement with inclusive practices?**

Analysis of the NQT interviews underlines the centrality of the school in which they are teaching in shaping how NQTs develop their understandings of inclusive teaching in practice. Whilst this clearly builds on the ideas they are exposed to during their Initial Teacher Education programme, the developing meanings they attach to these ideas are strongly influenced by the context, culture and practices within the school in which they find themselves.

Generally, it appears that the characteristics of the pupil population influences NQTs' understandings of what inclusive practice entails. Key factors evident within the interviews in this regard include the level and approaches to providing support for school students identified with special educational needs. For example, the practices adopted within the school in relation to withdrawing students from their class can be seen as a key contextual factor. NQTs appeared to strengthen or narrow their views of feasibility of inclusive education depending on the level of support and resources available in their schools. At the post-primary level in particular, NQTs tended to highlight curriculum constraints as a strong influence on how far they felt able to develop more inclusive practices. The significance of school context was also clear in the Principal interviews, for example in relation to DEIS schools in particular.

The type and level of opportunities for collaboration with other teachers was widely cited as an important issue by NQTs, both in the interviews and in the free-text responses to the survey. Where the school enabled opportunities for collaborative planning and team teaching, this approach offered a powerful medium for early professional development in relation to inclusive teaching. Likewise, planned opportunities for observing more experienced teachers, and informal space for consultation with colleagues, were often highly valued by NQTs. Equally, the school principals emphasised the importance of opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

In general, levels of confidence and a sense of competence vary among NQTs as set against their initial teacher education experiences. Not surprisingly the context, and in particular the culture and level of support in the NQT's school continue to be a key variable.

The potential of team teaching in the Irish context (Ó Murchú & Conway, 2017) highlights the reciprocal benefits for both teachers, student teachers, NQTs and their pupils. In addition, the risks inherent in induction and collaboration, namely 'the ties that bind can also blind', is offset by a focus on the learners' experience and learning outcomes. Such an interplay is captured by one principal who speaks of the continuum of learning for all, including all teachers, as supported by working closely within the interlocking spaces of ITE, NQT and ongoing CPD.

*...we're using the Droichead programme or the NQTs as a means of expanding professional capacity within the existing staff... (Post-primary principal (F1))*

Such a view resonates with the recent DES circular on Middle Management (DES, 0008/2018) which makes specific reference to distributed leadership. In so doing we are reminded of the purpose of schools and whether leadership is about 'leading the school house or leading the work of the school house' (Spillane, 2006).

The process of transition within NQTs' early professional identity towards accepting the role of an authority figure was evident in the data. This was sometimes linked to NQTs' learning in relation to managing behaviour in the classroom, which was framed in the interviews as a skill that can only be learned in practice as a teacher.

The variation in levels of support within and between schools as reported by NQTs aligns with the literature on school differences in general (Hattie, 2012; Desimone *et al.*, 2002). Interviews with principals highlight the between school differences or at least the between principal differences and by implication some of the possible messages received by NQTs either directly or indirectly in their school setting.

As with their view of HEI programmes, the level of support in the schools is often evaluated by NQTs in terms of the quality of support as opposed to the quality of frameworks offered as support. For example, NQTs' perceptions of a very supportive school were frequently based on the quality of support offered by certain individuals as opposed to explicit reference to structures such as the Professional Support Teams (PSTs) in Droichead schools. In short NQTs met individuals or groups of individuals who circumvented the notion of variation within and between schools and simply offered support in the form of in-class team teaching or advice and guidance between classes. The role of the SNA in part can reflect the school's response to the concept of inclusion and reveals the potential challenges in determining the cause and quality of such support. Some SNAs were seen as particularly supportive by NQTs. Within the context of supporting inclusive practices and in advancing the quality of the NQT experience, more explicit attention to engaging with parents and representatives from external agencies could prove of benefit for all. Likewise it would be worth considering how a range of experiences could be planned and sequenced for NQT induction, in relation to issues for inclusive teaching.

### **In what ways are NQTs developing their understandings of inclusive practices?**

The development of NQTs' understanding and implementation of inclusive practice occurs through different channels, in their professional journey from a 'student' to a 'professional' approach. In addition to the acquisition of skills and knowledge in relation to the specific learning needs of the pupil population and the school context, we identified two main conceptual processes through which NQTs develop their inclusive practice. These were bridging aspects of theory and practice, and through a shift of their focus from 'teaching' to 'learning'. NQTs develop a stronger attitude towards inclusive teaching whilst they come to experience its value in relation to the outcomes that their own practice brings for their pupils. Hence, when NQTs abandon an 'idealised' perception of inclusion they come to strengthen their inclusive teaching, to the extent that inclusive practice is supported and promoted as a meaningful professional act within the school context they operate.

The documentary analysis in Phase 1 and the student interviews in Phase 2 identified the issue of whether early career teachers can be seen, or are encouraged to see themselves, as in some ways 'agents of change' in relation to inclusive teaching as a new or innovative form of practice in schools. However, in the NQT interview data, the sense of agency referred to is relational and is mediated through the prism of school context. So some NQTs described feeling disappointed that they were sometimes less successful than they would have hoped in teaching inclusively for particular students with special educational needs. Interestingly, this was often attributed to curricular or resource constraints within the school, rather than to individual student deficits, or to a lack of knowledge or teaching strategies on the part of the NQT.

An aspect that appears important for NQTs' development of inclusive practice and potential development as change agents is their experience of how leadership promotes inclusion at school level, and their level of participation in decision-making processes. Within such a context, it appears that NQTs can engage with their role as potential change agents, but within the realms of collaborative rather than personal action. In general, NQTs placed great importance on collaboration with more experienced teachers as opportunities for professional learning. Moreover, the aspect of meaningful practice for promoting inclusive teaching, building on their views formed during their student years, appears to be a contributing factor for advancing their practice.

In general, NQTs were very conscious of the importance of the school context in shaping their opportunities to develop as inclusive teachers, and tended to reflect on this when identifying their career goals in terms of the kinds of schools they sought to work in. Some interviewees were more explicit in aiming to seek out schools that would enable them to develop as inclusive teachers.

Some of the NQTs continued to draw on the personal and professional networks they established through their initial teacher education programmes to support them through their early experiences of employment as a teacher. This included opportunities to reflect collaboratively with colleagues on aspects of inclusive teaching, and contributed to their processes of developing a sense of professional identity.

## **5.4 What lessons can be identified for ITE and subsequent phases in the continuum of teacher education?**

Overall, ITE programmes in Ireland do address inclusive education as a significant element both in terms of their ethos, and in their approach to the development of appropriate attitudes, skills and knowledge to support inclusive teaching. However, some important messages emerge from our data about areas that might be strengthened, in relation to the Profile of Inclusive Teachers. The central theme relates to the notion of embedding inclusive pedagogy across the curriculum in ITE, and this provides a framework for elaborating a number of sub-themes. These include developing skills for inclusive practices; aligning school placement experiences within programmes; planning inclusive teaching; working with parents and families; diversity and student teachers; and preparing student teachers for negotiating school contexts.

## Embedding inclusive pedagogy across ITE programmes

The key theme focused on processes for embedding inclusive pedagogy across the ITE curriculum. This could be linked to opportunities to review and update programmes, and to engage staff with a range of professional learning activities. One approach would be to create spaces for collaboration between subject specialists and those with expertise in inclusive education, for example in relation to inclusive teaching within particular subject areas.

The evidence from our student interviews and open-text survey responses in particular suggests that there can be significant variation *within* programmes in the quality of experiences reported by student teachers, about their perceptions of both taught input and support for school placement. This contrasts with a relative lack of evidence of any consistent variation reported between programmes or providers in this regard. The survey and interviews with teacher educators indicated significant variations in the extent to which academic staff felt prepared to develop inclusive teaching approaches. The documentary analysis identified a tendency to revert to a focus on identifying difference in relation to special educational need or disability in understandings of inclusive teaching. Taken together, we find that our evidence indicates a need for ITE to further develop more consistent approaches to inclusive teaching across a whole programme.

## Professional learning for teacher educators

A significant issue emerged in our data relating to the need for teacher educators to have access to opportunities for professional development in the area of inclusive teaching. The staff survey clearly indicated a mismatch between the importance teacher educators placed on inclusive teaching, and the degree of confidence they expressed in their capacity to deliver it. The interviews echoed this and suggested a need for greater collaboration between those academics with particular expertise in this area and their subject-specialist colleagues. Where inclusive education specialists gave a more in-depth account of their perspectives on embedding approaches to inclusive pedagogy across ITE programmes, they tended to express a lack of confidence that this understanding was consistently shared with colleagues.

The notion of creating spaces for collaboration and reflection between colleagues with expertise in inclusive education and those with subject-specialist expertise is supported in the literature (Florian, 2012). One approach would be to link professional learning activities for teacher educators to opportunities to review ITE programmes, in relation to how inclusive pedagogy is embedded across the curriculum. Such initiatives might usefully be extended to involve Placement Tutors and consider the role of Cooperating Teachers as teacher educators in practice. In this respect, we draw attention to the recommendation that preparing inclusive teachers is the responsibility of all teacher educators (EADSNE, 2012, p.11).

It is important to locate expectations for the impact of changes in ITE in the context of the education system as a whole. Our research questions necessarily focus on programmes but, learning in ITE takes place in the overall context of school cultures and policy systems, and these exert an influence on the student and NQT experience.

## Planning inclusive teaching

Engaging in a process of embedding inclusive pedagogy across an ITE programme might usefully involve collaborative reflection on approaches to planning inclusive teaching. An example would be the uses and meanings ascribed to the term 'differentiation', which seems to operate as a trope for a range of responses to learner differences. On the one hand, differentiation can be taken to refer to practices that involve identifying particular learners as requiring different teaching approaches than the majority within a classroom. An alternative approach would be to plan teaching activities that all learners can engage with in various ways, without the need to identify some as 'different'. So for example, there might be a range of practices from offering different worksheets to particular groups of pupils, to adopting a Universal Design for Learning approach throughout.

Both interpretations seem to co-exist within the guidance available to teacher educators. The Profile of Inclusive Teachers proposes that: it is 'normal to be different'... 'learner diversity is to be respected, valued and understood as a resource that enhances learning opportunities' (EADSNE, 2012b, p.12). Knowledge underpinning effective teaching in heterogenous classes includes: 'differentiation of curriculum content, learning process and learning materials to include learners and meet diverse needs' (EADSNE, 2012b, p.14). This approach is reflected within NCSE guidance that: 'Curriculum planning involves differentiation of curricular content, processes and outcomes' (NCSE, 2011, p.32). Likewise, the DES guidance is that: 'Teachers meaningfully differentiate content and activities in order to ensure that all pupils are challenged by the learning activities and experience success as learners' (DES, 2016, p.10).

However, the skills of differentiation may not always be sufficiently supported by clear attitudes and beliefs about the value of learner differences and the situated and contingent nature of learner 'abilities'. Our documentary analysis identified this concern across ITE programmes. In our staff interview data, academics with expertise in the area of inclusive education gave a particular focus to both of these issues, whilst expressing a lack of confidence that their approach was necessarily shared across ITE programmes as a whole. Others with a broader remit, such as programme leaders, were more likely to describe addressing difference as engaging with individual learning needs through differentiation.

## Developing skills for inclusive teaching

We know from international research that ITE students do not always make connections between their university experience and what they can learn in practice, and may see university 'input' as inadequate (Allen, 2009; Bullock & Russell, 2010; Goos *et al.*, 2009). In line with this research, we found that students were sometimes critical of their ITE programmes in relation to what they saw as the omission of courses on specific skills in inclusive practice that they felt they needed for school placements.

So a degree of disconnect is evident between ITE programmes, and student teacher perceptions of skills input in relation to inclusive teaching. The documentary analysis reveals substantial coverage of content related to both knowledge and understanding and skills and abilities for the area of competence 'effective teaching in heterogeneous classes', in the Profile of Inclusive Teachers. However, there is a consistent theme within the student interview data of a perceived lack of preparedness in terms of practical skills.

The interview data suggested that student teachers sometimes see teacher educators as stressing the importance of inclusive teaching, without providing detailed guidance on how to enact inclusive practices. Or teacher educators were sometimes seen as providing 'textbook' examples of strategies which student teachers found difficult to implement in schools. This is also reflected in the student survey, with students identifying the following items most commonly as areas for improvement in college learning: more input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs, and more input on subject specific strategies for inclusive teaching.

Where students were able to articulate an alternative approach, this typically reflected a desire for closer alignment between programme and placement learning. So for example, some student teachers expressed a wish for more workshop-style sessions where they could reflect on issues arising from their practice on school placement.

Whilst 'supported engagement with parents' is recommended as an element of school placement activities in Teaching Council guidance (Teaching Council, 2013, p.15), we found little evidence to suggest that this was prioritised consistently. In the programme documents, the preparation of student teachers to work with parents and families appeared to be the least developed area of competence within the Profile of Inclusive Teachers. Likewise, school Principals noted that NQTs were often not well prepared in this area.

### **Aligning school placement experiences within ITE programmes**

Our findings suggest that there is a need to examine further opportunities for greater alignment between taught sessions and school-based learning experiences. In part, this relates to the issue of developing skills with opportunities for critical reflection, enabling teachers to develop and learn from their experiences (DES, 2012; Villegas, Ciotoli & Lucas, 2017). In addition, there are questions about expectations of the range of experiences available within school placements, how student teachers are supported and how school placements are assessed in relation to inclusive teaching.

We found a substantial degree of variation in how well supported student teachers felt in developing inclusive teaching on school placements. This related both to the range of support offered by Placement Tutors from ITE providers and to the roles adopted by Cooperating Teachers in schools. Teacher educators also recognised the existence of mixed messages for students between HEIs and the practices of the schools, and this is an issue which programmes might directly address.

Equally, the assessment of inclusive teaching on school placements is likely to form a key influence on the depth to which a commitment to inclusive teaching is embedded in practice across ITE programmes. This issue was not detailed in the Teaching Council proforma that formed the bulk of the data for our documentary analysis, but was addressed to a degree in some responses to the staff survey. Assessment of inclusive practice is in turn linked to the configuration and planning of school-based support for student teachers. However, the literature would suggest that this is a key concern.

In our NQT data, it is clear that a substantial proportion of NQTs had experience of teaching in a 'resource' class. This finding has significant implications which are discussed below.

### **Diversity and student teachers**

In our student survey, most student teacher respondents indicated positive attitudes towards inclusive teaching in a number of respects; and this was generally the case irrespective of their background or type of programme. For example, 97% agreed or strongly agreed that: 'Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities'. A further key finding was that nearly half the respondents had significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability; and a similar proportion had prior experience of working with pupils with special needs.

A relevant point from our literature review was the suggestion that enabling student teachers to draw on their own experiences of difference or 'otherness' can support their engagement with social justice approaches (Baglieri, 2008; see also Hick, Arshad, Watt, & Mitchell, 2011). This is a potentially significant counterpoint to the overall lack of diversity amongst the student teacher population.

Some staff interviewees made the point that student teacher attitudes to diversity pre-ITE are shaped by their own experiences of schooling and that the student teacher cohort tends to reflect a relatively narrow demographic. In this context, it is interesting to note that our analysis of the student and NQT survey data suggested that a minority of student teachers and NQTs may be relatively resistant to adopting attitudes and beliefs identified in the Profile of Inclusive Teachers as important for inclusive teaching.

Overall, however, both student teachers and newly qualified teachers tended to report a perceived discrepancy between the emphasis on inclusive teaching advocated within ITE programmes, and the practices and contexts they experience in schools. So for example where selection, streaming or setting based on ability is practised in schools, this may sometimes be seen as negating some of the inclusive practices advocated within ITE programmes. Of concern is how ITE programmes equip new teachers to negotiate aspects of school contexts that may be experienced as presenting contradictions for them. One aspect of this might be to ensure that ITE programmes provide student teachers with a firm theoretical grounding for a critique of deterministic notions of ability, as a basis for reflection in working in schools where more selective practices are dominant.

## Positioning new teachers as change agents

ITE programmes may encourage new teachers to see themselves as part of a generation who are well placed to promote the development of more inclusive practices in schools. Some student teachers did see themselves as 'agents of change', advocating and addressing inclusive education in their practice. In some cases, they might wish to question what they saw as more conventional pedagogic practice. However, this may at times conflict with a requirement on student teachers to comply with the existing policies, practices and culture of a school which is hosting their placement experience. Student teachers sometimes expressed a need for more support in navigating such issues and in reflecting on potential differences between the content of their ITE programmes and their experiences in schools.

For newly qualified teachers, their developing identities as inclusive teachers were tempered by the predominant influence of the school context. How far newly qualified teachers are able to function as change agents in relation to inclusive teaching within their schools is likely to be strongly influenced by the leadership of their school.

The main support accessed by NQTs is overwhelmingly located within the schools in which they are employed. For example, they seek support from more experienced teachers to develop confidence in their skills in managing behaviour in their classrooms. However NQTs also referred to informal peer support networks as important in offering opportunities to reflect on their school contexts.

In contrast our survey data, including open-text responses, showed that NQTs were sometimes quite critical of the SEN workshops provided by NIPT, with some NQTs tending to see them as repeating material covered within the extended ITE programmes. This finding echoes that of the Teaching Council's evaluation of Droichead (Smyth *et al.*, 2016), which followed up an earlier cohort of NQTs.

## 5.5 Implications for developing teacher education

### Embedding inclusive pedagogy across the ITE curriculum

Our evidence indicates a need for ITE providers to further develop consistent approaches to inclusive teaching across a whole programme. We suggest that the notion of inclusive pedagogies offers an overarching theoretical framework to support this. The Profile for Inclusive Teachers offers one set of stimulus material for reflection which takes this approach. Our study suggests that this could assist teacher educators in reflecting how their approach to inclusive pedagogy is embedded across ITE programmes as a whole.

For example, when programmes are preparing for planned periods of review, this could present an opportunity for staff with expertise in inclusive education to collaborate with their colleagues with expertise in particular curriculum subjects on developing a holistic approach. The process of developing a clear and explicit approach to inclusive pedagogy, understood by all teacher educators and stakeholders within an ITE programme or provider, can provide a shared language for collaboration and reflection.

When linked to a collaborative professional development for teacher educators, the process of embedding inclusive pedagogy across ITE programmes could present an opportunity for a more transformative approach to responding to learner differences, in which disability is contextualised with diversity more broadly.

### **Professional development for teacher educators**

We found clear evidence of a need for further professional development opportunities for teacher educators in preparing inclusive teachers. We suggest that creating spaces for collaboration and reflection between colleagues with expertise in inclusive education and those with subject-specialist expertise may be a fruitful approach (Florian, 2012). In some instances it may be helpful to link professional learning activities for teacher educators to opportunities to review ITE programmes, in relation to how inclusive pedagogy is embedded across the curriculum. Such initiatives might usefully be extended to involve Placement Tutors and consider the role of Cooperating Teachers as teacher educators within school placements. In this respect, we draw attention to the recommendation that preparing inclusive teachers is the responsibility of all teacher educators (EADSNE, 2012, p.11).

For example, when programmes are preparing for planned periods of review, this could present an opportunity for staff with expertise in inclusive education to collaborate with their colleagues with expertise in particular curriculum subjects on developing a holistic approach. The process of developing a clear and explicit approach to inclusive pedagogy understood by all teacher educators and stakeholders within an ITE programme or provider, can provide a shared language for collaboration and reflection.

It would seem to present a valuable learning opportunity for teacher educators and their partners to review their practices across different areas of the ITE curriculum, to develop a shared understanding of their approach to planning inclusive teaching. This approach could be extended to contribute to a more transformative process in which ITE programmes are reconfigured in relation to an inclusive response to diversity more broadly, not only in relation to disability.

### **Developing skills for inclusive teaching**

In terms of the taught elements of ITE programmes, the prior experiences of disability and diversity that student teachers bring to their studies could be given greater attention as a resource for learning. ITE programmes could review the range of approaches to differentiation adopted across the curriculum, and consider approaches to inclusive teaching aimed at the whole class without the need to identify some pupils as different. Given the additional opportunities created by the extension to ITE programmes, our findings suggest that ITE programmes should consider how far they can prepare student teachers for negotiating the range of school contexts they are likely to encounter, in relation to inclusive teaching practices. One element of this could focus on ensuring they have a sound understanding of critiques of deterministic notions of ability, as a basis for reflection in developing their own identities as inclusive teachers.

One aspect that should be considered for taught sessions within ITE programmes, is to ensure that input on planning for inclusive teaching covers approaches aimed at the whole class, and is not restricted to forms of differentiation that require identifying particular pupils as 'different'. We suggest that ITE programmes could review how student teachers are provided with planned experiences for engaging in inclusive practices in schools; and how these are linked to opportunities for collaborative, critical reflection with peers and tutors in college-based sessions. Student teachers should have opportunities to participate in reflective enquiry processes for understanding how to better engage particular pupils or groups of pupils in learning.

Whilst 'school placement reflection workshops' are recommended within Teaching Council guidance (Teaching Council, 2013, p.15), our data suggests that more focused use can be made of these in relation to student teachers' engagement with inclusive practices. Where possible, such reflective workshop-style sessions may benefit from collaboration between teacher educators who are subject experts and those whose specialism is in inclusive education. For example, this kind of collaboration could enhance the development of more subject-specific inclusive approaches within ITE.

### **Aligning school placements within ITE programmes**

Overall, we suggest that there is scope for further development of the degree and levels of collaboration between schools and ITE providers in relation to opportunities for inclusive teaching. Our findings suggest there is a need to further examine opportunities for greater alignment between taught sessions and school-based learning experiences within ITE. As discussed, linking the teaching of skills for inclusive teaching to school placement reflection workshops would likely make a contribution to this, by making the process more transparent for student teachers. The other implication of our findings is that student teachers would benefit from more planned opportunities to teach diverse learners on school placement. We suggest that the Teaching Council may wish to consider whether school placement guidance might usefully be strengthened, in relation to the range of opportunities that are desirable for student teachers to engage in and observe inclusive teaching with diverse learners.

One approach would be to plan opportunities for student teachers to engage with inclusive practices in schools; to enable student teachers to make use of enquiry processes to reflect on pupils' learning; and to participate in workshop sessions with support for critical reflection from both subject specialists and experts in inclusive education. Planning for the range of opportunities afforded to student teachers within school placements could give greater attention to the degree of involvement with learner diversity, including pupils who may have SEN.

We suggest that planned opportunities for observing teachers' meetings with parents could be incorporated more explicitly within agreed protocols for school placements. These experiences could be supplemented by opportunities for critical reflection within ITE programmes.

We suggest that ITE providers seek opportunities to further harmonise the approaches to inclusive teaching adopted by Placement Tutors and Cooperating Teachers, in collaboration with academic teacher educators. It is commendable that the DES has been able to resource four days

for *Droichead* training with substitute cover for each member of the school's Professional Support Team. This underlines the contribution of school-based colleagues in teachers' professional learning, whilst at the same time pointing to the role of Cooperating Teachers in Initial Teacher Education. If support for Cooperating Teachers could be similarly resourced, it would assist them in engaging with ITE Providers in offering a more consistent approach to supporting student teachers with inclusive teaching. Likewise, such an initiative might provide an incentive to increase the availability and diversity of school placements for student teachers.

We suggest the Teaching Council may wish to consider whether the accreditation criteria for ITE programmes could be strengthened, in asking ITE providers to be more explicit in how inclusive teaching within school placements is assessed. Such a move might be helpful in clarifying that inclusive teaching is a responsibility for all teachers and for all teacher educators; and in stimulating conversations within ITE providers about any associated professional development requirements.

### **Negotiating school contexts**

Newly qualified teachers are simultaneously learning to demonstrate competence in their role in the classroom, whilst developing their own professional identities as beginner teachers. Where they seek to develop as inclusive teachers, they also have to negotiate school contexts that they may see as more or less supportive for this. The school context is clearly a dominant influence on their initial development, and the major source for their learning is often informal consultation with their more experienced colleagues. At the same time, they may need access to support for reflection independently of their particular school context, including the requisite knowledge and skills. In addition to developing reflective skills for professional learning, they also need a knowledge base to support critical thinking in response to less inclusive practices that they may encounter. There is evidence from the literature to suggest that equipping student teachers with a sound knowledge of critiques of determinist notions of ability would assist them in this regard.

Our finding that a substantial proportion of NQTs are allocated to teach in resourced provision of one type or another is significant. There is a broader concern that teachers sometimes report feeling under-qualified for their roles in special classes (Banks et al., 2016); and NCSE has advised DES in relation to post-primary schools that:

The DES should reframe its policy on the use of over quota hours for resource teaching to ensure that only teachers with appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies are allocated resource teaching hours. The practice of spreading resource teaching hours over an excessive number of post-primary teachers' timetables should be discontinued. (NCSE 2015a, p.147)

The NCSE recommends that NQTs should not be allocated to special classes for students identified with ASD:

Teachers should have a minimum of three years' teaching experience (postprobation) before taking up a position in a special class for students with ASD (NCSE 2015a, p.148).

The context for this issue is a rapid expansion of special classes in Ireland in recent years, often initiated informally in post-primary schools:

At post-primary level, however, just over half of special classes were not officially sanctioned, but established by schools through the pooling of resource hours. (Banks et al., 2016, p.2)

There remains a degree of inconsistency in the development of such provision, which is reflected in the terminology in use in schools. For example, in relation to special classes for students identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), NCSE reported that their research:

found confusion in the system about the purpose and role of special classes (NCSE 2015a, p.6).

### Supporting newly qualified teachers

We suggest the Teaching Council may wish to consider how inclusive teaching could be identified more explicitly within *Droichead*, the Integrated Professional Induction Framework (Teaching Council, 2017).<sup>11</sup> It may be possible to build on the approach taken within *Cosán*, the Framework for Teachers' Learning (Teaching Council, 2016), which highlights inclusion as an area for professional learning. For example, within the school-based strand, would it be appropriate to suggest that one or more professional conversations or observations could focus on issues for inclusive teaching? In our interview data, principals made a number of suggestions that could inform this, such as developing specific skills in working with pupils with SEN.

In the light of feedback from NQTs in the evaluation of *Droichead* (Smyth et al., 2017) and in our own survey, the NIPT may wish to review the content of induction workshops focused on inclusive teaching. It may be that many of the extended ITE programmes introduce some of the material currently covered, and that NQTs would welcome a wider range of activities including a more interactive approach to collaborative problem-solving. There may also be a place for further self-assessment of CPD needs for inclusive teaching, to guide NQTs in engaging with professional development opportunities and to further inform NIPT and other providers about their interests.

In terms of 'other professional learning activities' recognised within *Droichead*, we suggest that ITE providers consider scoping the demand from their alumni for opportunities for NQTs to reflect collaboratively on inclusive teaching experiences and on their developing professional identities. There may be potential for developing more open peer support networks for NQTs, either face-to-face or online and, where this can be offered by ITE providers, this is likely to be welcomed. Developing newly and recently qualified teachers' relationships with ITE providers offers the potential for a continuing engagement with schools that may be mutually beneficial, for example in enhancing teacher educators' knowledge of inclusive practices. Drawing the existing services for supporting schools in promoting learning for all into such collaborative networks with teacher educators would enhance this. Similarly, the promotion of teachers' professional learning (Cosán, Teaching Council, 2016) offers a potential framework for such collaboration, reflection and action in schools.

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11 Marleen Pugach also referred to *Droichead* in her presentation to the NCSE Research Conference, November 2017, which is available at: <https://ncse.ie/research-conference>

## Teachers' professional learning

Initial Teacher Education should provide student teachers with an awareness of the range of needs that diverse learners may bring, including broad areas of special educational need or disability. When linked to access to more detailed information when it is needed, this may be a sufficient level of knowledge within ITE programmes. It would not be feasible to provide all student teachers with an in-depth knowledge of a wide range of categories of special educational needs, and any suggestion that they could not be inclusive teachers without this should be avoided. However, there is already a range of specialist postgraduate qualifications available in inclusive education and special educational needs, for teachers seeking to develop a higher level of expertise in this area.

So the implication of our analyses is that teachers may need access to more detailed information about particular disabilities or categories of special educational need, when they are teaching pupils with needs identified in those ways. Many of the NQTs we spoke to turned first to on-line resources in these circumstances, and would perhaps have found it helpful to have access to a single, authoritative point of reference for reliable guidance. For example, the NCSE website now hosts substantial information provided by the former Special Education Support Service (SESS) and may wish to consider evaluating the utility and accessibility of these resources to NQTs; and promoting them appropriately.

## Aligning guidance to support inclusive teaching

There may be scope for further alignment of the guidance available to teacher education providers, schools and associated support services in developing more inclusive teaching in Ireland. There is currently a wealth of guidance available from the Department for Education and Skills, the Teaching Council, the National Induction Programme for Teachers, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the National Council for Special Education, and a range of professional associations. Our findings suggest that this guidance is not always as well understood or utilised as might be hoped. A mapping exercise, for example in relation to key elements of the Profile for Inclusive Teachers, may be helpful for those involved in teacher education in HEIs and schools in clarifying support for inclusive teaching.

In Ireland there is a sense of convergence in the direction of policy development to support inclusive education, in terms of recent initiatives from the DES, the Teaching Council and the NCSE for example. ITE in Ireland has many of the building blocks in place for developing more inclusive teachers, together with the potential to move further along this trajectory, subject to inevitable system constraints.

Further movement from a narrower focus on disability, towards an understanding of inclusive teaching as encompassing all learners and diversity more broadly, could be stimulated by a wide-ranging debate and policy review at all levels. A process of professional development for teacher educators could create spaces for collaborative reflection, engaging colleagues with subject expertise with those with expertise in inclusive education. However, any impetus to develop such a process into a more thorough-going transformation of teacher education for inclusive teaching, would benefit from a parallel trajectory of development in the wider policy context in Ireland. Certainly such a process would need to involve school leaders in reconfiguring partnerships with universities for teacher education.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix 1 EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers

**Table 16: Profile of Inclusive Teachers: Core Values and Areas of competence, with attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/understanding and skills/abilities exemplars**

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs A	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
1. Valuing Learner Diversity	1.1 Conceptions of inclusive education	<p>... education is based upon a belief in equality, human rights and democracy for all learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education is about societal reform and is non-negotiable;</p> <p>... inclusive education and quality in education cannot be viewed as separate issues;</p> <p>... access to mainstream education alone is not enough; participation means that all learners are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful for them.</p>	<p>... the theoretical and practical concepts and principles underpinning inclusive education within global and local contexts;</p> <p>... the wider system of cultures and policies of educational institutions at all levels that impacts on inclusive education. The possible strengths and weaknesses of the educational system that they work in have to be acknowledged and understood by teachers;</p> <p>... inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just those who are perceived to have different needs and may be at risk of exclusion from educational opportunities;</p> <p>... the language of inclusion and diversity and the implications of using different terminology to describe, label and categorise learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education as the presence (access to education) participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes) of all learners.</p>	<p>... critically examining one's own beliefs and attitudes and the impact these have on actions;</p> <p>... engaging in ethical practice at all times and respecting confidentiality;</p> <p>... the ability to deconstruct educational history to understand current situations and contexts;</p> <p>... coping strategies that prepare teachers to challenge non-inclusive attitudes and to work in segregated situations;</p> <p>... being empathetic to the diverse needs of learners;</p> <p>... modelling respect in social relationships and using appropriate language with all learners and stakeholders in education.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs A	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
	<p>1.2 The teacher's view of learner difference</p>	<p>... it is 'normal to be different';</p> <p>... learner diversity is to be respected, valued and understood as a resource that enhances learning opportunities and adds value to schools, local communities and society;</p> <p>... all learner's voices should be heard and valued;</p> <p>... the teacher is a key influence on a learners' self-esteem and, as a consequence, their learning potential;</p> <p>... categorisation and labelling of learners can have a negative impact upon learning opportunities.</p>	<p>... learners can be used as a resource to facilitate learning about diversity for themselves and their peers;</p> <p>... learners learn in different ways and these can be used to support their own learning and that of their peers;</p> <p>... essential information about learner diversity (arising from support needs, culture, language, socio-economic background etc.)</p> <p>... the school is a community and social environment that affects learners' self-esteem and learning potential;</p> <p>... the school and classroom population is constantly changing; diversity cannot be seen as a static concept</p>	<p>... learning how to learn from differences;</p> <p>... identifying the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity in all situations;</p> <p>... addressing diversity in curriculum implementation;</p> <p>... using diversity in learning approaches and styles as a resource for teaching;</p> <p>... contributing to building schools as learning communities that respect, encourage and celebrate all learners' achievements.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs A	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
<p>2 Supporting All Learners</p>	<p>2.1 Promoting academic, practical, social &amp; emotional learning of all learners</p>	<p>... learning is primarily a social activity;</p> <p>... academic, practical, social and emotional learning are equally important for all learners;</p> <p>... teachers' expectations are a key determinant of learner success and therefore high expectations for all learners are critical;</p> <p>... all learners should be active decision-makers in their learning and any assessment processes they are involved in;</p> <p>... parents and families are an essential resource for a learner's learning;</p> <p>... developing autonomy and self-determination in all learners is essential;</p> <p>... the learning capacity and potential of each learner has to be discovered and stimulated</p>	<p>... understanding the value of collaborative working with parents and families;</p> <p>... typical and atypical child development patterns and pathways, particularly in relation to social and communication skill development;</p> <p>... different models of learning and approaches to learning learners may take.</p>	<p>... being an effective verbal and non-verbal communicator who can respond to the varied communication needs of learners, parents and other professionals;</p> <p>... supporting the development of learners' communication skills and possibilities;</p> <p>... assessing and then developing 'learning to learn skills' in learners;</p> <p>... developing independent and autonomous learners;</p> <p>... facilitating co-operative learning approaches;</p> <p>... implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support learner's social development and interactions;</p> <p>... facilitating learning situations where learners can 'take risks' and even fail in a safe environment;</p> <p>... using assessment for learning approaches that take account of social and emotional as well as academic learning.</p>
	<p>2.2 Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes</p>	<p>... effective teachers are teachers of all learners;</p> <p>... teachers take responsibility for facilitating the learning of all learners in a class;</p> <p>... learners' abilities are not fixed; all learners have the capacity to learn and develop;</p>	<p>... theoretical knowledge on the way learners learn and models of teaching that support the learning process;</p> <p>... positive behaviour and classroom management approaches;</p> <p>... managing the physical and social environment of the classroom to support learning;</p>	<p>... employing classroom leadership skills that involve systematic approaches to positive classroom management;</p> <p>... working with individual learners as well as heterogeneous groups;</p> <p>... using the curriculum as a tool for inclusion that supports access to learning;</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs A	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
		<p>... learning is a process and the goal for all learners is the development of 'learning to learn' skills, not just content/ subject knowledge;</p> <p>... the learning process is essentially the same for all learners – there are very few 'special techniques';</p> <p>... on some occasions, particular learning difficulties require responses based upon adaptations to the curriculum and teaching approaches;</p>	<p>... ways of identifying and then addressing different barriers to learning and the implications of these for teaching approaches;</p> <p>... the development of basic skills – in particular key competences – along with associated teaching and assessment approaches;</p> <p>... assessment for learning methods focussed upon identifying the strengths of a learner;</p> <p>... differentiation of curriculum content, learning process and learning materials to include learners and meet diverse needs;</p> <p>... personalised learning approaches for all learners that support learners to develop autonomy in their learning;</p> <p>... the development, implementation and effective review of Individual Education Plans (IEP) or similar individualised learning programmes when appropriate.</p>	<p>... addressing diversity issues in curriculum development processes;</p> <p>... differentiating methods, content and outcomes for learning;</p> <p>... working with learners and their families to personalise learning and target setting;</p> <p>... facilitating co-operative learning where learners help each other in different ways –</p> <p>including peer tutoring – within flexible learner groupings;</p> <p>... using a range of teaching methods and approaches in systematic ways;</p> <p>... employing ICT and adaptive technology to support flexible approaches to learning;</p> <p>... using approaches to teaching that are evidence based to achieve learning goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the use of clear feedback to learners;</p> <p>... using formative and summative assessment that supports learning and does not label or lead to negative consequences for learners;</p> <p>... engaging in collaborative problem solving with learners;</p> <p>... drawing on a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills to facilitate learning.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs A	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
3 Working With Others	3.1 Working with parents and families	<p>... awareness of the added value of working collaboratively with parents and families;</p> <p>... respect for the cultural and social backgrounds and perspectives of parents and families;</p> <p>... viewing effective communication and collaboration with parents and families as a teacher's responsibility.</p>	<p>... inclusive teaching as based on a collaborative working approach;</p> <p>... the importance of positive inter-personal skills;</p> <p>... the impact of inter-personal relationships on the achievement of learning goals</p>	<p>... effectively engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning;</p> <p>... communicating effectively with parents and family members of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds.</p>
	3.2 Working with a range of other educational professionals	<p>... inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams;</p> <p>... collaboration, partnerships and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers and should be welcomed;</p> <p>... collaborative teamwork supports professional learning with and from other professionals.</p>	<p>... the value and benefits of collaborative work with other teachers and educational professionals;</p> <p>... support systems and structures available for further help, input and advice;</p> <p>... multi-agency working models where teachers in inclusive classrooms co-operate with other experts and staff from a range of different disciplines;</p> <p>... collaborative teaching approaches where teachers take a team approach involving learners themselves, parents, peers, other school teachers and support staff, as well as multi-disciplinary team members as appropriate;</p> <p>... the language/terminology and basic working concepts and perspectives of other professionals involved in education;</p> <p>... the power relationships that exist between different stakeholders that have to be acknowledged and effectively dealt with.</p>	<p>... implementing classroom leadership and management skills that facilitate effective multiagency working;</p> <p>... co-teaching and working in flexible teaching teams;</p> <p>... working as part of a school community and drawing on the support of school internal and external resources;</p> <p>... building a class community that is part of a wider school community;</p> <p>... contributing to whole school evaluation, review and development processes;</p> <p>... collaboratively problem solving with other professionals;</p> <p>... contributing to wider school partnerships with other schools, community organisations and other educational organisations;</p> <p>... drawing on a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills to facilitate working co-operatively with other professionals.</p>

Core Values	Area of Competence	Attitudes and beliefs A	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities
4 Personal Professional Development	4.1 Teachers as reflective practitioners	<p>... teaching is a problem solving activity that requires on-going and systematic planning, evaluation, reflection and then modified action;</p> <p>... reflective practice facilitates teachers to work effectively with parents as well as in teams with other teachers and professionals working within and outside of the school;</p> <p>... the importance of evidence-based practice to guide a teacher's work;</p> <p>... valuing the importance of developing a personal pedagogy to guide a teacher's work.</p>	<p>... personal meta-cognitive, learning to learn skills;</p> <p>... what makes a reflective practitioner and how personal reflection on and in action can be developed;</p> <p>... methods and strategies for evaluating one's own work and performance;</p> <p>... action research methods and the relevance for teachers' work;</p> <p>... the development of personal strategies for problem solving.</p>	<p>... systematically evaluating one's own performance;</p> <p>... effectively involving others in reflecting upon teaching and learning;</p> <p>... contributing to the development of the school as a learning community</p>
	4.2 ITE as a foundation for ongoing professional development	<p>... teachers have a responsibility for their own continuous professional development;</p> <p>... initial teacher education is the first step in teachers' professional lifelong learning;</p> <p>... teaching is a learning activity; being open to learning new skills and actively asking for information and advice is a good thing, not a weakness;</p> <p>... a teacher cannot be an expert in all questions related to inclusive education. Basic knowledge for those beginning in inclusive education is crucial, but continuous learning is essential;</p> <p>... change and development is constant in inclusive education and teachers need the skills to manage and respond to changing needs and demands throughout their careers</p>	<p>... the educational law and the legal context they work within and their responsibilities and duties towards learners, their families, colleagues and the teaching profession within that legal context;</p> <p>... possibilities, opportunities and routes for further, in-service teacher education, in order to develop knowledge and skills to enhance their inclusive practice</p>	<p>... flexibility in teaching strategies that promote innovation and personal learning;</p> <p>... employing time management strategies that will accommodate possibilities for pursuing in-service development opportunities;</p> <p>... being open to and proactive in using colleagues and other professionals as sources of learning and inspiration;</p> <p>... contributing to the whole school community learning and development processes.</p>

**Table 17: Mapping of EASNIE Profile for the Survey showing derived survey questions**

	Areas of the Profile				
	Core Values V	Areas of Competence C	Attitudes & beliefs A	Knowledge & understanding K	Skills & abilities S
<p>Identified Key EASNIE statements</p> <p>And derived Survey questions [shown in red]</p>	<p><b>1 Valuing Learner Diversity</b></p> <p>learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education</p>	<p><b>1.1 Conceptions of inclusive education</b></p>	<p>... education is based upon a belief in equality, human rights and democracy for all learners;</p> <p>... inclusive education is about societal reform and is non-negotiable;</p> <p>... inclusive education and quality in education cannot be viewed as separate issues;</p> <p>... access to mainstream education alone is not enough; participation means that all learners are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful for them.</p> <p>Q1 Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities</p> <p>Q2 Most children with special educational needs can be included successfully in mainstream schools</p>	<p>... the theoretical and practical concepts and principles underpinning inclusive education within global and local contexts;</p> <p>... the wider system of cultures and policies of educational institutions at all levels that impacts on inclusive education. The possible strengths and weaknesses of the educational system that they work in have to be acknowledged and understood by teachers;</p> <p>... inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just those who are perceived to have different needs and may be at risk of exclusion from educational opportunities;</p> <p>... the language of inclusion and diversity and the implications of using different terminology to describe, label and categorise learners;</p>	<p>... critically examining one's own beliefs and attitudes and the impact these have on actions;</p> <p>... engaging in ethical practice at all times and respecting confidentiality;</p> <p>... the ability to deconstruct educational history to understand current situations and contexts;</p> <p>...coping strategies that prepare teachers to challenge non-inclusive attitudes and to work in segregated situations;</p> <p>... being empathetic to the diverse needs of learners;</p> <p>... modelling respect in social relationships and using appropriate language with all learners and stakeholders in education.</p>

Areas of the Profile					
	Core Values V	Areas of Competence C	Attitudes & beliefs A	Knowledge & understanding K	Skills & abilities S
				<p>... inclusive education as the presence (access to education) participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement (learning processes and outcomes) of all learners.</p> <p>Q3 I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners</p> <p>Q4 I understand that some schools are better than others in supporting inclusive education</p>	<p>Q4a My own beliefs and attitudes are not relevant as to whether I can achieve effective inclusive practice [Reverse]</p>

## 7.2 Appendix 2 Phase Three and Four Data Mapping

### Phase 3 Data Mapping against Research Questions

**Table 18 Phase 3 Data Mapping against Research Questions**

	Research Question	NQT Interview Questions	Principal Interview	NQT Survey
2	Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?	3	4, 5, 6,	23, 24, 35
3b	Do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?	10	(7)	21, 33
3.1	How well prepared do NQTs feel to engage with inclusive practices?	2, 3		33
3.2	How do NQTs see the fit between their experience of engaging with inclusive practices in ITE placement and their experience of learning about inclusive practices in their ITE college-based support sessions?	3		15, 16, 34
3.3	How does school context influence NQT engagement with inclusive practices?	4, 5, 6	1,2,3,9	19, 20, 25, 26
3.4	In what ways are NQTs developing their understandings of inclusive practices?	1		34, 35
4	What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects needs to be strengthened to better prepare student teachers to be inclusive?	3	11	14, 15, 16

## Phase 4 Data Mapping against Research Questions

**Table 19: Phase 4 Data Mapping against Research Questions**

	Research Question	NQT2 Interview Questions	Principal Interview 2	NQT2 Survey
2	Do the recent changes to ITE prepare newly qualified teachers to be inclusive as identified by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) Profile of Inclusive Teachers?	20, 22, 30	2	13
3b	Do student/newly qualified teachers perceive their learning during initial teacher education makes an impact on outcomes for students with SEN?	13, 14, 15		9, 10, 11
3.1	How well prepared do NQTs feel to engage with inclusive practices?	9, 10, 12, 33		13, 17
3.2	How do NQTs see the fit between their experience of engaging with inclusive practices in ITE placement and their experience of learning about inclusive practices in their ITE college-based support sessions <sup>12</sup> ?			18
3.3	How does school context influence NQT engagement with inclusive practices?	5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 27, 28, 29, 32	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	12, 14, 15, 16
3.4	In what ways are NQTs developing their understandings of inclusive practices?	8, 9, 19, 24, 25, 33	8	13, 15, 16
4	What gaps are there in how current ITE programmes prepare student teachers to be inclusive as per the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers and what aspects needs to be strengthened to better prepare student teachers to be inclusive?	11, 21, 26, 31	2	18

12 This question was thought to be less relevant for second-year teachers

## 7.3 Appendix 3 The Student Survey

### About you

1. Where are you studying?  
[drop-down menu of institutions, including 'other']
  - 1a. If you selected Other, please specify:  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you on an undergraduate or postgraduate programme?
  - Undergraduate
  - Postgraduate
3. Are you on a primary or post-primary programme?
  - Primary
  - Post-primary
4. What is your chosen subject specialism?  
[drop-down menu of subjects, including 'other']
  - 4a. If you selected Other, please specify:
7. What age are you?
  - 20-23
  - 24-26
  - 27-30
  - 31-40
  - 41-50
  - 51-65
8. Are you
  - Female
  - Male

9. What is your experience of working in schools generally prior to the course? (Please tick those that apply)
- None
  - I have worked in a school as a special needs assistant
  - I have worked in a school in a voluntary capacity (teaching)
  - I have worked in a school in a voluntary capacity (non-teaching)
10. What type of school(s) have you worked in prior to starting the course (Please tick all that apply)
- Early Years
  - Primary
  - Post Primary
  - Further Education
  - Not Applicable
11. What is the total length of time that you have worked in schools prior to starting the course? (Please tick one)
- Less than 3 months
  - 3 months to 6 months
  - 6 months to 1 year
  - More than 1 year
  - Not Applicable
12. What is your experience of working specifically with children with special needs, in a school or other setting, prior to starting the course? (Please tick those that apply)
- None
  - I have worked in a mainstream school with a child/group of children with special needs
  - I have worked in a special school
  - I have worked in a summer scheme with children with special needs
  - Other

10a) If you selected Other, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

13. What is the total length of time that you have worked with children with special needs prior to starting the course? (Please tick one)

- Less than 3 months
- 3 months to 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- More than 1 year
- Not Applicable

14. Have you had significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability?

- Yes
- No

15. Do you consider that you yourself have a special educational need or disability?

- Yes
- No

13a If yes, give more details if you would like to

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Which of the following types of schools have you had placements in during your course (Please tick all that apply)

- Rural Primary
- Urban Primary
- Rural Secondary
- Urban Secondary
- Voluntary Primary
- Voluntary Secondary
- Special School
- Community Comprehensive

- Education Training Board
  - Centres for Education
  - Other
17. Thinking across all your placement classes, did you have involvement with small group and 1:1 classes as well as your main class?
- To a very significant extent
  - To a significant extent
  - To a limited extent
  - Not at all
18. Thinking across all your placement classes, did you have involvement with team teaching?
- To a very significant extent
  - To a significant extent
  - To a limited extent
  - Not at all
19. Were all your school placements (i.e. which schools you would go to) decided upon by you?
- All of them
  - Some of them
  - None of them (i.e. your college chose them)
20. Did you spend time at an alternative placement during your course (Please tick all that apply)?
- Special School
  - Residential School/High Support Unit Detention School
  - School out of my phase e.g. post-primary if you are on a primary course Other Setting
  - No I did not have an alternative placement
21. If you had an alternative placement, how long was it for?
- Less than 1 week

- 1 week to 3 weeks
- More than 3 weeks
- Not Applicable

### About your course

22. Thinking across all your placement classes, did your school experience overall give you the opportunity to teach:

	To a very Significant extent	To a significant extent	To a limited extent	To a very limited extent or not at all
1.Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds				
2. Children with different levels of social disadvantage				
3. Children with English as an Additional Language				
4. Children with Special Educational Needs				

23. Understanding of Inclusion Section 1

Please tick one answer on each line to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities						
Most children with special educational needs can be included successfully in mainstream schools						
I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners						
I understand that some schools are better than others in supporting inclusive education						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My own beliefs and attitudes are not relevant as to whether I can achieve effective inclusive practice						
Categorising and labelling of learners is a positive tool for learning						
I understand how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds in the classroom						
The fact that children learn in different ways is a positive for learning overall in the classroom						
I feel confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom						
It's not possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms						
I understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills						
I feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom						
The learning process is essentially the same for all learners and there are very few "special teaching" or "special pedagogy" techniques						
I understand how to identify different barriers to learning and how to tailor teaching to address these						
Flexible learner groupings are not as effective as grouping or setting by ability						

## About your understanding of Inclusion Section 2

### 24. Understanding of Inclusion Section 2

Please tick one answer on each line to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My school needs to be responsible for ensuring that I undertake professional development in inclusion						
Effective collaboration with parents and families is important in ensuring that children learn well in class						
Effective inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams						
I feel confident in communicating with and engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning						
I understand how to work effectively with other professionals involved in education						
I understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to my work as a teacher						
I feel confident in communicating and collaborating with Special Needs Assistants						
I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion						
Reflection on practice is a key part of achieving effective inclusive practice						
The work that teachers do in the classroom should be strongly informed by evidence						

I understand the opportunities that are available for me to develop my knowledge and skills in inclusive practice as my career progresses						
---	--	--	--	--	--	--

25. This survey has asked you to think about your attitude, knowledge and skills in relation to inclusive education. This question is about how well your course covered these areas.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Inclusive education was covered well in my course						

26. Please rank which part of the course helped you understand about inclusive education the most, by ranking them 1,2 or 3 where 1 is most and 3 is least

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) in any single column.

	1	2	3
College elements of the course			
School Placement			
Things outside your course experience such as discussions with family or visits to schools as a volunteer			

26a. In terms of what you learned from the college elements of the course, was the most useful input from

- A particular module or set of modules
- Input across the programme
- Other

26ai. If you would like to give more detail on what was the most useful input please do so here:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Developing your course

27. In what ways could your school placement be further developed in helping you to include all children in the classroom (please tick all that apply)

- Opportunities to work children with a range of abilities and needs

- Opportunities to work with children with mild or moderate learning needs
- Opportunities to work with children with severe learning needs
- Opportunities to observe good inclusive practice
- Level of support from my university tutor in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement
- Level of support from my school in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement
- Level of support from my co-operating teacher in helping me develop inclusive practice whilst on school placement
- Level of support around dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs
- Other

25a. If you selected Other, please specify:

---

28. In what ways could your college experience be further developed in helping you to include all children in the classroom (please tick all that apply)

- More input on attitudes and understanding in relation to inclusive education
- More input on specific strategies and approaches for working with children with a range of learning needs
- More input on understanding typical and atypical development in children
- More input on subject specific strategies for inclusion
- More emphasis on inclusion across different areas of my taught programme rather than in just one or two modules
- More input on dealing with challenging behaviour and meeting children's emotional needs
- Better integration between university based and school based elements of the programme
- Other

26a. If you selected Other, please specify:

---

## 7.4 Appendix 4 The NQT Surveys

### 7.4.1 Survey 1

[Qs 1 and 2 are name]

3. Are you

Female

Male

4. Where did you do your initial teacher education programme?

[drop-down menu of institutions, including 'other']

If you selected Other, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Were you on an undergraduate or postgraduate programme?

Undergraduate

Postgraduate

6. Were you on a primary or post primary programme?

Primary

Post primary

7. Some people completed a similar survey to this last year in the Spring of 2016 when they were students completing their initial teacher education programme. Did you complete this initial survey in your Initial Teacher Education Year?

Yes

No

Not Sure

8. What was your subject specialism in your ITE programme?

[drop-down menu of subjects, including 'other']

English

Maths

Humanities (Gaelige, History, Geography, Languages, Religious Education,

Business)

Special Educational Needs

Psychology

Arts (Music, Art and Design, Physical Education or Drama)

Sciences

Computing

Early Childhood Studies

General

Other

8a. If you selected Other, please specify:

9. What age are you?

20-21

22-24

25-27

28-30

41-50

51-65

10. Have you had significant interactions with a friend or relative who has a special educational need or disability?

Yes

No

11. Do you consider that you yourself have a special educational need or disability?

Yes

No

If yes, give more details if you would like to

---

13. During your ITE Programme, which types of schools did you have school placements (teaching practice) in? (Please tick all that apply)

- Rural Primary
- Urban Primary
- Rural Secondary
- Urban Secondary
- Voluntary Primary
- Voluntary Secondary
- Special School
- Community Comprehensive
- Education Training Board
- Centres for Education
- Other

13a. If you selected Other, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Thinking across all your placements on your ITE course classes, to what extent did you have experience as an ITE student of working with:

	To a very Significant extent	To a significant extent	To a limited extent	To a very limited extent or not at all
1. Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds				
2. Children with different levels of social disadvantage				
3. Children with English as an Additional Language				
4. Children with Special Educational Needs				

15. Were you assessed specifically on inclusive practice whilst on school placement (teaching practice)?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
16. If you would like, in your own words, tell us about how your placement tutor supported you in developing your practice as an inclusive teacher
- 
17. What you are doing now?
- Working in a permanent teaching position in a school in Ireland
  - Working in a temporary teaching position in a school in Ireland
  - Working in a teaching position abroad
  - Not yet been employed in a school and looking for employment in a school
  - Looking for other employment outside of education
  - Working in another role in education
  - Working in another role outside of education in Ireland
  - Working in another role outside of education abroad

**About your school where you teach now**

18. Are you working full time or part time?
- Full time
  - Part time
19. If applicable, what type of school are you working in? (If you have been working in several types of schools, indicate the type where you have spent most time)
- [drop-down menu, including 'other']
- Rural Primary
  - Urban Primary
  - Rural Post Primary
  - Urban Post Primary
  - Special School

Centres for Education

Other type of school or educational setting in Ireland

Other type of school or educational setting outside of Ireland

Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

---

19b. Are you currently teaching in a DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools programme) School?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

### About your school where you teach now

If you have been working in more than one school, think about your experience overall across all of those schools when answering the questions in this section.

20. Have you been allocated to a Resource or Special Class or to a Resource/Learning Support Role?

- All of the time
- Some of the time
- Not at all
- Don't Know

20a. Describe your experience in working in a Resource or Special Class or in a Resource/Learning Support Role in your own words? (If relevant mention if you were involved in team teaching or worked alone)

---

21. Describe the role that Special Needs Assistants play in your class(es) in your own words

---

22. To what extent have you had experience in the school at which you work now of teaching

	To a very Significant extent	To a significant extent	To a limited extent	To a very limited extent or not at all
1.Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds				
2. Children with different levels of social disadvantage				
3. Children with English as an Additional Language				
4. Children with Special Educational Needs				

23. Understanding of Inclusion Section 1

Please tick one answer on each line to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities						
Most children with special educational needs can be included successfully in mainstream schools						
I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners						
I understand that some schools are better than others in supporting inclusive education						
My own beliefs and attitudes are not relevant as to whether I can achieve effective inclusive practice						
Categorising and labelling of learners is a positive tool for learning						
I understand how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds in the classroom						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The fact that children learn in different ways is a positive for learning overall in the classroom						
I feel confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom						
It's not possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms						
I understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills						
I feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom						
The learning process is essentially the same for all learners and there are very few "special teaching" or "special pedagogy" techniques						
I understand how to identify different barriers to learning and how to tailor teaching to address these						
Flexible learner groupings are not as effective as grouping or setting by ability						

### About your understanding of Inclusion Section 2

24. Understanding of Inclusion Section 2

Please tick one answer on each line to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My school needs to be responsible for ensuring that I undertake professional development in inclusion						
Effective collaboration with parents and families is important in ensuring that children learn well in class						
Effective inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams						
I feel confident in communicating with and engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning						
I understand how to work effectively with other professionals involved in education						
I understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to my work as a teacher						
I feel confident in communicating and collaborating with Special Needs Assistants						
I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion						
Reflection on practice is a key part of achieving effective inclusive practice						
The work that teachers do in the classroom should be strongly informed by evidence						
I understand the opportunities that are available for me to develop my knowledge and skills in inclusive practice as my career progresses						

**About how the school that you work in now has prepared you for inclusion**

This question is about how well you think that you are supported by your school that you teach in now to develop your understanding about being an inclusive teacher.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My school supports me in developing a positive attitude towards inclusion.						
My school supports me in developing strong skills and knowledge about inclusion						

26. In what ways does your school encourage or discourage inclusive practice?

**About the National Induction Programme (NIPT)**

27. Is your school a Droichead school?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

28. Have you attended the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) induction programme workshops?

- Yes I attended all or most of the workshops so far
- Yes I attended some of the workshops so far
- No I did not attend the workshops

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The national induction programme supported me in developing my understanding of inclusion.						

30. In what ways did the National Induction Programme workshops help you? (Tick all that apply)

- Developing a positive attitude towards inclusion
- Developing my skills and knowledge about inclusion
- Making links with teachers outside of my school
- Understanding policy issues on inclusion in Ireland
- Understanding where to go to get help and advice with particular problems
- Other

31. Tell us in your own words if and how the NIPT workshops helped you become a more inclusive teacher

---

32. If you are a primary teacher, did you participate in the workshop on "IEPs for pupils with SEN" (Primary)?

- Yes
- No
- Not aware of this

32a. If you are a Post Primary teacher, did you participate in the online workshop "Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Classes"

- Yes
- No
- Not aware of this

### About the impact of your ITE programme

This question is about whether you think that your learning on your ITE programme about inclusive education made a difference to the outcomes of your pupils in class(es) that you work with now.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My teacher education programme makes a difference to the academic outcomes of my pupils						
My teacher education programme makes a difference to the social and emotional development of my pupils						

### Thinking Overall

34. Thinking overall, to what extent do the following help you in effective inclusive teaching as an NQT?

	To a very Significant extent	To a significant extent	To a limited extent	To a very limited extent or not at all
Experience of working with pupils in school as an NQT				
Advice from my peers – other teachers in my school				
Advice from more senior teachers in my school				
Advice from the School Principal				
Advice from senior staff including SEN Coordinator				
Advice from other NQTs				
The National Induction Programme				
My own network outside of school				
Online resources				
Input on inclusion in subject specific modules in the academic classes of my ITE programme				

Input on inclusion across the academic classes of my ITE programme				
Experience on school placement in general on my ITE programme				
Experience in a special school, special or resource class or in resource/learning support role during my ITE programme				
Things outside my professional experience such as discussions with family				

35. Thinking overall, tell us in your own words, about what best prepared you for working as an inclusive teacher? You could discuss your experience in your initial teacher education programme and the experience you have had as an NQT.

---

35a. What would have helped you further in developing as an inclusive teacher? You might refer to aspects of your initial teacher education programme and/or your experience as an NQT.

---

### 7.4.2 Survey 2

[Qs 1 and 2 are name]

3. What you are doing now?
- Working in a permanent teaching position in a school in Ireland
  - Working in a temporary teaching position in a school in Ireland
  - Working in a teaching position abroad
  - Not yet been employed in a school and looking for employment in a school
  - Looking for other employment outside of education
  - Working in another role in education
  - Working in another role outside of education in Ireland
  - Working in another role outside of education abroad
  - About your school where you teach now

4. Are you working in the same schools were you spent most of your NQT year?
  - Yes
  - No
  
5. Are you working full time or part time?
  - Full time
  - Part time
  
6. Are you working in a Primary or Post-Primary school?
  - Primary
  - Post-Primary
  
7. Are you working in a Rural or Urban Setting?
  - Rural
  - Urban
  
8. If you are working in a school in Ireland, what type of school are you working in?  
(Tick all that apply)
  - Community College
  - Voluntary Secondary
  - National School
  - Gaelscoil
  - Educate Together
  - DEIS
  - Special School
  - Not Applicable
  
9. Have you been allocated to a Resource or Special Class or to a Resource/Learning Support Role?
  - All of the time
  - Some of the time
  - Not at all
  - Don't Know

9a. Describe your experience in working in a Resource or Special Class or in a Resource/Learning Support Role in your own words? (If relevant mention if you were involved in team teaching or worked alone)

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Describe the role that Special Needs Assistants play in your class(es) in your own words

\_\_\_\_\_

11. To what extent have you had experience in the school at which you work now of teaching

	To a very Significant extent	To a significant extent	To a limited extent	To a very limited extent or not at all
1. Children from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds				
2. Children with different levels of social disadvantage				
3. Children with English as an Additional Language				
4. Children with Special Educational Needs				

**About your experiences and views on inclusion**

12. What approach does your current school take to issues of inclusive teaching and what are the main challenges and supports for inclusive practice that you experience in your current role? [If you are not working in a school then you can skip this question]

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Have your views on inclusive teaching changed or remained the same since you were a student teacher? In what ways?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. How well supported were you during your NQT year, for developing as an inclusive teacher?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Who and What have you found helpful in your efforts to be an inclusive teacher?

\_\_\_\_\_

16. What are the barriers/enablers that prevent/allow you be the inclusive teacher you wish to be?

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17. What have you learned about yourself as an inclusive teacher and how do you see yourself developing?

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18. Looking back, what advice would you give you to your Initial Teacher Education college and to your school where you were an NQT for supporting beginning teachers in developing inclusive teaching?

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## 7.5 Appendix 5 School Principal Interview Schedules 1 and 2

### 7.5.1 Interview 1 (Phase 3)

#### Introduction

- a) Refer to Letter of Invitation and Information Sheet – any questions?
- b) Consent Form – review and request signature
- c) Focus statement on inclusive teaching:

The focus of this project is on how well new teachers are prepared for inclusive teaching. Inclusive teaching in this context is concerned with all students, but particularly with those who may be vulnerable to being marginalised from educational opportunities for any reason, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. We are keen to understand your views on how well Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are prepared by their teacher education programmes to develop as inclusive teachers.

#### Questions

1. How would you describe the context of your school in relation to issues of inclusive education?
2. In what ways does the ethos of your school relate to inclusive teaching?
3. What do you feel are the typical challenges experienced by NQTs in your school in relation to inclusive teaching?
4. How well do you feel NQTs are prepared by their Initial Teacher Education programmes for becoming inclusive teachers?
5. In your experience, how would you describe the relevance of the attitudes, knowledge and skills that NQTs typically develop through their Initial Teacher Education programmes?
6. As you may know, teacher education programmes have recently been extended by one year and now incorporate mandatory content related to inclusive education. Have you noticed any significant changes in how well NQTs are prepared to develop as inclusive teachers?
7. How does this impact on school students with special educational needs?
8. In your experience do newly qualified teachers tend to have somewhat fixed ideas about student's abilities or do you notice more open expectations for students with SEN?
9. How are NQTs supported at your school? (eg Droichead, NIPT, Mentoring/Senior Staff?)
10. Where would you expect NQTs to look for advice and information in relation to issues of inclusive teaching?
11. How might teacher education programmes develop further in relation to inclusive teaching?

12. Do you see newly qualified teachers developing skills in relation to working with parents/families?
13. Do you see newly qualified teachers developing skills in relation to collaborating with other teachers? With SNAs?
14. What forms of CPD would you like to see made available to NQTs in relation to developing more inclusive teaching?
15. Would you like to make any further comments?

Thank you for your time!

## **7.5.2 Interview 2 (Phase 4)**

### **School Context**

1. How would you describe your school context in relation to issues for inclusive teaching?

### **NQT support**

2. What do you feel are the typical challenges experienced by NQTs in your school in relation to inclusive teaching?
3. How are NQTs supported at your school; and where would you expect NQTs to look for advice and information in relation to issues of inclusive teaching?
4. How do you see the development of a distributed leadership model within your school impacting on support for NQTs as inclusive teachers?
5. How has the introduction of the new General Allocation Model impacted on the experience of NQTs & early career teachers, in relation to inclusive teaching?

### **NQT development**

6. How does the context and culture of your school influence the development of NQTs as inclusive teachers?
7. How can NQTs/early career teachers be supported as a potential resource for developing more inclusive practices within your school? How are they enabled to engage with a role as an 'agent of change'?
8. What forms of CPD would you like to see made available to NQTs in relation to developing more inclusive teaching?

## 7.6 Appendix 6 NQT Interview Schedules

### 7.6.1 Interview 1

1. How have your views on inclusive teaching changed since you were a student?
2. What challenges have you faced as an NQT in relation to inclusive teaching?  
Can you give some examples? What helped you respond to these situations?
3. How well did your ITE programme prepare you for inclusive teaching?
4. How do you think inclusive teaching is approached in your school?  
How does this impact on your teaching?
5. Can you describe the context for your teaching in the classroom? (% with SEN...  
Any individual withdrawal, small groups or team teaching?)
6. How do you work with SNAs?
7. Can you think of times when the whole class has gained from activities you planned  
with the aim of including particular pupils? Can you reflect on what helped you  
succeed?
8. What aspects of differentiation do you find most challenging personally? [PROMPT:  
eg planning and assessment, implementing and review/measurement of progress]
9. What are the benefits and challenges of having diverse learners in your classroom  
or the school?
10. What about the benefits and challenges in relation to particular groups of learners  
such as those identified with special educational needs?
11. Where do you go when you want to know more about differentiating learning  
for students? What support do you get from more senior staff, NIPT, Droichead?
12. Have you access to external personnel for advice in teaching students with SEND?  
(SENO, NEPs, CAMHS Inspectorate...)
13. How would you see yourself developing into the future as an inclusive teacher – what  
do you think you will need by way of further support and professional development?
14. Are there any further issues you would like us to bring up in this interview or that you  
thought we should ask you about?

## 7.6.2 Interview 2

### Experience

1. What has happened work-wise since we last spoke? Are you teaching in the same school?
2. If a different school: How did you acquire this position?
3. Did you complete the NQT requirements?
4. Is it a Droichead school? What was your experience of NQT Induction like?

### School context

5. What is your role in the current school? (full hours, which classes, additional responsibilities...?)
6. What is the profile of students who need support to be included in your school?
7. How would you describe the school's approach to inclusive teaching?
8. Can you give me an example of this?

### Conceptualisation of inclusive education

9. How do you view the range of differences between learners in your school?
10. Have your views on inclusive teaching changed or remained the same and in what ways?
11. Is there a gap between what you would like to happen in your class and what does happen in practice, in relation to inclusive teaching? If so, how do you think this can be addressed?
12. What/Who have you found helpful in your efforts to be an inclusive teacher?
13. Prompt: Within school and also outside of school

### Development of inclusive teaching/practices

14. Can you think of examples when you have adopted an inclusive approach;
15. to planning...
16. choice of teaching methods...
17. assessment practices...
18. How have you developed your skills for promoting inclusive learning in your classroom? Can you think of an example?
19. Can you think of something that you do now that you might have done differently/ found difficult as a student teacher?
20. Prompts: can you give me an example from your classroom?

21. Do you feel more/less confident that your teaching practice promotes inclusive learning in the classroom for all pupils? In what ways?

### **Collaboration**

22. Who do you collaborate with in your work? In what ways?
23. Are you involved in the decisions made in relation to students with additional needs and how additional resources are deployed and reviewed?
24. Prompts: who is engaged in that process? Would you like to be more/less involved? Do you feel qualified/confident for doing that?
25. Do you work with other professionals from agencies outside your school? (Prompt?)
26. Are there any professional networks that you take part in for supporting yourself?

### **Reflecting on ITE programmes**

27. How helpful was your ITE programme? (both school placement and campus experiences)
28. How might it be improved?
29. Which were the topics/areas studied that helped you most to understand and implement inclusive practices in your classrooms?
30. How well supported were you during your NQT year, for developing as an inclusive teacher?

### **Professional identity/aspirations**

31. Since we last spoke, what have you learned about yourself as an inclusive teacher? Can you give an example?
32. How do you see yourself developing as an inclusive teacher now and how do think this has changed since you were a student?
33. What skills do you feel that you need to develop more for enabling you in developing further your inclusive practice?
34. What are the barriers/enablers that prevent/allow you be the inclusive teacher you wish to be?
35. Do you feel that you contribute to the advancement of inclusive practice in your school? If yes, in what ways/how?
36. Prompt: If not, what prevents you from having a more active role in changing practices?
37. What would you like to be done differently in your school, in relation to inclusive teaching?

**Final thoughts – looking back:**

38. What advice would you give to your ITE-self?
39. What advice would you give to ITE providers? (lecturers, placement tutors,...)
40. What advice would you give to schools in relation to supporting NQTs? (principal, cooperating teacher....)
41. What/Who has influenced you most in your development as an inclusive teacher?
42. Is there anything you wish to add? Is there any question I should have asked?

## 7.7 Appendix 7 NQT Survey Analysis

### 7.7.1 Initial Exploratory Factor Analysis with the student survey sample

To improve our reporting of the association between aspects of the ITE process and attitudes/knowledge/skill (A/K/S) as gathered in the student survey (see Appendix 3), we have employed a data reduction technique which allows for easier interpretation than trying simultaneously to understand associations with the large number of individual items that are indicators of underlying A/K/S. Our approach to constructing these summative indices is informed by exploratory factor analysis.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a statistical technique that is used to reduce data to a smaller set of summary variables and to explore the underlining theoretical structure of the phenomena. It is used to identify the structure of the relationship between the variables and the respondents. We ran EFA using all of the items within questions 21 and 22 (26 items in total). After further interrogation of the items we removed question 21 item 13 and question 22 item 1 due to ambiguity in the wording. We also carried out rotation as part of the EFA using the varimax model; this helps interpretation of the factors (see Field, 2009).

Factor analysis of the 24 remaining items initially yielded three factors which explained 52%, 33% and 10% respectively (total 95%) of the variance present in the original item responses. After rotation and removal of all items with a loading less than 0.4, we arrived at the factor structure presented below. Ten items loaded strongly (i.e. over the 0.4 threshold) on the first factor (a mixture of items from questions 21 and 22), 8 factors loaded strongly on the second factor (again, a mixture of items from questions 21 and 22), and two items loaded strongly on the third factor (only items from question 21). These factors seemingly represent a strong structure in our data that we can use to summarise individuals' attitudes.

Finally, we explored whether simple standardised summative indices of the items associated with each factor (i.e. summing the individual item scores and weighting them by the factor loadings) are just as effective at representing Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills (A/K/S) as the factor scores extracted from the EFA analysis. Such scaled scores would have the benefit of being more directly constructed, rather than having to appeal to a more complex analysis. We found that simple standardised summative indices are highly correlated with their corresponding factors scores (Index/Factor 1  $r = 0.96$ ; Index/Factor 2  $r = 0.94$ ; Index/Factor 3  $r = 0.79$ ), and thus the initial analysis employs the three standardised summative indices.

The resulting factor structure from the initial exploratory factor analysis is shown in Tables 20-22.

**Table 20: Factor 1 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching'**

Factor 1 'Understanding and Skills for Inclusive Teaching'		
Question	Loading	Item text
21.9	0.7639	I feel confident in dealing with the needs of different learners in the classroom
21.14	0.7316	I understand how to identify different barriers to learning and how to tailor teaching to address these
21.7	0.7252	I understand how to include children with a range of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds in the classroom
22.5	0.6592	I understand how to work effectively with other professionals involved in education
21.12	0.6241	I feel confident in implementing positive behaviour management approaches that support social skills development in the classroom
22.7	0.6096	I feel confident in communicating and collaborating with Special Needs Assistants
22.4	0.5906	I feel confident in communicating with and engaging parents and families in supporting their child's learning
22.8	0.5204	I am confident that I can engage in personal learning about effective inclusion
22.11	0.514	I understand the opportunities that are available for me to develop my knowledge and skills in inclusive practice as my career progresses
21.11	0.4893	I understand about typical and atypical child development in relation to social and communication skills

**Table 21: Factor 2 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching'**

Factor 2 'Attitudes and Beliefs for Inclusive Teaching'		
Question	Loading	Item text
22.6	0.5418	I understand the concept of a reflective practitioner and how it relates to my work as a teacher
22.9	0.5687	Reflection on practice is a key part of achieving effective inclusive practice
21.3	0.534	I understand that there are debates about the use of language to label or categorise learners
21.1	0.5268	Inclusive education is about equality for all learners not just those with special educational disabilities
22.2	0.6096	Effective collaboration with parents and families is important in ensuring that children learn well in class
22.3	0.4757	Effective inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams
21.4	0.4408	I understand that some schools are better than others in supporting inclusive education
22.10	0.4272	The work that teachers do in the classroom should be strongly informed by evidence

**Table 22: Factor 3 'Negative Attitudes towards Inclusion'**

Factor 3 'Negative Attitudes towards Inclusion'		
Question	Loading	Item text
21.15	0.4337	Flexible learner groupings are not as effective as grouping or setting by ability
21.10	0.4123	It's not possible to expect all learners to achieve high standards in mixed ability classrooms

The initial analysis of the student survey suggested, as indicated, a possible third factor, Negative Attitudes Towards Inclusion, which comprised two items concerning the limits of mixed ability classes.

Although we initially extracted three factors from our analysis of the data collected during the ITE phase, we chose to exclude the third factor from longitudinal analysis of the teachers' understanding of inclusion. This was done following an exploration of the relationship between the predicted factor scores and the standardised scores (which are what we use in the analysis for ease of interpretation and consistency across time) in the longitudinal sample. While Factor 1 and Factor 2 continue to perform as expected, with the predicted factor scores correlating well with the standardised scores, this was not the case with Factor 3, where we find a negative correlation between the predicted factor score and the standardised score. As such, it was unclear that we would be reliably measuring Factor 3 in the longitudinal sample, which would not have been a strong basis for the longitudinal analyses we conduct.

### 7.7.2 Dropout analysis

As not all the respondents who completed the ITE survey also completed the follow up NQT survey, it is possible that the results of the longitudinal analysis could be biased as there may be some systematic way in which people decide to respond or not to the follow up survey. To explore whether Cohort 1, i.e. the longitudinal sample of respondents who completed both the ITE and NQT survey is representative of the whole ITE sample initially recruited during ITE, we conducted a simple dropout analysis. This involves specifying a binary outcome regression model (specifically we use logistic regression) with an outcome variable where 1 indicates that the individual was also present in the follow-up and 0 indicates that they were not. Predictor variables – i.e. variables which could be the basis for people responding or not based on that variable such as age, gender etc, are characteristics collected in the ITE survey (so that they are present for all individuals regardless of their presence at follow-up). If there are statistically significant differences in this analysis, that would suggest differences between individuals in the initial ITE sample and those in the longitudinal sample, suggesting the latter is not representative on this characteristic. Results are illustrated in Table 23

**Table 23: Logistic regression model of an individual's presence in the NQT survey conditional on their presence in the ITE survey.**

Characteristic	Present at follow-up	t (* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001)
Postgraduate	-0.192	(-1.07)
Postprimary	-0.199	(-0.87)
Special/Psy	-0.152	(-0.55)
Creatives	0.0635	(0.28)
Sci/Maths/Tech	-0.119	(-0.71)
24-26	0.245	(1.18)
27-30	0.0750	(0.28)
30+	0.488	(2.03)*
Male	-0.245	(-1.36)
No friend with SEN	0.119	(0.89)
No SEN	0.186	(0.57)
Observations	421	

All but one of the associations in the drop-out model are small and statistically insignificant. The exception is individuals who are aged 30 or more, which just meets the traditional criterion of statistical significance at the 5% level. As such, this suggests that our longitudinal sample is broadly representative on most of the characteristics available for this model. It should be noted that, of course, there may be other ways in which the longitudinal sample is unrepresentative in terms of unobserved or unobservable characteristics.

### 7.7.3 Comparability of the Cohort 2 dataset

When the decision was taken to collect data from a wider set of NQTs than just those in the original ITE sample (Cohort 1), one possibility was that if this wider set of NQTs was very similar in terms of their demographic characteristics and other attributes, then we could theoretically undertake a cross sectional panel analysis. In other words, we would see how the factors changed between the initial ITE sample and the full NQT sample, and treat this as indicative of the actual change in the whole population of ITE students. For us to do this, the characteristics of Cohorts 1 and 2 would need to be very similar.

To understand the comparability of the NQT dataset, we considered the distribution of observed characteristics between individuals who were recruited at the ITE stage and those who were recruited at the NQT stage. For each characteristic, we investigated the distribution depending on timing of recruitment and the result of a Pearson chi-squared test of the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the distributions between the two groups.

There was evidence of difference between the groups in terms of several characteristics. Those recruited at the ITE stage are more skewed towards training for primary teaching when compared to those recruited at the NQT stage (Pearson Chi Squared=5.5,  $p=0.02$ ). In terms of subject specialism, those recruited at the ITE stage are more skewed towards Science, Maths and Technology and away from Creative and Humanities subjects (Pearson Chi Squared=57.4,  $p<0.01$ ). In terms of age, those recruited at the ITE stage are younger than those recruited at the NQT stage (i.e. beyond the difference that would simply be due to aging) (Pearson Chi Squared=57.1,  $p<0.01$ ).

There was also evidence of difference in the distribution of experience of children with SEN and children with EAL between the two groups, with those recruited at the NQT stage seemingly less likely to have experience of teaching children with these characteristics (for SEN Pearson Chi Squared=11.4,  $p=0.01$ ; for EAL Pearson Chi Squared=8.3,  $p=0.04$ ). Given the focus of this study and, thus, the potential relevance of increased experience of teaching children with SEN, these differences in experience between these groups would seem to cast doubt on the representativeness of the NQT group as a standalone comparator.

As such, we did not think it possible to treat the NQT sample as a cross sectional panel follow up cohort and thus we make no comparisons between the change in factors between the ITE sample and Cohort 2, i.e. the respondents who were recruited at the NQT stage. We restrict such comparisons only to Cohort 1 – i.e. those respondents who completed both the ITE and NQT surveys.

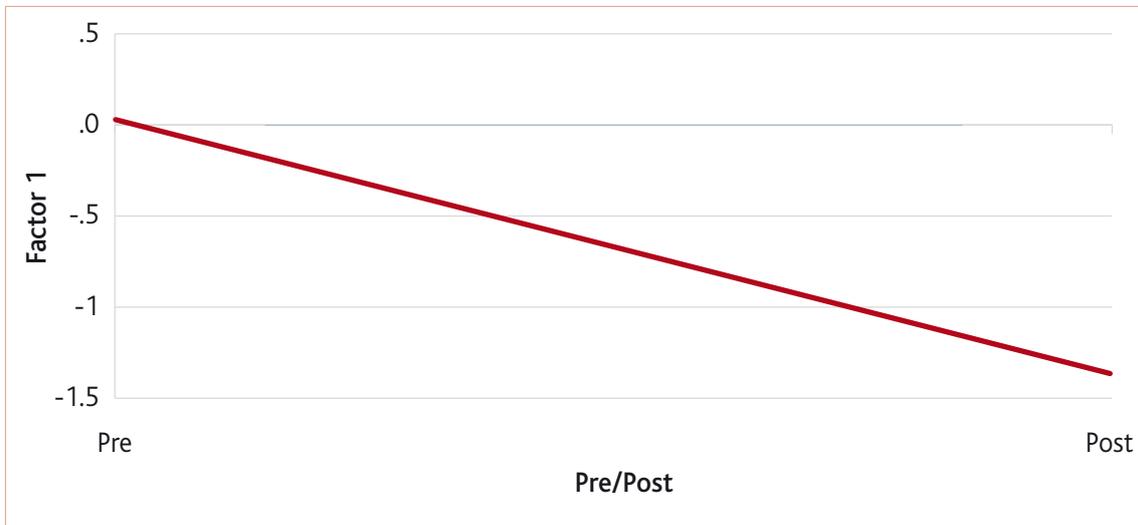
#### **7.7.4 Overall change over time for Cohort 1**

We used unconditional multiple regression analysis to investigate the difference over time across Cohort 1 as in Figures 7-2 and 7-3.

Conditional multiple regression analysis allows us to calculate conditional differences in means between groups, i.e. the differences that we would see if individuals in each group had the same set of all other characteristics contained in the model.

We report such conditional differences in trends for the group level effects, i.e. whether there is any difference in the trend over time based on particular group characteristics such as age, gender etc. As such, when we report the conditional differences in trends, we are estimating what the difference in the trend that is associated with specifically being in one group rather than another, taking into account any other differences that there are between the individuals in these groups. This is helpful since those other differences between the individuals in the two groups might explain the differences that are observed in an unconditional comparison of the means in the two groups better than the characteristic itself.

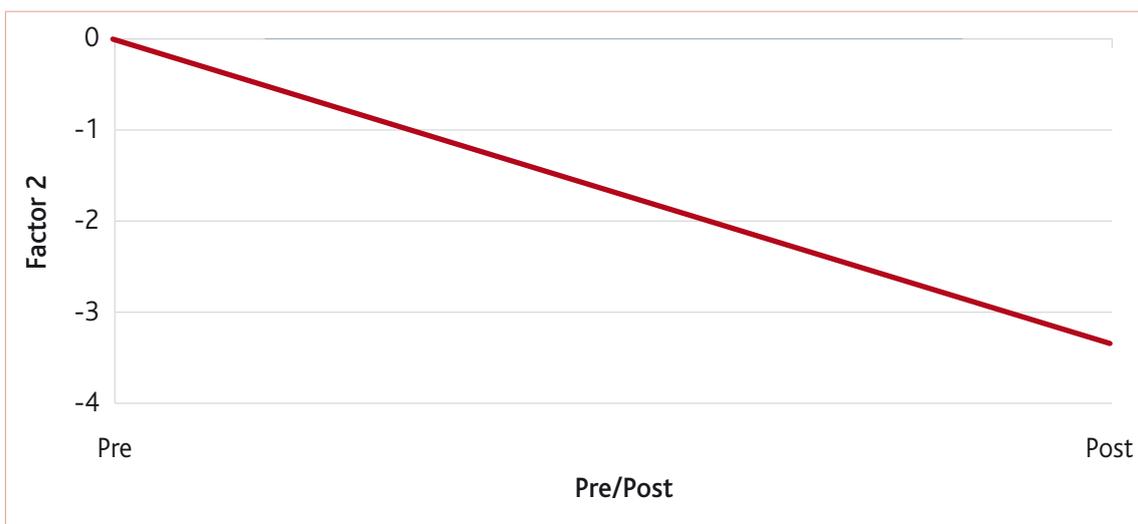
**Figure 7-1: Change in Factor 1 T1 = 0.02, T2 = -1.37, Difference = 1.379, t=-19.77, p<0.01**



Note: The factor scores are standardized, i.e. they are divided by the standard error of the pre-test distribution. Thus one point on the scale equals a change equal to one standard error of the pre-test distribution. More precisely, the figures show Glass's Delta effect sizes/standardised scores, because they are standardised on the basis of the pre-test variance alone (rather than the pooled standard deviation, which is used in Cohen's d effect size).

In the figures, Pre refers to the ITE Survey and Post refers to the NQT Survey.

**Figure 7-2: Change in Factor 2 T1 = 0.20, T2 = -3.33, Difference= 3.53, t=-45.11, p<0.001**



As can be seen from the slope of the graphs, for both factors there is a large and significant drop between the end of the ITE year and the end of the NQT year,

### 7.7.5 Change over time by characteristic

As noted, a conditional multiple regression analysis is used to indicate differences in the factor scores over time by characteristics. In order to help interpret the findings of the multiple regression analyses, we plotted the change in the factor scores associated with different levels of key characteristics (identified in the ITE survey). This allowed us to identify whether there was evidence of differential change in the scores associated with these characteristics, when the other characteristics in the model are held constant. That is, we were then able to determine if the rate of change between the ITE and NQT timepoints varied by characteristic, e.g. do male respondents have the same rate of change as female respondents or is there a difference?

For each of these comparisons, we employed a significance test (F test of joint significance, in case of the presence of more than two categories) of the null hypothesis of no interaction between the characteristic variable(s) and the time variable. This provided evidence about the statistical significance of differential change conditionally associated with this characteristic. In most cases, there was no significant difference in the rate of change of the factors based on particular characteristics. Where there are significant differences, the difference of differences of the standardized means, as a measure of 'effect size' is reported in section 4 of this report.

## 7.8 Structure of Initial Teacher Education in Ireland

A full account of the context of ITE in Ireland is given in the Report on Phases 1 and 2 of the *Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion Project*, Hick *et al.* (2018), Section 1.4; teacher education statistics for each ITE provider are given in Appendix 3 of that report. An abridged extract from that account is provided below.

Initial teacher education in Ireland is provided by a number of higher education institutions, most of which are state supported. One private college is state accredited for the provision of teacher education. Both concurrent (undergraduate) and consecutive (postgraduate) models of initial teacher education (ITE) are available. The vast majority of post-primary teachers hold a postgraduate diploma in education while the vast majority of primary teachers completed a 3-year BEd. Concurrent courses are common for post-primary teachers of specialised subjects with a strong practical component such as art, physical education, music, home economics or technology. More recently, there has been an on-going process of mergers and alliances forming between some ITE providers, following the recommendations of the 'Review of the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland' (DES, 2012).

Since 2012, all programmes of initial teacher education were required to extend the period of training. All concurrent (undergraduate) programmes of initial teacher education must be of four years' duration and all consecutive (postgraduate) programmes of initial teacher education must be of two years' duration. The latter was also redesigned as a masters degree – Professional Master of Education (PME). There are also post-graduate programmes for primary teachers and again these programmes are of 2 years' duration and lead to a PME.

Along with the extended duration of the period of initial teacher education, is the reconceptualisation of the educational experience itself. A key principle of the new provision across all programmes is the closer integration of theory and practice, and in this regard the school placement element of the redesigned programmes is pivotal.

All programmes are required to have an extended period of school placement and the school itself is viewed as fundamental to the acquisition of an inquiry-oriented professional stance. While the HEIs have the ultimate responsibility for the programmes, schools and experienced teachers are encouraged to serve as effective mentors; and co-operating teachers and school-university partnerships are essential to this agenda. Both the co-operating teacher and the HEI tutor are expected to collaborate and share expertise in fostering the student teacher's learning. In this context the Teaching Council (2011a, p. 15) is encouraging 'new and innovative school placement models' and new kinds of relationships across co-operating teachers, HEI tutors and student teachers. While school placement was part of initial teacher education for many decades and teacher education providers have a long history of involvement with schools, relationships and partnerships were usually informal and based on goodwill. In the current context partnerships are becoming more explicit and formal with some providers developing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with their schools, although goodwill remains a key feature. Overall, the view of initial teacher education in the new policy context is one that is professionally and academically enriching and which lays the foundation for the teacher as a lifelong learner.

A key understanding now in teacher education is that it is not enough for student teachers to have more time in school, important though that is; rather, the requirement is that student teachers have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers teaching and to have opportunities to discuss their observations with mentors/co-operating teachers, HEI tutors and fellow students. In other words, the new policy is one where student teachers are positioned as learners (as well as teachers) while they are in school. The nomenclature itself – school placement, replacing teaching practice – is telling in the new arrangements: it emphasises the need for student teachers to gain an understanding and experience of the wider culture and practices in a school. A more broadly based experience is thus expected beyond direct teaching.

Regardless of the type of programme (concurrent, consecutive or primary, post primary) all students have to spend a considerable period of time in school during their initial teacher education course. This involves engaging in teaching, observation and participating in a range of school activities. The School Placement Guidelines (Teaching Council, 2013) state that 'over the full programme, the school-based element must incorporate, at a minimum, 100 hours of direct teaching experience...it is expected that HEIs and schools will work towards a position where student teachers will gain direct teaching experience in the region of 200 to 250 hours' (p.12). Typically, a student teacher on an undergraduate programme spends about 24 weeks on school placement. A student on a two-year postgraduate programme spends 30 weeks of that programme in schools. In all cases, the Council requires that the second half of the programme should include at least one block placement for a minimum of 10 weeks. Within those requirements, programme providers have flexibility in determining the duration, structure and timing of the school-based element and thus can have regard for local circumstances. Student teachers are expected to participate fully in the life of the school and over their programme must

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be placed in at least two contrasting placement settings. They are expected to have experience of teaching at a variety of levels of the system (e.g. classes at upper and lower primary level if becoming a primary teacher). Students are observed and assessed by their HEI tutors.

While there is no formal structured or paid mentoring scheme in operation for the mentor/co-operating teacher, and schools provide assistance to student teachers on a voluntary basis, HEIs typically offer guidance, run information days, and other forms of support to build capacity to respond to the new requirements. Among the activities a student teacher may participate in during placement (along with direct teaching of a designated class) are the following: structured observation and feedback, professional conversations with experienced teachers, and, critical reflection on practice. In the context of the theme of this study, also listed are the following activities: learning support and resource teaching, supported engagement with other professionals and with parents.

All students have to produce an inquiry-oriented study focusing on practice as a preparation for career-long commitment to research and reflective practice.



