

**From ex-quota to in-quota: An analysis of guidance counsellors'
perceptions of the impact of 2012 budgetary cutbacks on their
care work across different school types.**

by

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DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
GT	Association of Guidance Teachers
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
C&C	Community and Comprehensive
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CDVEC	City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DE	Department of Education
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science / Skills
DfE	Department for Education (UK)
DH	Department of Health
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board
FES	Free Education Scheme
GEI	Guidance Enhancement Initiative
HE	Higher Education
HSE	Health Service Executive
IAEEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ICG	Institute of Career Guidance (UK)
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
IVGCI	Institute of Vocational Guidance and Counselling of Ireland
JMB	Joint Managerial Body
LAA	Local Area Authority
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied

NAPD	National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NCGS	National Council of Guidance Services
NCS	National Children's Strategy
NEETS	(Teenagers) Not in Education or Training (UK)
NGF	National Guidance Forum
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education (UK)
PESP	Programme for Economic and Social Progress
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSE	School Self-evaluation
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
UCD	University College Dublin
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VSS	Vocational Secondary School
WSE	Whole School Evaluations

ABSTRACT

From ex-quota to in-quota: An analysis of guidance counsellors' perceptions of the impact of 2012 budgetary cutbacks on their care work across different school types – Liam Harkin.

Baker's equality discourse (2004, 2009) and Lynch's affective care dialogue (2002, 2007, 2009) informed this study on the impact of budgetary cutbacks on guidance in Irish schools, which found that uneven guidance reductions, primarily between fee-charging schools and schools in the Free Education Scheme (FES), resulted in an unequal distribution of care and a negative student care experience. From its inception in the 1970s, guidance in Irish schools had a holistic, equality agenda, and it is discussed as one means of reducing the impacts of many inequalities in schools. While guidance in all schools helps students make choices in their lives, the thesis showed that it operated differently in fee-charging schools and FES schools, with greater demands from students for help with personal decision-making and counselling in FES schools and by contrast a greater emphasis on educational decision-making and career decision-making in fee-charging schools. Factors such as social class, familial habitus, parent-power, cultural, social and economic capitals, and institutional habitus were shown to influence young people and their parents' decision-making, and in turn the guidance provided in schools. Care was not distributed equally across all school types. The study demonstrated that students in FES schools experienced compromised care, due to a large reduction in counselling appointments. With a reported rise in student mental health issues, the demand for counselling in FES schools increased, but as these schools prioritised career guidance, counselling was neglected, the quality of the service suffered and it became a reactionary crisis-intervention service, mirroring the trivialisation and neglect of the affective in education (Lynch, 2009). Managing greater care demands with less time resources also increased guidance counsellors' stress. The change from an ex-quota to an in-quota guidance allocation thus had an unequal impact across schools and a negative impact on the quality and distribution of student care in some school types.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

One of the most radical and fundamental changes in guidance policy and delivery in second level schools in Ireland in four decades was the catalyst for this thesis. Essentially, the method used to allocate guidance resources (i.e. guidance hours) by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to second level schools changed. The change was introduced by the government as a cost-saving measure in Budget 2012, and came into effect in September 2012.

There were three key features in the guidance allocation system which was replaced. Firstly, the original system which had been in situ from 1972, was centralised, standardised and based on student enrolment; with one full-time guidance counsellor post allocated by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for every 500 students. This changed to a localised one where the school principal individually now decides on how best to allocate the “appropriate guidance” (DES 1998, Para. 9c) resources for the school. The second key feature of the former system, was that the provision of guidance resources in Irish second-level schools was based on an ‘ex-quota’¹ guidance allocation which meant that it was largely protected from local timetabling constraints. The third key feature of the ex-quota arrangement was that there were different allocation schedules for fee-

1

The term ‘ex- quota’ has been used extensively in education in Ireland to describe a post that has been allocated in addition to or outside the schedule of teaching posts allocated to a school and includes the posts of Deputy Principal and Principal. In 1972, the then Department of Education (DE) granted ex-quota status to guidance *teachers* (sic) in schools with more than 250 pupils, and this provided a minimum of 12 hours guidance per week outside of the teaching allocation. In 1983, budget cutbacks resulted in a doubling of the number of students required for a school to receive an ex-quota guidance allocation from 250 to 500 students. That revised system remained in place until the beginning of the 2012-13 school year. See Appendix B for full details.

charging² schools and schools fully supported by the state in the Free Education Scheme (FES). FES schools received a larger guidance allocation than fee-charging schools.³ This ex-quota allocation was set out in DES Circulars, and the two most relevant of these are provided in Appendix C. Chapter Two and Appendix B provide a full discussion of the development of policy in Ireland in relation to guidance allocations.

There were some situations which merited additional guidance allocations in a minority of schools, and these were linked with educational disadvantage. For example, in 2005 an additional guidance allocation was introduced to schools which were specifically targeted under the 2005 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative as having high concentrations of students enrolled from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The situation changed in December 2011 with the announcement in the Budget that the ex-quota guidance allocation would be abolished with effect from the beginning of the school year 2012-13. The then Minister for Education Ruairí Quinn explained that he had no alternative to the change as he sought a four per cent cut in the nine billion euro education budget (Quinn, 2012). In early 2012, school principals received notification that any additional guidance allocations, such as DEIS were also being terminated with effect from September 2012 (Appendix C).

² The more accurate term 'fee-charging' was first used in an official DES report in 2013 (see DES, 2013b) to describe schools which were formally called 'fee-paying' schools, and is the preferred term in this thesis.

³ For instance, a FES school with an enrolment of 400 pupils had an ex-quota guidance allocation sanctioned by the DES of 17 hours per week, whilst a 400-pupil fee-charging had a smaller ex-quota guidance allocation of 11 hours.

Effectively the changes in the allocation arrangements had the same impact as an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio from 19:1 to 19.8:1. In simple terms, the pupil-teacher ratio is not about how many pupils are in a classroom, but rather how many teachers are allowed to be employed in a school. Under the 1983-2012 arrangements, schools were entitled to employ guidance counsellors in addition to the number of teachers allocated, but post-September 2012 they had to be provided from within the school's teacher allocation, with the responsibility for deciding on the appropriate guidance resources for each school being given to school principals.

Introduction to the Research

First of all, in this chapter I outline the context, rationale and methodology used for a study of guidance counsellors' perceptions of the impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation across different school types and its impact on the affective care of students and their well-being. Secondly, I locate the study in the context of current debates in relation to habitus and agency of students and teachers, equality, social disadvantage, care and care labour. Thirdly, I outline the content of the chapters that follow.

The focus of my research was on exploring the perceptions and experiences of Irish guidance counsellors, in different school settings, during the 2012-13 school year, when the provision of guidance in second-level schools in Ireland changed fundamentally. The research themes were initially suggested by a three-stage Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) audit of guidance in 2013, which showed that there was a 59% reduction in one-to-one guidance appointments in schools as a result of the cutbacks and that the reduction in guidance was not equally spread across all school types.

My Aims in this Research

Being an audit, the 2013 IGC study was purely quantitative and the results gave rise to two major research questions for me: firstly, it did not provide any reasons for the reported unequal reduction in guidance across different school types, and secondly it did not explore why the one-to-one element of guidance was so adversely affected. My intention in this thesis was to provide some answers to these questions.

I realised that this would involve constructing and conducting both qualitative and quantitative dialogues in an attempt to understand the impact of the changes discussed above. Reflecting firstly on the unequal reduction in guidance across different school types, it struck me that there must have been some underlying reasons for these differences, and this line of questioning led to discourses on inequality and equality. In giving some consideration to the 59% reduction in one-to-one appointments, I thought that student care and well-being was one area that might have been impacted. I believed that it would be worthwhile investigating the work of guidance counsellors in the context of affective care in schools.

This study is based on both quantitative and qualitative research, with a greater emphasis on the qualitative, and I was effectively the primary data collection 'instrument'. Having noted that in the research literature, writers such as Creswell (2009) advocated "the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases", (p.196), one of the first tasks I set myself was to ask myself where I was positioned in relation to my planned research.

My own perceptions and experiences of guidance have been shaped by my personal experiences working as a guidance counsellor for the past 18 years. I qualified in guidance in 1996, and then worked as a fulltime guidance counsellor in a private

fee-charging second-level school in South County Dublin for three years. I was then seconded to the DES for a year from 1999 to 2000, where I worked as a Development Officer for guidance in the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE). After this, I moved to rural Co. Donegal to take up a post as a fulltime guidance counsellor in a very large co-ed community school which has DEIS status. This school is located in a Partnership⁴ area of extreme rural disadvantage (Haase, 2006) where I still work 14 years later. I completed a MSc. in Guidance and Counselling in 2004, where my thesis explored '*Student perceptions of guidance counselling and the guidance counsellor's role*'.

My former job as guidance counsellor in a private urban fee-paying single-sex secondary school and my current employment in a rural DEIS co-ed community school offer intriguing and contrasting perspectives on guidance. This wide and varied experience at both ends of the social spectrum has given me a unique first-hand understanding and an acute sensitivity to the different ways guidance operates in schools depending on their institutional habitus. I believe that it enhances my awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to many of the issues that emerged in this study.

Particular challenges related to bias.

Much of the literature on research methodology emphasises the importance of considering the self as a researcher and with regard to the research topic. It would be highly unlikely if the 18 years that I spent working in different guidance settings did not influence my thinking and practices. My experience has very probably also influenced my data collection and data analysis processes. Equally, my experience

⁴ The term 'Partnership' is used to describe specific geographic areas of social and economic disadvantage in Ireland under Pobal, where special rural development and social inclusion programmes and initiatives are in place.

has inevitably brought certain biases and possible blind-spots to this study.

Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity, these biases may have subconsciously shaped the way I viewed, organised and understood the data I collected and the way I interpreted participants' experiences and perceptions.

In conducting this research and in its analysis, I tried to remain very conscious at all times that I was not working as a guidance counsellor or advocating for guidance counsellors, rather that I was a researcher whose aim was to conduct research using objective methods and procedures. Therefore, I had to continually reflect on my stance and the research methodology I was using, to eliminate any hint of bias. When it came to analysis, I had to adopt a neutral position and avoid any distortion of the data to serve my interests, prejudices and arguments.

Researchers need to find ways to guard against their own biases in order for their research strategy to be credible (Patton, 1990). The researcher can for example foreground their prejudices and assumptions clearly at the outset, which is what I have done here. Other suggestions involve participant validation and working closely with supervisors (Rajendran, 2001). In this respect I sought written feedback from participants in both phases of the pilot research; this feedback is detailed in Chapter Three. In addition, throughout the research process, my thesis supervisors played a key role in helping me become more aware of my biases, in assisting me in correcting my false interpretations, in encouraging me to consider alternatives, and in locating blind spots and omissions.

Definitions / Terminology

It is important from the outset that there is clarity of understanding of the terms used in this thesis, therefore the terms *guidance*, *guidance counsellor* and *guidance counselling* need some clarification and definition.

Guidance in an Irish context has been defined in several different ways over the past two decades and there is a large degree of overlap and indeed agreement between these definitions. In 1996, the joint National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)/DES ‘*Guidelines for the Practice of Counselling and Guidance in Schools*’ described guidance as “the full range of interventions which assist pupils to make ...choices about their lives” (p. 4) in the three key areas of personal and social, educational and career. The White Paper on Adult Education (Ireland, 2000a) referred to guidance as a ‘range of activities designed to assist people to make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices’ (p.156).

In 2004, the definition evolved to encompass both of these attempts, with NCGE describing guidance in the educational context as ‘a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, designed to assist students to make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices’ (NCGE, 2004, p.12).

In 2005, in an attempt to highlight the holistic nature of guidance in Ireland, the DES added the following words to the 2004 definition: “it encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance” (DES, 2005a, p.4). The DES defined counselling separately as:

The empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties they may be experiencing. Counselling in schools may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or combinations of these (p. 4).

While several other definitions of guidance exist (OECD, 2004, p. 15; Sultana, 2004, p. 24; Wannan & McCarthy, 2005, p. 11; National Guidance Forum, 2007b, p. 4), these definitions refer to guidance in all stages and areas of life, including school, work, unemployment and retirement. As this thesis relates to guidance in second level education in Ireland, these definitions are not considered as being directly related to the research.

Some confusion may arise with the co-existence of the terms “*guidance and counselling*”, “*guidance counselling*” and “*guidance*” in the literature. Over the past decade in Ireland, these terms have come to be regarded as being synonymous with each other. In 2004, NCGE made the decision to use just one term “guidance” for reasons of consistency and simplicity when it published ‘Planning the School Guidance Programme’: “the terms ‘guidance counselling’ and ‘guidance and counselling’ are both understood as being covered and included in this definition” (NCGE, 2004, p. 12). Since the publication of this report, the term “guidance” has superseded the other terms and for reasons of clarity is the term used in this research.

Guidance counsellor is the professional title used by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), the representative body for guidance counsellors in Ireland, to describe the role of the lead person delivering the guidance service in schools.

My personal understanding of guidance.

Before leaving the matter of definitions of ‘guidance’, I feel that it is appropriate that I should clearly state my own understanding of the term ‘guidance’ as this perception could undoubtedly have an impact on the research undertaken. I have long-held the view that guidance in Irish second-level schools is holistic in nature. I see the three elements of guidance – the educational, the personal and the career

as being inextricably linked. Indeed I would argue that this multi-faceted model of guidance is its main strength. For instance I have had numerous experiences over the years where a student asked for an appointment about revising career options, only for the most pertinent issue to be a complete lack of study, which in turn was due to the student working many hours in a part-time job due to financial pressures in the family. In my opinion, having a holistic guidance service in schools removes the stigma which is often associated with seeking help for mental illness, depression, and self-harming. The student can very easily seek help under the guise of career or educational guidance and other students or teachers are none the wiser. Chapter Two and in Appendix B provide more detailed information on the development of guidance in Ireland.

Aims and Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this study was to explore guidance counsellors' perceptions and lived experiences of change in schools during the year immediately after the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation.

Specifically, the research aimed to achieve this through investigating:

- changes in the practice and delivery of guidance across different school types.
- changes in the roles and responsibilities of guidance counsellors, including their changed work environment / conditions.

The experiences of other education stakeholders, such as students and parents were deliberately not included for the following reason. In Ireland, recent research has found that guidance (particularly career guidance) is concentrated on Senior Cycle in Irish schools (McCoy et al., 2010) with a particular focus on Sixth Year (Smyth et al., 2011). Based on this finding, it was felt that if students and their parents were

consulted, many of them would only be in a position to pass judgement on the guidance service provided in their current school year (2012-13), and that they would not be in a position to judge whether it was any different than in previous years.

Arising out of these aims, there were two objectives for the thesis, these were to explore guidance counsellors' views on:

- the impact of the guidance allocation changes across different school types
- the impact of the guidance allocation changes on student care.

Theoretical Discourses

The two main theoretical discourses underpinning the thesis are based around the two quite separate notions of equality (Baker et al., 2004) and affective care (Lynch et al. 2009, 2007; O'Brien, 2005b; Folbre & Bittman, 2004; Badgett & Folbre, 1999). In this thesis I develop a three-way conversation involving these concepts and guidance in schools, as a means of understanding some of the impacts that the changed guidance allocation system has brought about.

Guidance is easily conceptualised in different ways to link in with the concepts of equality and affective care. With regard to an equality agenda, and the significant reduction in one-to-one guidance (59%) as a result of the cutbacks (IGC, 2013b), it is inequality of love, care and solidarity in schools, as mediated by counselling that is a prime concern in this thesis - although educational⁵ and career guidance⁶ are also given consideration. Guidance in Irish second-level schools does not operate in

⁵ Helping students with educational decision-making (e.g. choices related to examination subjects and levels).

⁶ Helping students with career decision-making (e.g. choices related to progression and transition to third level or the world of work).

a vacuum, but rather is positioned at the nexus of decision-making for students and their parents, where choices with regard to education and career are made relative to social class, familial habitus, capitals and institutional habitus. Different emphases on guidance between some school types are scrutinised, and the impact across school types from the changed guidance allocation is discussed.

As regards affective care, guidance is conceptualised in terms of personal guidance and counselling, and can be understood within feminist discourses of care labour (Lynch et al. 2007, 2009; O'Brien, 2005b; Folbre & Bittman, 2004; Badgett & Folbre, 1999). The trivialisation and neglect of the affective in educational research (Lynch, 2009) is seen to be mirrored in the neglect of personal guidance and counselling in schools under the new guidance allocation arrangements.

While equality and affective care have been discussed in the research literature in relation to education, these concepts have not been linked to guidance before. In this thesis, the aim was to use these models, to help to analyse guidance in schools as it functions and is understood, linking guidance to the equality and care scholarship for the first time. These discourses are examined in Chapter Three.

Outline of the Thesis

This section provides an outline of the organising framework for the thesis. The research is presented in six further chapters, and these are now described briefly.

Chapter two.

This chapter provides relevant background on the development of the guidance and counselling service in Ireland, which from the start had a holistic focus on the three linked areas of guidance: personal, educational and career guidance. The chapter examines how policy on guidance allocations in Irish second-level schools was

developed over the years and benchmarks the 2012 changed guidance allocation policy against similar policies from other countries.

Chapter three.

This chapter comprises a literature review in two thematic parts. The first section looks at inequalities across different school types with a particular focus on guidance. It is guided by several discourses on equality, notably the equality framework developed by John Baker et al. (2004); it draws upon the concepts of habitus and capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977); it explores class-influenced decision-making in schools through the lenses of Bernstein (1970, 1971), Lareau (1987, 1989, 2003) and others. Smyth and Banks' recent research (2012) is then scrutinised, as it draws together the notions of individual, familial and institutional habitus and shows their differing influences on student behaviour and decision-making across middle-class and working class schools. Smith and Banks also found that while guidance in Irish fee-charging schools was more concerned with career and educational decision-making, guidance in FES schools had a greater emphasis on counselling.

The second section of the literature review examines the literature on affective care and care labour as a means of providing a framework for understanding student care and well-being in schools. A strong argument is made for how care in schools can be impacted by changes in resources, principally of time, but also of emotion. There is a particular focus on Kathleen Lynch's (2009) work on how the affective domain has been somewhat neglected and trivialised in education as how this ties in with the collapse in counselling in the FES sector of Irish second-levels schools since September 2012. Given that time for one-to-one appointments was reduced (IGC 2013b), there is a discussion on the increase in mental health issues among teenagers, coupled with the increased demand for counselling services. The

unforeseen effects on the guidance counsellor of this increase in demand, and the reduced resources available to the care-giver are also explored.

Chapter four.

This chapter describes in detail the research approach and methods that were used. It explains the research context, the methodologies chosen for the research and the rationale for choosing these approaches. Ethical considerations are outlined, the two-phase mixed methods research design is explained, and the research participants are described. The sampling procedures and the data collection methods in each phase are detailed. The procedures for data analysis are clarified and quality assurance is considered.

Chapter five.

This chapter presents the findings for research question one: '*What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?*'

The aim was to establish if the changed method of allocating guidance hours had the same or differing impacts across different school types. The school types under scrutiny were:

- 'historical' school types, defined in terms of school ownership and management: these were Voluntary Secondary Schools, Education and Training Board (formerly Vocational Educational Committee) Schools and Community and Comprehensive Schools;
- single sex schools v. co-educational schools;
- DEIS schools v. non-DEIS schools;
- fee-charging schools v. schools in the FES.

The data in this chapter are a mix of quantitative and qualitative elements, and are derived mostly from the first phase of research – the online survey.

Chapter six.

This chapter presents the findings from both phases of the research for research question two: '*What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in second-level schools?*' The findings of the mostly qualitative data are described.

Chapter seven.

This chapter brings the thesis to a close with a summary and discussion of the findings followed by conclusions. The findings for both research questions are discussed and analysed separately. The contribution of the thesis to the scholarship on equality and care is considered. Several suggestions for future research are offered and various recommendations to policy stakeholders are made.

CHAPTER TWO:
GUIDANCE AND GUIDANCE POLICY.

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The thesis explores guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of how the guidance cutbacks have impacted across different school types, and how they have had a bearing on the care of students in schools over the course of the school year 2012-13. In this chapter I give some important background information which seeks to inform the reader on guidance and guidance policy, it is in four sections:

- 1) In the first section I explain the development of the holistic model of guidance in Irish schools;
- 2) In the second section I look at the development of guidance policy in Ireland;
- 3) In the third section I examine current best practice internationally in relation to guidance allocations, and
- 4) In the fourth section I review recent research in Ireland on the new method of allocating guidance resources to schools.

The Development of a Holistic Model of Guidance in Ireland

In this first section of this chapter, I provide some important background and contextual information to enable the reader to fully understand the role of guidance counsellors in Irish second level schools, by examining how the guidance counsellor role developed over the last fifty years. I explain how guidance allocations to second-level schools originated and developed. I follow this with a description of the unique Irish model of guidance and counselling, and I give an account of the professionalization of guidance and the emergence of the IGC, the representative body for guidance counsellors.

A historical perspective on the development of guidance in Ireland.

When examining policy development, Haddad and Demsky (1995) emphasize the importance of taking a “historical and evolutionary perspective on the dynamics of policies across time” (p. 29). Following this logic, one can get a better sense of why guidance was being advocated in Ireland for the first time in the 1960s and how the role of the guidance counsellor in post-primary schools developed since then.

Pre-World War II, few people in Ireland gave much thought to the notion of choosing an occupation as “jobs were limited and people generally lived and died where they were born” (Casey, 1969, p. 1). However in the United States at this time, guidance theories and practices had become quite developed, notably Parsons’ Talent Matching Model where a person’s abilities were matched with the skills needed to do a particular job. The most salient feature of early guidance theories such as Parson’s, was that once a person was matched with a suitable job, it was assumed that this job would remain suitable for life. This thinking was also common on mainland Europe where the focus of the limited guidance services was on getting a job at the end of compulsory schooling (Reuchlin, 1964).

In the post war years, and particularly in the US, the understanding of guidance was broadened (Gambert, 1962), to include “educational guidance, vocational information, individual assistance to pupils for guiding them generally in life and, finally, advice on the choice of a vocation” (p. 4). It was this broader American notion of guidance encompassing the educational, the personal and the vocational that became the blueprint for the type of service that emerged in Ireland in the 1960s.

It was also in the US that the role and job title ‘guidance counsellor’ first became defined. The role was established in order to meet the needs of pupils “disoriented

by large impersonal schools and by frequent family movement” (Ó Conchubhair, & Ó Gormáin, 1968, p. 38). This quotation shows that the focus was on the personal needs of students as much as on career guidance. It was this American job title ‘guidance counsellor’ which became the preferred term in Ireland, rather than the more limited title of ‘careers teacher’ that had become commonplace in the UK.

In continental Europe in the early 1960s, guidance gradually came to be regarded as a continuous process, an “intrinsic part of education” (Ó Conchubhair & Ó Gormáin, 1968, p. 39) and not just a one-off event at the end of second-level schooling. There was a preoccupation with ‘le cycle d’orientation’ during the first few years of post-primary education where a student’s progress and achievements were recorded, and where the student was helped make informed decisions on his/her vocational choices at the end of this ‘cycle’.

The influence of psychology on the development of guidance in Ireland.

Staffed by psychologists, Ireland’s first Child Guidance Clinic, opened in 1955 by the Brothers of St. John of God, was an important milestone in the development of the country’s mental health services. (McLoone, 1998, p. 213). Then in 1965, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap recommended the establishment of a schools psychological service, and significantly it was to be located within the Department of Education (DE) – not within the Department of Health (Ireland, 1965).

An international report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1966 was important in the development of a school-based guidance service in Ireland. It recommended that a career guidance service should be established in all second-level schools in Ireland. There was a gradual

recognition by the DE that training would be required to provide the personnel to deliver the service. A detailed chronology of the main developments in guidance training from the late 1950s until 2013 is given in tabular format in Appendix A. It is clear from this chronology that the role and influence of psychologists was “significant” (Cassells, 2006) from the very start.

The influence of psychologists on the development of guidance in Ireland can also be seen in the collaboration between the Psychology Department in University College Dublin (UCD) and the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) in 1964, to provide some minimum training for guidance teachers to work in its schools. The Psychological Service set up by the DE in 1965 “under its own mandate” (Murray, 2013, p. 41), was headed up by two psychologists. Its brief was “to provide a guidance service to the newly established comprehensive schools, to develop standardised tests, and to conduct research” (Crowley, 2007, p. 181). According to Murray (2013), the Psychological Service played an important role in influencing DE policy to abandon a plan for careers teachers with minimum training and accept “the concept of the professionally trained guidance counsellor” (p. 46). Later on, once guidance counsellors were trained, psychologists withdrew from direct involvement in schools, and then provided guidance counsellors with support through the Psychological Service.

It is worth noting that from the sixties through to the eighties, the guidance inspectors in the DE used the designation “Guidance Services Inspector /Psychologist” (Moran, 1977, p.33) to describe their role. These qualified educational psychologists “or inspectors of guidance services, as they are also known, are nominally responsible for supervising the work of guidance counsellors and for assisting them in a consultative and advisory capacity” (Shiel & Lewis, 1993, p. 7). One of the last references to this term was in 1985, when it turned up in

a written answer by the Minister of Education Gemma Hussey to a parliamentary question in Dáil Éireann from L.T. Cosgrave (Ireland, 1985). This widespread usage of the term psychologist over several decades illustrates that psychology and counselling were regarded as being intrinsic elements of the guidance service.

In the first full-time training course in Guidance in Ireland – the Diploma in Career Guidance, which started in UCD in 1967, the emphasis was very firmly on psychology and counselling. The list of course modules demonstrates this, as only one of the ten modules offered was on career decision-making, compared to six which were rooted in psychology. These were listed by Teeling, Hussey and Casey (2013) as “General Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Educational Psychology, Emotional Development, Vocational Development, Psychology of Individual Differences, Counselling Principles & Techniques, The Interview, Testing, Cumulative Records and Educational Organisation” (p. 87).

Affective care at the core of the Irish model of guidance.

Given these strong psychological influences, it is not surprising that affective care of students grew to become such a central feature of the guidance service in Irish schools, with counselling being an intrinsic component of the guidance service from its inception. The DE had a holistic, person-centered, US-style of guidance service in mind: “guidance in the broad sense is much more than career or vocational advice, it sets out to help people to make the most of their opportunities and to develop as persons” (Ó Conchubhair and Ó Gormáin, 1968, p. 34).

The Institute of Vocational Guidance and Counselling of Ireland (IVGCI) also envisaged the emerging school guidance service as providing a broad service with a person-focused remit:

For the young person, a realistic self-concept, self-determined yet responsible choices at all stages as well as at career stage, a well-adjusted adult who finds his maximum satisfaction in that way of life and personal satisfaction with life as a whole (Casey, 1969, p. 12).

The aims of the fledgling guidance service were impressive:

Guidance must begin the moment a student first enters the post-primary school ... (and) ... must continue right up to the time the student leaves school. Careful record is kept of his progress, and his parents are kept continuously informed about him. Where difficulties arise, the guidance service will call on the skills of all the teachers and other experts. Then, when the student is ready, he is helped, first to make *educational choices* (what courses and subjects to study), and, later, *vocational and career choices* [italics in original] (DE 1969, p. 24).

From the outset, the DE also had an equality agenda in mind, stating that the new guidance and counselling service needed to have an emphasis on ‘equality of opportunity’ (DE, 1969): “these changes are necessary if we are to attain our most urgent social and educational objective: “*equality of opportunity*” [italics in original] (p.1).

The service that materialized was one that was unique to Ireland in that it combined aspects of career guidance with counselling (Ryan, 1993) and was “a compromise between the American model which emphasises personal counselling and the European model which almost exclusively focuses on the narrower concept of career guidance” (p. 63). In other European countries, the concept of schools having a role in counselling and pastoral care was not commonplace; in fact the opposite was the case. In Germany for example, from World War II onwards, “the remit of the school decreased in favour of the family’s responsibility for personal and social education” (Norman, 2003, p. 67).

In Britain and in Ireland, there had long been a blurring of the distinction between guidance roles and pastoral care roles and both the Education Act (UK Parliament, 1988) in Britain and the Education Act (Ireland, 1998) illustrated clearly that personal and social development was seen as an important dimension to education, with teachers regarded as having a strong duty of care to their pupils. Norman (2003) found that the model of pastoral care in British comprehensive schools greatly influenced the development of pastoral care in Irish schools and uses the term “pastoral care professional” (p. 76) to describe the guidance counsellor role in Ireland.

The strong holistic and affective model of guidance that emerged in Irish schools should also be viewed in light of the dominance of religious-run schools at the time. In these schools, a strong pastoral care ethos existed and an informal counselling service was already being provided, largely by priests, nuns and brothers, many of whom went on to train as some of the first guidance counsellors.

As the early guidance practitioners set about defining their unique role in schools, the comments of Fr. John Bresnan, Chairperson of the newly-formed IGC, writing in 1977 are insightful, as they emphasise the affective and caring nature of the role:

It may seem repetitious to keep stressing the integral nature of guidance, but it is the key. Guidance is not merely remedial or preventative; it is above all developmental and cares for the adjustive phases of pupil growth (p. 6).

Tussing (1978) noted that the Irish guidance system was not developed solely for the “purpose of encouraging economic growth”, or for “preparing pupils for careers” (p.12). Chamberlain (1983) posited that it was the linking of vocational preparation with counselling and pastoral care that enabled the newly created role of guidance counsellor to be “readily accepted in Irish schools” (p. 480). However

there is some doubt as to how well guidance counsellors were actually accepted into schools, and there are hints to the tensions between principals and guidance counsellors, with Murphy (2000) opining that guidance counsellors “do have a credibility problem in being accepted as an important and essential part of the school team” (p. 11), with school managements “not entirely supportive” (p. 11) of the counselling element of the role.

In retrospect, it is clear that the Irish model of guidance was “most firmly based in post-primary education” (McCarthy, 1999), reflecting some of the earlier career development theories which viewed adolescence as the critical point of career decision making. This was based on the now outdated model of working life, where one’s enduring career choice was made at eighteen years of age. Since then however, lifelong guidance has begun to become more widely available, with the development of a network of regional adult guidance services, and with the expansion of non-formal guidance services in centres such as Youthreach.

The professionalization of guidance in Ireland.

To represent teachers working in the field of guidance, the Association of Guidance Teachers (AGT) was formed in 1968. This “Association enjoyed a high profile, as the media became interested in the work of the Guidance Teacher. Conferences addressed guidance issues, which attracted large audiences from around the country” (Cassells, 2006). Graduates of the UCD Higher Diploma in Careers Guidance had their own separate representative group, the IVGCI.

The two representative bodies merged in 1973 to form the National Council of Guidance Services (NCGS) and this new umbrella group represented all trained personnel working in guidance in post-primary schools. At the time, this was seen

as a very important development, as it ensured that there was one voice articulating the concerns and needs of all guidance counsellors.

In 1976, this organisation changed its name to the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), to reflect the increasing amount of personal guidance and counselling work being undertaken by its members. According to Cassells (2006), the IGC became firmly established countrywide through the work of its local branches and members were kept up to date with developments in the field of guidance and counselling through in-service initiatives and Annual General Meetings. Used extensively by members, the term 'guidance and counselling' gradually became commonplace in Ireland, and this emphasised and gave equal status to the counselling element of the role.

The development and acceptance of the term 'guidance counsellor' in Ireland.

It is interesting that in all its documentation, the official title given by the DE to the new posts in schools from 1972 onwards was "Guidance Teacher" while the majority of post holders preferred and used the term "Guidance Counsellor" (the title was always written in capitals until recently). Substituting the word counsellor for teacher was very important to practitioners in the IGC as it emphasised the caring and nurturing elements of the role as they saw it.

This title did not receive a universal welcome outside of the guidance community, with Christina Murphy, the influential Education Correspondent with the Irish Times, writing a provocative article for the IGC Journal where she berated the "elitism" of guidance counsellors for insisting on the use of this title, accusing them of "an unnecessary splitting of hairs" and of "trying to buy respectability by dubbing itself with a fancy, academic-sounding name" (Murphy, 1981, p. 11).

Policy Development in Guidance in Ireland

In the second section of this chapter I examine the development of guidance policy in Ireland. I scrutinise previous guidance cutbacks in 1983 and their effects, and I discuss how the development of policy around guidance allocations in Ireland displayed an increasing emphasis on disadvantage.

The beginning of the ex-quota guidance allocation.

In 1972 the DE changed fundamentally the way that guidance posts were allocated in schools and granted 'ex-quota' status to guidance *teachers* (sic) in schools with more than 250 pupils. This marked the start of three decades of developments in the area of guidance policy. The full details of these developments are given in Appendix B, and only the most noteworthy of these are discussed below.

From 1972, the allocation of guidance hours to schools was based on an ex-quota guidance allowance, where one full-time guidance counsellor post was sanctioned for every 250 pupils enrolled in a school. The most salient feature of this guidance allocation was that it was ex-quota, and was thus largely protected from individual school timetabling pressures or local constraints. In 1983, due to harsh economic circumstances, this allocation was reduced to 500:1. All schools received a schedule of ex-quota guidance hours per 100 students enrolled. This ex-quota allocation varied from 0.36 posts to 2 posts depending on school size. For example, a school with an enrolment of 500-599 received an allocation of 24 hours per week. There were different schedules for fee-paying schools and schools fully supported by the state. This allocation was set out in a Department Circular (Circular PPT 12/05 DES), which is presented in Appendix C.

Despite several campaigns by the IGC in the 1980s and 1990s, which attempted to reverse the 1983 cuts, the pre-1983 ratio of 250:1 was never re-introduced. In 1991,

the OECD called for more guidance counsellors to be recruited in Ireland, particularly for schools located in areas of disadvantage. In response, under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP)⁷ a phased programme was introduced which provided an ex-quota half guidance post (11 hours) in secondary and community schools with an enrolment of less than 500 (350-499 students) and on a pro-rata basis in Vocational Education Committee (VEC) schools (Ireland, 1991). This was the first time that any recognition was given to the increased guidance needs of students in schools with high concentrations of disadvantage.

Additional guidance allocations linked with disadvantage.

From 2000 onwards, any increased guidance allocation was dependent on factors such as a specific plan to use the increased allocation, or a school having a high concentration of disadvantage. There were two initiatives, the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI) and the DEIS⁸ Guidance Allocation. In 2001, the GEI began which allocated guidance hours with a specific disadvantage focus for the first time, to enable schools develop and strengthen links with business and the local community, target disadvantage and promote the choice of science subjects at senior cycle. Then in 2005, a new DEIS guidance allocation was announced as part of the Department's DEIS plan aimed to improve student attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment with "enhanced guidance counselling provision, targeted at supporting junior cycle students ... in second-level schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage" (DES, 2005b, p. 11).

⁷

PESP was one of several national social partnership pay agreements between the Government, the main employer groups and the trade unions.

⁸

DEIS: Developing Equality of Opportunity in Schools – a government education initiative launched in 2005. A 'DEIS school' is a school that has been given disadvantaged status under this scheme.

The 2012 budgetary change in guidance allocations.

Notwithstanding the additional guidance allocations largely targeted at disadvantage (GEI, DEIS), the situation with regard to mainstream guidance allocations in most schools remained unchanged for almost three decades until December 2011, with the announcement in the 2012 Budget that the ex-quota guidance allocation was being abolished with effect from the beginning of the school year 2012-13. As in 1983, this was an example of a policy decision being forced on a government due to external events – in both cases economic circumstances. In early 2012, school principals received notification from the DES in Circular 0009/2012 (DES, 2012) that all guidance allocations, including both the GEI and the DEIS guidance allocations were being terminated for economic reasons, with effect from September 2012:

As part of the budget measures guidance posts at post-primary level will no longer be allocated to any post-primary school on an ex-quota basis (i.e. the additional allocations for guidance provision is to be managed by schools from within their standard staffing schedule allocation. This circular supersedes all previous circulars in relation to the provision of guidance counselling hours in second-level schools (Section 4).

The circular also clarified that from September 2012, schools (principals and management authorities) had “a greater freedom to allocate and manage staff” for the provision of guidance to students (Section 4.2). The circular is presented in Appendix C.

In response, the main management bodies in Irish education⁹ jointly produced a framework document advising school principals and management authorities on how best to provide guidance in their schools under the new staffing arrangement. Its interpretation was that “resources may now have to be deployed differently in order to achieve the outcomes desired for students” (ACCS/IVEA/JMB/NAPD, 2012, Section 2.0). Interestingly, the joint document continued to view guidance holistically and recommended that no single component should be prioritised: “it should be borne in mind that good guidance is essentially holistic. Thus guidance should not be separated into its component parts - personal guidance versus vocational and educational guidance” (ibid, Section 3.0).

With regard to one-to-one time with students, the recommendation in Circular 0009/2012 is informative. It advised that school authorities should “ensure that the guidance counsellor has 1.1 time towards meeting the counselling needs of students experiencing difficulties or crisis” (Section 4.3). In interpreting this recommendation for school principals and management authorities, the joint document strongly advised (by using bold and underlining in the typeface) that:

The amount of time that a school should allocate for one-to-one counselling is something that has to be determined by each school management, following consultation with the Guidance Counsellor – having regard to all relevant factors at play in a particular school, at a particular time (Section 10.0).

The joint document was published and sent to all school managers in May 2012. It strongly emphasised that it was non-prescriptive and that it was up to each

9

The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA), the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) and the National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).

principal/ management authority to comply with the requirements to provide “appropriate guidance” under Section 9(c) of the Education Act as they saw fit:

Ultimately, however, each school will have different needs, circumstances and resources and their decisions will have to take full account of these. In the matter of guidance counselling provision, one size certainly does not fit all (Section 13.0).

Research, Best Practice and Policy in Relation to Guidance Allocations

In this third section of the chapter I examine relevant research, best practice, and policy statements regarding guidance allocations, from an Irish and international perspective, in order to provide a benchmark with which to assess guidance counsellors’ experiences of guidance changes in their schools during 2012-13.

The literature shows that the Budget 2012 decision to eliminate ring-fenced guidance resources in post-primary schools goes against many aspects of best practice in guidance. Firstly, recent studies show that more, not less guidance is frequently requested by students and one-to-one guidance is preferred to online or classroom-based guidance. Secondly, the Irish government's policy decision has been shown to go against several existing national and international guidance policies and decisions. Thirdly, devolved responsibility for guidance to schools in other countries has proven problematic. These three sub-themes are now explored in detail.

Research on student preferences regarding access to guidance.

Research in other countries has found that young people are generally not satisfied with the amount of career guidance available to them to assist with their decision-making in school and would like more help, not less (Keys et al., 1998; Maychell et al., 1998). In Ireland, Smyth and McCoy (2011) reported similar findings where

students expressed positive perceptions about career learning experiences in school but were critical of the limited time available for individual career appointments:

Students were particularly disappointed with the lack of time given to guidance counselling at school. Many felt that their guidance counsellors were over-burdened combining their teaching work and role as guidance counsellor. The interviews highlight insufficient time allocation for guidance and guidance-related activities and students appear to be missing out on the guidance and counselling they need (p. 181).

Ironically, the 2012 budgetary decision runs contrary to recommendations from an earlier DES report (DES, 2009) which advocated increased guidance at Junior Cycle, where: “in approximately half of the schools, the guidance provision in the Junior Cycle was limited” (p. 46).

Similarly, the National Guidance Forum (2007a) had recommended an increase in access to career guidance activities at Junior Cycle two years earlier:

Guidance services in second level schools need to be available and to be seen to be available for students in the Junior Cycle and for those who are less academic, as well as for those who intend to go to university (p. 17).

This recommendation reflected similar recommendations from an earlier report on guidance needs in schools by Ryan (2000) who found that there was a definite need for a comprehensive guidance service for early school leavers, particularly the need for access to psychological and other specialist services. Neither the 2007 recommendation, nor the 2000 one was implemented.

One-to-one engagement preferred to online access.

In what can be seen as an attempt to pre-empt anticipated difficulties in providing guidance to pupils in schools under the new arrangements, the DES put forward a suggestion to principals by way of a Circular (DES, 2012) that schools should

provide more access to online career information, “to enable students to use directly the extensive range of guidance tools available through the internet from relevant websites” (p. 5) as an alternative to face-to-face guidance. Research by MacAllum et al. (2007) however, suggests that this type of guidance provision would not have the desired impact. They found this to be particularly true for students in disadvantaged schools. The research found that even though much of the information that students seek is readily available via the Internet and other published sources, it is less accessible and less comprehensible for students in disadvantaged schools than for middle income students. MacAllum et al. concluded that while students from disadvantaged schools and their families would benefit from additional information and resources, they would also benefit from assistance in interpreting and using the information.

In fact, similar concerns were expressed by The House of Commons Education Committee (2013) that UK schools were relying too much on careers information websites rather than providing personal one-to-one guidance:

They cannot, however, replace face-to-face guidance, nor are they sufficient in themselves to fulfil the requirement on schools to provide independent, impartial guidance ... the signposting of independent websites is insufficient to meet their statutory duty (p. 27).

The 2012 guidance allocations policy viewed in relation to other national policy goals national policy goals and obligations.

It would appear that the Budget 2012 government decision on guidance allocation runs counter to stated public policy goals and the legal obligations of the State in relation to the provision of guidance in schools. Section 9(c) of the Education Act (1998) placed a legal requirement on schools to “ensure that students have access

to appropriate guidance”. The implications of this one sentence remained vague for several years, until the DES issued clarification “Guidelines” (DES, 2005a), which showed schools how to develop and plan a holistic school guidance programme. In this regard, McCarthy (2012) was of the opinion that the guidance allocation changes “made a mockery of the Act and of the Guidelines” (p. 7):

Given the Budget decision to withdraw the ex-quota staff resource for guidance in schools, the Guidelines are now just aspirational. It leaves schools with no way to turn the Education Act guidance requirement into a reality for students and parents (p. 7).

The decision to remove the ex-quota guidance counselling provision is also in conflict with Goal 3 of the National Children’s Strategy (NCS), which states that “children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development” (NCS, 2000b, p. 27). Since September 2012, schools have had greater difficulty providing the services advocated by the NCS:

When it is seen that a child is not coping, parents do not delay intervention but act quickly to prevent problems developing. These responses by parents can be characterised as positive, holistic, comprehensive and proactive. These are also the characteristics which should be reflected in the services provided to children by schools (p. 44).

When the Department of Education and Skills / Health Service Executive / Department of Health launched a new mental health policy for post-primary schools in 2013, they urged schools to utilise their existing guidance resources fully:

Schools need to maximise the use of their available resources for the provision of guidance and should seek to ensure that the guidance counsellor has time allocated for individual counselling with students experiencing difficulties or in crisis (p. 33).

However this utopian vision was not accompanied by any commitment to the provision of any additional guidance resources. Similar aspirational goals had been expressed in the Social Partnership Agreement “Towards 2016” (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006), where one of the aims was to “further develop measures to combat early school leaving and enhance attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment at primary and second-level” (p. 31). The agreement gave a nod towards equality by advocating that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities should be prioritised “by supporting schools and their communities to achieve equality in terms of educational participation and outcomes in line with national norms” (p. 42).

The 2012 guidance allocation policy viewed in relation to international resolutions and directives on guidance.

When one charts the key current international reference points for guidance policy, from the OECD, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Council of Europe and the Council of the European Union, it becomes apparent that the new Irish government policy on guidance allocation runs contrary to several international guidance policy statements. For example, it runs counter to current OECD (2012) policy articulation on guidance in schools:

The provision of guidance and counselling in second-level schools is vital to enable each pupil to gain the maximum benefit from the education system, and guidance counsellors have a particularly important role to play in advising second-level students on career options and on the related issue of appropriate subject choice (p. 47).

An earlier OECD report (2004) also highlighted the importance of career guidance provision in schools, saying that career services are necessary for making effective transitions both within education and from education to training and work. In 2004

member states of the ILO (including Ireland) agreed to “assure and facilitate, throughout an individual's life, participation in, and access to, vocational and career information and guidance, job placement services and job search techniques and training support services” (ILO, 2004, VIII,15a).

Ireland is also a signatory to the European Social Charter, (Council of Europe, 1996) where Article 9 refers to the right to free and effective vocational guidance services:

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to vocational guidance, the Parties undertake to provide or promote, as necessary, a service which will assist all persons, including the handicapped, to solve problems related to occupational choice and progress, with due regard to the individual's characteristics and their relation to occupational opportunity: this assistance should be available free of charge, both to young persons, including schoolchildren, and to adults (p. 9).

At EU level, a 2004 resolution of the Council of the European Union underlined the importance of career guidance in schools:

Guidance provision within the education and training system, and especially in schools or at school level, has an essential role to play in ensuring that individuals' educational and career decisions are firmly based, and in assisting them to develop effective self-management of their learning and career paths. It is also a key instrument for education and training institutions to improve the quality and provision of learning (p. 2).

The above quotations serve to outline how the 2012 budgetary changes to guidance allocation run counter to four distinct international declarations and resolutions, which Ireland has signed up to. Each of these in its own right, is illustrative of aspects of best practice in guidance.

Issues regarding devolved decision-making to schools on career guidance provision.

The 2012 government policy in relation to guidance allocation removed the onus and criteria for allocating guidance posts from the DES. It devolved the responsibility to each individual school principal to provide “appropriate guidance” (DES, 2005a, 1998) for each school. With regard to education policy, and indeed policy-making in general, Ireland, according to Smyth and McCoy (2011), often copies and adapts policies from other jurisdictions, which they term “policy borrowing” (p. 7). As this policy shift has already happened in other countries, it may prove insightful to look at how schools in these jurisdictions have dealt with devolved responsibility in relation to guidance. In this respect, McCarthy (2012) described it as “hit and miss” where “the discretionary approach promotes inequality of access to services ... and inequality in obtaining comparable career learning experiences and quality assured experiences” (p. 9).

In New Zealand, schools are now legally obliged to provide careers education but have the discretion to provide it as they see appropriate. The outcomes there have been largely negative: nearly all of the careers advisors are now part-time, untrained and unqualified, the secondary school completion rates are low and the public perception of the guidance service is negative (McCarthy, 2012; Watts, 2011).

In the Netherlands, schools are now given a grant to use at their discretion to provide career guidance. Schools invariably purchase this service from outside agencies or do not provide guidance. There is no quality assurance of this service and student perceptions of the service there are also very negative (McCarthy, 2012; Watts, 2011).

In England and Wales, the responsibility to secure careers advisors and deliver career guidance was devolved from local authorities to individual schools under the 2011 Education Act (UK) and schools are no longer required to provide careers education or one-to-one guidance. Under the new arrangements schools have the freedom to “decide what careers guidance services to make available for their pupils and whether or not to provide careers education” (Andrews, 2013, p. 14). If they decide to offer the service, they are required to purchase career guidance services from independent agencies, but pay for this out of their existing budgets. This has resulted in huge variability among the career learning experiences of students according to the school he/she attends (McCarthy, 2012).

According to Tristram Hooley, Head of the International Centre for Guidance Studies, many schools have cut the amount of careers guidance they offer and others have opted out of providing qualified careers advisers altogether:

As a result, eight out of 10 schools in England have reduced their careers advice. ... In one case, a school had switched from 65 days of careers advice a year from Connexions¹⁰ to just 16 days of bought-in services (Hooley, 2013, para. 3).

The Guardian’s Education Correspondent (Sheppard, 2011) described one secondary school in England where “only teenagers with special needs are to be given careers advice” (para. 13) and conveyed warnings from the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG) in the UK that careers advice for young people was becoming extinct, with ICG members fearing a further rise in the number of NEETS (teenagers not in education or training).

¹⁰

The Connexions Service was a youth support service in England which ran from 2000 – 2012 to provide ‘a smooth transition from compulsory schooling to post-16 learning’ and to the world of work.

Concerns were widely expressed in the UK in early 2013 that funding needed to be ring-fenced to ensure similar per pupil funding across all schools (COA News, Spring 2013). Andrews (2013) reported that some schools had given the career guidance role to “someone who is not qualified or trained” (p. 15), while others were providing “no access to careers guidance for their pupils” (p. 15). The 2013 report of the House of Commons Education Committee on the impact of the budgetary decisions on young people concluded that the guidance service to young people was deteriorating. It highlighted serious shortcomings in the implementation of the UK Government's policy of transferring responsibility for careers guidance to schools:

International evidence suggests such a model does not deliver the best provision for young people. The weaknesses of the school-based model have been compounded by the failure to transfer to schools any budget with which to provide the service. This has led, predictably, to a drop in the overall level of provision (p. 12-13).

In a damning assessment of the new statutory duty for schools to provide careers guidance, an official OfSTED (2013) report found that it was “not working well enough” (p. 2) as only 12 of the 60 schools inspected had ensured that “all students received sufficient information to consider a wide breadth of career possibilities” (ibid). Only 40% of parents thought that the school had helped their child make informed decisions about their post-16 options, while 30% had negative views. The report found that the weakness of the model was that the Department for Education (DfE) did not prescribe clearly enough the way that schools should provide students with independent and impartial guidance. A key finding from the small number of schools which did provide very effective careers guidance, was that in these schools, “leaders and governors had made careers guidance a high strategic priority” (p. 5).

Simms, Gamwell and Hopkins (2014) found that changes to the careers advice system in England had created a service with “profound gaps” (Para 4). They found that some schools were directing their students to websites to do all their own research because they knew that providing good careers advice was not crucial to pass government inspections:

There was a widespread view that careers provision would not ‘make or break’ an Ofsted judgement so some schools were content to rely largely on the website of the National Careers Service and argued that as long as they gave students time to explore the website that would be sufficient to demonstrate provision of careers advice (Para 7).

It appears therefore that the policy of devolution of responsibility for guidance provision to individual schools has been tried and tested in a number of countries in recent years, such as the England and Wales, New Zealand and The Netherlands. The outcomes have been unfavourable in terms of increased inequality of access, huge variability in career learning experiences for students, lack of quality assurance and negative perceptions by students and parents of the service. In summary, the main difficulty with devolving responsibility for guidance to schools is one of subjectivity, where “some managers may see guidance as being very important for the institution and its students [and] some may not” (McCarthy (2012, p. 4).

Research on Guidance in Ireland since 2012

In the fourth section of this chapter I report on the findings from the limited research conducted on guidance in Ireland since the method of allocating guidance resources to schools was changed in the 2012 Budget. Three research studies have been published on the impact of this change, while the preliminary findings from a

fourth study were released just before the thesis submission date. The first study was carried out by the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI), it took place after the budgetary announcement in early 2012, but before the implementation of the cuts. It explored principals' experiences and expectations of budgetary cutbacks in education, including guidance. The second piece of research consisted of a three-part audit of guidance in schools, carried out by the IGC (2013a, 2013b) subsequent to the changed guidance allocation. Third, a study by NCGE (2013) involved of a two-stage review of guidance counselling provision in second level schools. Fourth, preliminary findings from a Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI, 2013) survey were released in the month before the submission date for this thesis. The main findings from these four key research studies are now discussed.

ASTI research: 'Impact of austerity measures on second level schools: Survey of school principals' (2012).

The ASTI-commissioned survey of school principals, conducted in early 2012, before the guidance changes took place, provided a foretaste of what was to come: 71% of principals intended to reduce the hours allocated to guidance. Of the 29% of principals who intended to retain the existing hours, over a quarter of these (27%) intended to reduce the counselling service and focus the resources on career guidance, while 20% of schools intended to introduce an out-of-school counselling service. Asked to describe the impending changes, one principal of a DEIS school commented on how difficult it was to ensure that student care did not suffer:

This is a DEIS school. These students cannot get the extras outside of school (i.e. privately paid by them): guidance/career services, advice counselling and mental health services. The counsellor is the glue that keeps our student services working. Who is to take up the slack? The students will still need the care, direction, but the HSE is also cutting back. An impossible task (p. 32).

In hindsight, the results of the ASTI study show that what actually happened in schools was not entirely unexpected.

IGC research: ‘*National audit of guidance & counselling practice in second level schools in Ireland, 2011-2014: Report of findings, phase 3.*’

The IGC conducted a three-stage national audit of guidance in March 2012, October 2012 and October 2013. The IGC study is very important in terms of this thesis as the findings provided the impetus for me to come up with the two main research questions, directly related to its main findings. The IGC findings showed that there was a 58.8% reduction in the 2013-’14 school year in timetable allocation for one-to one appointments, a 21.4% reduction in guidance services and an increase of 19.8% in academic subject teaching by guidance counsellors. Another important finding was that the reduction in guidance hours was not evenly spread across all school types (p. 6), see Table 2.1.

Table 2.1:

Changes in Guidance Hours by School Type 2011 – 2013 (IGC, 2013)

School Type	% Reduction
Voluntary Secondary Schools*	- 25.5% *
ETB Vocational Schools/ Community Colleges*	- 24.5% *
Community and Comprehensive Schools*	- 22.8% *
Fee-Charging Schools	- 14.1%

* In the Free Education Scheme (FES)

The IGC concluded that “the uneven and disjointed service provision revealed in the audit demonstrates that the vulnerable and disadvantaged students are hurt most by the cuts” (p. 10). However, as the statistics for schools with disadvantaged status were not specifically examined as part of this study, it is unclear how the IGC was

able to make this claim. Furthermore, based on the findings in Table 2.1, there is no more than a 3% difference between the three school types in the FES.

The biggest difference in the guidance reduction was between schools in the fee-charging sector and the FES sector. In fee-charging schools, the guidance reduction was 14.1%, in contrast with an average reduction in the three FES sectors of 24.3%. While it was likely that a proportion of these FES schools were DEIS schools, it is impossible to substantiate the IGC claim, based on the evidence provided, but this possibility warranted further study and clarification. Ultimately, it was the finding regarding the 10% differential in reduced guidance between fee-charging schools and FES schools, which attracted my attention and set me thinking about exploring this aspect of the changed guidance allocation.

NCGE research: *‘Review of guidance counselling provision in second level schools, 2012-2013: Report of the findings.’*

NCGE also conducted a review of guidance counselling provision in second level schools in 2012-13 on behalf of the DES and the NCGE Management of Guidance Committee (NCGE, 2013). This research (conducted after the guidance allocation changes) found a mean decrease of 24 hours during 2011-12 and a further 17.8 hours during 2012-13. The study is important as it provided corroborative evidence for some of the quantitative findings in this thesis.

TUI research: *Untitled, unpublished.*

The TUI conducted a survey of guidance counsellors in 125 schools in a limited geographic area in 2014. Preliminary findings were released in the month before this thesis was submitted (Murray, 2014). As the TUI survey was conducted after the research for this thesis was completed, the preliminary findings were

scrutinized for any replication of findings. It was interesting that all the key findings from the TUI research were found to replicate findings from this thesis:

- There was a significant and worrying decrease in the overall capacity within schools to provide comprehensive and effective counselling support and career advice to post-primary students;
- There was an increase in reactive strategies and 'hit and miss', firefighting support as a direct consequence of the reduction in the time available for career guidance and counselling work;
- The time for counselling and guidance has been displaced in favour of curricular subjects;
- There was strong inconsistency in the level of services to students across schools;
- The provision of one-one guidance and counselling sessions to students was among the biggest casualties;
- It was impossible for guidance counsellors to do little more than the bare minimum given the constraints emerging from increased timetabled commitments.

Taken as a whole, the three pieces of research conducted in the aftermath of the changed guidance allocation during 2012-'13 provided valuable baseline data for the research questions in this thesis (as noted above the TUI research was published after this research was completed). They established that guidance allocations were reduced in most schools, that the one-to-one element of guidance (including counselling) was reduced by 59% overall and that the reduction in fee-charging schools was 10% more than in schools in the FES. As all of the data provided by these three studies were quantitative, this fact influenced my decision in this thesis to employ a more qualitative approach in contrast to the quantitative approach

taken in the above studies. A secondary aim was to see if some of the quantitative findings in these three studies would be replicated.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has shown how a holistic and affective model of guidance in Irish schools developed over time. It had strong roots embedded in psychology and pastoral care. From these beginnings a professional guidance counsellor role emerged in schools, where counselling was an intrinsic and even major component of the guidance training and the guidance service.

From the outset, guidance in Irish schools had an equality agenda in mind, with its social and educational objective of ‘equality of opportunity’. In an examination of policy developments in guidance in Ireland, the chapter looked at how a deficit understanding of disadvantage was shown to incrementally influence Irish government policies around the allocation of guidance resources to schools through the Guidance Enhancement Initiative in 2001 and the DEIS guidance allocation in 2005.

The decision to eliminate ring-fenced guidance resources in 2012, has been shown to conflict with national and international best practice, with studies showing that more, not less guidance is often requested by students. The chapter also demonstrated how the changed allocation arrangements for guidance and counselling services runs contrary to the Government’s stated social equity goals of ensuring that education and employment opportunities are distributed equitably.

The review of guidance policy has shown that the new policy runs contrary to several Irish reports which advocated increased, rather than reduced guidance provision (Ryan, 2000; NGF, 2007; DES, 2009; Smyth & McCoy/ESRI, 2011).

It also conflicts with the Education Act (1998), as well as policies such as the DEIS

programme, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the National Children's Strategy and the Social Partnership Agreement "Towards 2016." Equally, the budgetary decision has been shown to contradict recent international policies on guidance (OECD, 2004; ILO, 2004; European Social Charter, 1996) and a resolution of the Council of the European Union (2004).

A review of the recent international policy trend for devolving the responsibility for guidance provision to individual schools has shown that the outcomes in New Zealand, the Netherlands and England have been largely negative with increased inequality in guidance provision.

Recent research by the IGC and the NCGE confirmed that one-to-one guidance counselling has been reduced in schools and that the reduction is uneven across school types, with the biggest difference being between fee-charging schools and schools in the FES. Preliminary findings from TUI research also replicated the findings of this thesis.

Following on from this uneven reduction in guidance in schools, the literature reviewed in Chapter Three firstly examines discourses of disadvantage and inequality from a guidance perspective using an egalitarian lens, and broadens out the discussion to the reproduction of inequality in education in general.

Secondly, with one-to-one guidance appointments having been reduced by 59% (IGC, 2013b), the importance of student care in schools is also examined in the literature reviewed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE:
LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter Two, I presented the main findings of recent national research by the IGC, which found that the impact of the guidance cutbacks was not equal across school types (IGC, 2013a), and that there had been a 59% reduction in one-to-one counselling in schools in general (IGC, 2013b). These two findings provided the impetus for the current study and the two research questions, which were:

1. What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?
2. What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in second-level schools?

These two research questions formed the basis for a review of the literature which is in two parts, reflecting two themes:

- Inequalities across different school types, with a particular focus on guidance and decision-making in schools
- The importance of affective care provision in schools.

Overview of Chapter

In the first part of the literature review, I position guidance in dialogue with the problems of inequality for the first time. The IGC research findings got me thinking about guidance from an egalitarian perspective and motivated me to link my knowledge and experience of guidance with egalitarian theory.

In order to explore any unevenness in guidance provision, discourses around inequalities in schools are examined. I single out the ideas of Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh (2004) and Lynch, Baker, Cantillon and Walsh (2009) as best articulating these inequalities. I discuss guidance as an effective counterweight that

can provide a buffer to some inequalities in schools, in particular in relation to inequalities of love, care and solidarity.

Various definitions of disadvantage are explored. I discuss some of the factors associated with disadvantage and highlight some problems with the language and terminology used in the debate. I give an account of how the policy focus in Irish education moved gradually from deficit and disadvantage towards equality.

I scrutinise the discourse on how inequality in education is reproduced, in terms of economic, cultural, social and class reproduction, where my key focus is on Bourdieu's (1973) 'habitus' and 'capital' concepts.

As guidance essentially involves decision-making (see Chapter One), I discuss differences in educational and career decision-making across school types, taking in Bernstein's (1970, 1971) insight into restricted student choice, and Lareau's (1987, 1989, 2003) discourses around middle-class 'concerted cultivation'. I then consider different factors influencing educational decision-making, including social class and capitals, institutional habitus and career guidance.

In the second section of the literature review, which deals with the second research question, I explore the importance of affective care in schools. Chapter Two has demonstrated how guidance counsellors in Ireland are well positioned to support students in schools, in ways in which other staff members cannot, as evidenced by the strong psychological foundations of guidance in Ireland and the ongoing emphasis on personal counselling as an integral component of the guidance counsellor's role. The salience of the affective domain of equality in particular, struck a chord with my knowledge and experience of guidance in schools. In some ways it was stating the obvious to describe guidance in schools as an affective

concern, but no one has linked guidance to affective equality in this way in the research before.

I discuss counselling, caring and care labour in the second section of the chapter, and I make distinctions between care labour and other work. I show that the quality of affective care is linked with resource limitations of time and space.

Schools are identified as important locations for affective care and mental health provision, and given recent reported increases in mental health problems in Ireland and elsewhere, I illustrate the importance of counselling and guidance counsellors in schools. I report on findings from recent research on guidance in Ireland (conducted before the budgetary cutbacks), which showed that students were critical of the lack of time available for guidance in schools (McCoy, Byrne, O'Connell, Kelly & Doherty, 2010; Smyth, Banks & Calvert, 2011) and that individual guidance was preferred over classroom-based guidance (Smyth et al., 2011).

The Guidance-Inequality Dialogue Explored

In order to examine the first major theme of the research - any unevenness or inequality in guidance provision across school types, it is necessary to examine several discourses on the concepts of equality/inequality and disadvantage in relation to education. In particular, guidance in the Irish education system is discussed as a counterbalance to various inequalities, particularly in the area of affective care.

Inequalities in education.

The ideas of Baker et al. (2004) and Lynch et al. (2009) best illustrate current thinking on the concept of inequality in education. Baker et al. (2004) articulated four of the principal inequalities in education as:

- inequality of love, care and solidarity
- inequality of power
- inequality in educational resources
- inequality of respect and recognition.

There are many different ways in which these inequalities are manifest in schools, but given the importance of counselling in the role of the guidance counsellor in Ireland, and the considerable reduction in one-to-one guidance (59%) as a result of the cutbacks (IGC, 2013c), it is inequality of love, care and solidarity in schools that is a prime concern in research question one of this thesis. Though as Baker et al. (2004) emphasized, each type of inequality is “completely interwoven” (p. 60), so the three other inequalities are also referred to, in order to give a full overview of systemic inequality in schools. The loss of affective care is explored through a guidance lens and some of the ways in which a guidance service can counteract such inequalities are outlined.

Inequalities of love, care and solidarity.

The affective domain is what gives life meaning or makes us ‘feel’ life is worth living (Baker et al., 2004). O’Brien (2011) in agreement, has argued that if our life has no meaning “we cannot flourish as human beings” (p. 45). Care, love and solidarity have been neglected in public life, although family life and the private sphere have been understood as providing a context for relationships. Relationships are important in public life and so schools need to be cognisant of this and work to support the development of these relationships. However, it has been pointed out that within education, the role of caring is regarded as more of a personal than a policy matter (Connell, 1993).

Tronto (1993), Bubek (1995) and Kittay (1999) have argued that not only does affective care entail having a caring attitude towards others, it also involves the act

of caring for others, through the provision of active support. This in essence is what guidance counsellors provide in Irish second-level schools. Baker et al. (2004) in developing this sentiment further have argued that education needs to provide both students and teachers with ample prospects for relations of love, care and solidarity as “students learn best when they are in a relationship of trust and care with the teacher” (p. 164). Lynch and Lodge (2002) maintained that schools should be recognised as “affective enterprises” (p. 11) where both teaching and learning are deeply and variously concerned with relationships of care and interdependence. O’Brien (2011) found that teachers’ care is “key to learning and wellbeing at the level of individual students” (p. 46). However students are rarely given the space in schools to talk about their feelings, or about how they are learning, or how they are being taught (Lyons, Lynch, Close, Sheerin & Boland, 2003) - except for example in a one-to-one guidance appointment.

Baker et al. (2004) have been critical of the peripherality of the emotions in education, and how subordinate or even antithetical they are to reason. They critiqued the lack of emphasis on interpersonal¹¹ intelligence in the education system, where students could have the opportunity to learn about relationships and emotional health, but are prevented from doing so, as a narrow focus is maintained on academic intellectual education. They posited that this was to the detriment of students’ mental health and well-being and regarded it as “a denial of the educational needs of both teachers and students as emotional beings” (p. 164).

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Gardener (1987) defined interpersonal intelligence as the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, feelings and motivations of other people and to act accordingly.

Very little research on student well-being has been carried out internationally, in contrast to the major focus on student achievement (PIRLS¹², PISA¹³, TIMMS¹⁴). However, in Finland, which is regarded as a world leader in terms of student academic achievement in education, some limited research into student well-being has been carried out by Konu, Lintonen and Rimpela (2002). Unsurprisingly, they found that Finnish schools do not regard student well-being as important as student academic achievement.

Maggie Feeley (2007; 2008) explored the issue of inequalities of care in various educational institutions and she described the importance of recognising affective matters as “an important part of how and what we learn” (2008, p. 287). Her findings suggested that inequalities of care interact to impede learning, while “even small amounts of affection, resources, respect and recognition and power” (p. 289) made an improvement in the learning situation.

Developing Lynch et al.’s 2007 model, Feeley constructed learning care in terms of three learning care relationships:

- primary – family and intimate relationships;
- secondary – relationships with teachers in school, and
- tertiary – relations of care with friends, peers, colleagues and communities of interest.

¹² PIRLS: Since 1995, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study); an assessment conducted by IAEEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) has measured trends in reading comprehension at the fourth grade.

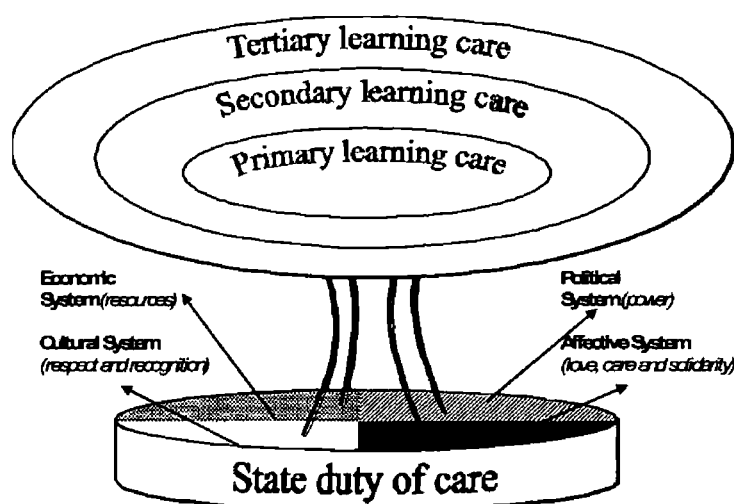
¹³ PISA: Since 2000, PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment); a worldwide assessment by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in member and non-member nations of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading.

¹⁴ TIMMS: Since 1991, TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study); an assessment conducted by IAEEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) has measured trends in mathematics and science achievement at the fourth and eighth grades.

Though developed in a different context, Feeley's model helps contextualise the locus of the guidance counsellor at the secondary level of care. It also highlights how the State has an underlying duty of care to students (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Feeley's model of learning care relationships



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The disconnect between care and reasoning observed by care and equality scholars is also evident when one looks at how guidance operates within the greater context of schooling. At the heart of the guidance counsellor's relationships and role is emotion; without emotion, there cannot be effective counselling or empathy. Kidd (1998) called emotion "an absent presence" (p. 275) in career guidance in general, and argued that to ignore affect is to ignore too much. Yet for students, the focus for the greater part of the school day and with the majority of teachers is firmly on intellect, rationality and reason.

Other inequalities.

Apart from inequalities of love, care and affection, other domains of inequality in schools need to be acknowledged, so inequalities of power, inequalities of

resources, and inequalities of respect and recognition are now discussed in relation to guidance in schools. Guidance counsellors, by the very nature of their role, are often acutely aware of how interconnected these different inequalities are, as evidenced by the wide range of issues listed by Hearne (2011) that students bring to the guidance counsellor's attention. Each of these other domains of inequality is now reviewed.

Inequality of power.

Equality of power is an issue in education; at a macro level it concerns the institutionalized procedures for making decisions regarding school management, educational and curriculum planning and policy development and implementation. At a micro level it involves the internal life of schools with regard to the relations between staff and students and among staff (Baker et al., 2004).

With regard to an equality of power agenda within education, this involves challenging power inequalities, and constructing a more democratic, cooperative model of education. Several researchers have pointed out that many young people have begun to question teachers' assumed manifestation of power through hierarchical control and authority models (Humphreys & Jeffers, 1999; Lynch & Lodge, 1999; Devine, 2000), and are starting to expect and demand greater democratization and equality in teacher-student relations.

In this context, the guidance and counselling service in schools can be viewed as an antidote to the undemocratic power relations that exist between teachers and students, and the traditional focus on the rational, the intellectual and the academic in Western education, to the neglect of the emotional (Lynch & Lodge, 2002; Noddings, 2003; Baker et al.; 2004).

Compared to teachers, who are sometimes viewed as autocratic, guidance counsellors who work full-time in the role are involved more in relationships of dialogue with their students than dominance. They engage in more democratic student-centred relationships by virtue of their advocacy, listening and counselling roles. For guidance and counselling to work successfully, a democratic relationship of trust needs to be built up between the guidance counsellor and the student.

Though referring to teachers rather than guidance counsellors, Freire (1970) was one of the key advocates of such a democratic relationship. He argued that teachers should aim for cooperation with students rather than adopt a hierarchical approach.

The holistic model of guidance in Irish schools as defined by the DES (DES, 2005), can be viewed as encouraging and enabling such a democratic approach in schools, as the one-to-one guidance relationship is so radically different to the traditional teacher-pupil classroom relationship (see Chapter Two). In addition, guidance counsellors can offer a buffering or mediation role between students and teachers when necessary in times of conflict, and they can provide a space within the school where emotions that normally need to be suppressed can breathe, allowing caring for the well-being of the individual to take place.

Inequality in educational resources.

Inequalities in educational resources were considered by Baker et al. (2004) as significant contributors to a person's educational progression. These resources include not only wealth and income but also social and cultural capital, a healthy living/working environment and adequate leisure time (Loury, 1987; Coleman, 1990, ch. 12, Baker, 1992, Dworkin, 2000; Wolff, 2002). Baker et al. argued that unequal access to educational resources leads to unequal participation and unequal outcomes in education.

This inequality in education manifests itself as a social class issue, and much recent research has been carried out in Ireland and elsewhere on working-class students inability to access, participate in and achieve in education on an equal footing with middle-class students (Gambetta 1987; Shavit & Blossfeld 1993; Clancy 1995; Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Mortimore et al. 1995; Ball, 1997; Clancy 2001; Hatcher 1998; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1998; Green 2003; Teese & Polesel 2003).

Education like all other resources, has become commodified in such a way that parents with the greatest economic, social and cultural capitals can purchase educational advantages for their children, in the form of fee-charging schools, extra private tuition where required, or private career guidance consultations.

Within schools, Baker et al. (2004) were highly critical of internal school practices that contributed to reproducing inequality such as admission policies, streaming of classes by ability¹⁵, discipline-based *modus operandi*, and an emphasis on academic learning that only focused on two of Gardner's eight recognised multiple intelligences – logical and linguistic, rather than recognising all of them (Gardner, 1987; 1993).

Baker et al. (2004) maintained that schools offer no quick-fix solutions to the problem of class-based inequalities in educational resources, because “they are rooted in wider economically generated inequalities” (p. 151) that “will only be eliminated in full when class systems themselves are eliminated” (p. 153).

However, guidance counsellors form part of the ‘institutional habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1999) of a school and Reay, David, and Ball (2001, 2005) showed a strong influence for institutional habitus on post-school choices. Smyth and Banks (2012)

¹⁵ See also Lynch & Lodge, 2002; Smyth, 1999.

compared student experiences of guidance in schools with very different institutional habituses - a fee-paying middle-class school and a working-class school. They found differences in the kinds of career information and advice students received in the transition to higher education. Guidance counsellors can help alleviate any such lack of cultural or social capital in a student's home by providing information on progression opportunities, and offering those who may not have any career role models in their families or communities, a range of possible career options.

Inequality of respect and recognition.

Many groups experience inequalities of respect and recognition in education; these include inequalities of gender, race/ethnicity, disability (including learning disability), class and sexuality. They have variously been described in research studies as 'other', 'irrelevant', 'inferior', 'marginal', 'minority' or 'invisible' (Smith 1987, 1998; Young, 1990, Said, 1991), and they frequently suffer disrespect and even violence (Harding, 2003). As Connell (1993) argued, a failure to resolve these inequalities can in turn generate further inequalities of resources.

As O'Brien (2008) reminds us, in order "to foster well-being, schools need to become meaningful places for the diversity of young people they purport to serve" (p. 181). Guidance counsellors are well-placed to have a role in schools with regard to respect and recognition of diversity that is underpinned by the State in equality legislation (Ireland, 2000b; 2004).

Space does not permit a full discussion of all of the inequalities of respect and recognition listed above, so I will use one as an example to show how the guidance service in schools can play a part in recognising the inequality and in helping to reduce it. Of all of the groups listed above who experience inequalities of respect,

gay, lesbian and bisexual students are among those who suffer the greatest (Fraser, 1997). However guidance counsellors have the training to provide frontline support to students who are experiencing homophobic bullying. In this respect, the privacy and space of the guidance counsellor's office is one of the few places in schools where "the silence that surrounds the subject of sexual orientation" (Baker et al. 2004, p. 155) can be broken.

A summary of the guidance-inequality discourse.

As an assessment of the equality literature has shown, when Baker's inequality model is applied to the realm of guidance, guidance counsellors can be considered as having the capacity to counteract some of the main inequalities prevalent in schools in several ways: through caring for the well-being of students and their emotional health; through acting as mediators and advocates for students in a school culture of authority and power; through the provision of career information and motivation to some students who might otherwise not receive it in the home; and through providing support to students who are experiencing homophobic bullying.

'Equality of condition' or 'equality of opportunity'?

Thus far in the literature review the focus has been on the radical equality theories of Baker and Lynch, as they have a particular concern for inequality in schooling, and they also consider the significance of care in the context of education.

'Equality of condition'¹⁶ as explained by Baker and Lynch (Baker et al., 2004, p. 33-42) is very much the utopia or pinnacle of equality and this philosophy is still relatively new and radical. A lot of the policies and practices around equality in

¹⁶ Feeley (2008) succinctly explains Baker and Lynch's 'equality of condition' as "the ultimate objective of those who aspire to create a more equal world. According to Feeley, this is the most radical form of equality and the only lasting way to change unequal social systems" (p. 13).

education in Ireland do not yet go as far as Baker and Lynch might wish, and could be described as fitting in with an ‘equality of opportunity’ perspective. When many of these policies were being planned and implemented, the concept most in vogue was ‘disadvantage’ and not equality/inequality. Given that the notion of ‘disadvantage’ has been so influential in policy making in Irish education over the past few decades, and also in the area of guidance policy (see Chapter Two), it is important to consider in some detail what it actually meant.

Difficulties with terminology and defining ‘disadvantage’.

Little agreement has been reached over recent decades in Ireland on an accepted definition of educational disadvantage, even though much research had been carried out on its extent, its identifying factors and measures to address it. Several attempts were made in the 1980s and 1990s to define the notion¹⁷ but it was Boldt and Devine (1998) who were the first to offer a comprehensive definition of educational disadvantage in an Irish context:

A limited ability to derive an equitable benefit from schooling compared to one’s peers by age as a result of school demands, approaches, assessments and expectations which do not correspond to the student’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors into which (s)he has been socialized as opposed to those to which (s)he is naturally endowed (p.7).

In the absence of agreement on an agreed definition, there was more conformity of opinion on factors associated with educational disadvantage. Kellaghan (2001), for example, argued that a child may be regarded as being at a disadvantage at school if “the competencies and dispositions which he/she brings to school differ from the competencies and dispositions which are valued in schools and which are required

¹⁷ See Hannan, in Crooks and Stokes Eds., 1987, pp. 47-48; Corcoran in Crooks and Stokes Eds., 1987, p. 66; Conference of Major Religious Superiors Education Commission, 1992, p. xvii; Kellaghan et al., 1995, p. 2.

to facilitate adaptation to school and school learning” (p. 3). He identified six areas which came to be widely accepted as indicating educational disadvantage: a low income and material poverty, individuals marginal to the labour force, the intergenerational nature and limitations of upward mobility, a reliance on state income support, limited schooling, and prevalence in areas of social deprivation.

Not only are definitions of the concepts of disadvantage and inequality problematic however, as Zappone (2007) encapsulated when she described research in the area as “theories of ‘difference’, ‘deficit’, ‘discontinuity’, ‘substantive equality in education’, ‘equality of opportunity’ to name but a few” (p. 10), but there are also issues with the terminology and language used to describe these concepts. Initially, there was an overwhelming emphasis on the negative, with the implicit suggestion that some intervention or other, some programme or some investment would alleviate the educational disadvantage, so that the working class student could be supported enough or enabled to participate fully in education. As Farrelly (2009) pointed out, the notion was implied that “if the working class or educationally disadvantaged student can be given enough support to adapt and change, then they can participate fully in the opportunities that the system offers” (p. 70).

This was clearly the thinking behind the introduction of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme in 2005, which focused on alleviating educational disadvantage in schools, where the majority of pupils came from backgrounds with high levels of socio-economic and educational disadvantage. In the last decade, the term DEIS has become synonymous in Ireland with educational disadvantage, however the use of terminology such as this raises issues about labeling students, schools or regions as disadvantaged. The intentions may be

positive - so that extra resources can be targeted or early intervention organized, but one cannot help but wonder if this labeling becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

An increasing focus on equality, rather than disadvantage.

By the mid-sixties, efforts were being made to tackle educational disadvantage in Ireland. Initially the focus was on increasing access to education with the introduction of free second-level education and free school transport. As Clancy (2005) indicated though, the issue of increasing access to education was a one dimensional approach that could never achieve equality of outcome.

Writing in 2002, Zappone highlighted the need, from a policy perspective, to broaden out the notion of educational disadvantage to one that focused attention on equality and not on deficit. She argued that state policy in Ireland had become increasingly concerned with policies focusing on deficit, where the aim was to achieve ‘equality of educational opportunity’, through what Hyland (2002) called “a focused targeting of additional resources to those most at risk and most in need” (p. 47). Gilligan (2002) was also critical of this deficit model of educational disadvantage, and called it a “flawed understanding” (p. 11). Both Zappone (2002) and Gilligan (2002) postulated new ways of looking at the issue. Rather than concentrating on the problems of disadvantage, Zappone advocated “radical changes to the system of education, or changes to wider social and economic systems that sustain the disadvantage and inequality” (p. 11), while Gilligan argued that the focus should be on educational equality, which respects and recognizes the individuality of all children.

Spring (2007), spoke of a gradual shift in thinking on ‘disadvantage’, where by 2005, the focus of the definition of disadvantage had gradually moved from access to education, to participation in education, to the educational outcomes. There was

a growing acceptance that schools were not the panacea for resolving educational disadvantage; that it could not be solved by school-based programmes alone but was strongly affected by the wider community and society.

Despite this shift in thinking, a major DES initiative to tackle educational disadvantage, such as the DEIS programme launched in 2005, was still focused on an ‘equality of opportunity’ agenda. Within this programme, there was a guidance dimension, where guidance was regarded as a possible means of equalizing opportunity by targeting extra resources to “those most in need” (DES, 2005b, p. 11). A DEIS guidance allocation was proposed, where extra guidance counselling hours were provided “in second-level schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage” (ibid). This policy initiative can be interpreted in such a way that students in so-called ‘disadvantaged’ schools were thought to need more guidance resources than students in other schools to achieve a greater equality of outcome (see Appendix B). The indicators of success for the DEIS programme included improved school completion rates, and improved progression rates, and it is clear that increased guidance was considered the key to achieving these improvements. As part of the 2012 Budget, this DEIS guidance allocation, and the earlier GEI allocation from 2001, which also had a specific disadvantage focus, were both removed in 2012-13.

The reproduction of inequality in schools.

The literature in this section explores discourses around how inequalities are (re)produced and operate both within and across schools. The complex links between family, habitus, cultural, economic and social capitals, social class, education, guidance and inequality are considered. This discussion is important, as it helps to inform the first research question which explores whether the changed

guidance allocation had an unequal impact across various schools types.

Later on in this chapter, the findings of Smith and Banks (2012) and McDonough (2007) are examined; this work explored the influence of social class, capitals and institutional habitus on educational and career decision-making.

In order to fully comprehend the notion of institutional habitus however, the discussion firstly necessitates an understanding of Bourdieu's 'habitus' and 'capital' metaphors, as I feel that these theories offer invaluable conceptual lenses through which to understand unequal educational experiences and outcomes.

Understanding habitus.

The term 'habitus' has a long history and according to Nash (1999), was first used by Aristotle. In recent decades, the term has become closely associated with Pierre Bourdieu who used 'habitus' as a way of describing the outlook or worldview of an individual, an institution, a school or its pupils. According to Reay (2004), Bourdieu defined habitus in terms of an individual's complex, multi-layered, internalised core, from which everyday experiences and practices emanate. Bourdieu (1990) maintained that habitus was expressed through "ways of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking" (p. 70). As Di Maggio (1979) explained, a habitus is constantly evolving, it is a product of early childhood experience and in particular socialization within the family, but it is continually re-structured by the individual's contacts with school and with the outside world.

Understanding cultural capital.

In an attempt to explain the variations in children's educational outcomes in France in the 1970s, Bourdieu carried out extensive research on the differing worldviews of children from different social backgrounds. He concluded that much of the

differences could be ascribed to 'cultural capital'. He understood cultural capital as knowledge, academic and professional qualifications, and an appreciation of art and culture, specifically art and music. He argued that these non-financial social assets can promote social mobility beyond economic means. Aschaffenburg and Mass (1997) provide a useful definition of Bourdieu's cultural capital metaphor:

Proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices - for example, linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, styles of interaction. Cultural capital is not a simple byproduct or reflection of class position, but is actively deployed in making hierarchical distinctions and in reproducing social inequalities (p. 573).

Bourdieu and Passeron in *La Réproduction* (1970) used the notion of a lack of 'capital culturel' to explain the poor academic performance of working-class children. In contrast, middle-class parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the education system. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) works to the advantage of those who are already in possession of a certain degree of it in the first place. This cultural capital of the dominant groups reproduces their class position and privilege, because educational advancement is controlled in schools by testing precisely these skills that cultural capital provides – effectively this is a vicious circle. As with 'habitus', Bourdieu (1984) proposed that the acquisition of cultural capital depends heavily on "total, early, imperceptible learning, performed within the family from the earliest days of life" (p. 66).

Bourdieu's theories around habitus and cultural capital are important in this discussion, as they challenged deficit thinking about underachievement and led to a greater appreciation of the power of socialised norms in determining a person's thought processes, choices and behaviours.

Understanding social capital.

Bourdieu (1986) also suggested that the concept of social capital was particularly useful in explaining inequalities in educational outcomes. He understood social capital as equating to membership of a group or network, conferring on the group members the credential of a collectively-owned social form of capital. He posited that like cultural capital, its value cannot be instantaneously transferred by one generation to another, rather it takes time and effort: "the reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed" (p. 22).

Looking at the education system, Bourdieu (1986) emphasized how the 'dominant' social classes preserve their social privileges across generations, showing the fallacy of the notion of the meritocracy of formal education. For Bourdieu, cultural and social capital are transmitted so diffusely within families, largely through the mother, that it escapes observation and control; so that when it comes to education, it appears that certain children have 'natural abilities' to learn. The education system then rewards these children with honours, awards and distinctions. However Bourdieu (1986) argued that education just reproduces what it is given in the first place: "the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family" (p. 17). Bourdieu (1986) pointed out that in so doing, the education system is "capable of disguising its own function" (p. 22). By this he meant that its 'raison d'être' was to reproduce social differences and hierarchies, but to keep this hidden under the mask of supposedly egalitarian and meritocratic educational processes.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) had earlier suggested that the educational system plays a major (even central) role in reproducing individuals who will go on to

perpetuate the divisions of capitalist society, which ensures that inequalities pass on from one generation to the next. It is social class, they claimed, which is reproduced in the structures of schools that forms the basis of division in schools. Education, they argued, has also increasingly been used as a means of displaying distinction; and distinction, in educational terms depends on which university is attended and what postgraduate studies are completed. All of this takes conscious effort, effort takes time and time takes money. This they argued, again points to the myth of the meritocratic notion of education; it may seem that success in education is determined purely on the basis of merit, but in fact having the financial wherewithal and the social and cultural capital to be able to afford the time and the cost of education is the real determinant of success.

With particular reference to schooling, other social theorists (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Sweeney & Dunne, 2003; Ghosh, Mickelson & Anyon, 2007) have also argued that schools legitimise the cultures of the dominant classes and thus act as a means to sort and select students for adult roles, they reproduce social hierarchies of class through academic success, which either advantages those who have access to cultural capital, or alienates those who do not have access to it. Young people who are members of the dominant social class groups enjoy advantages through their prior knowledge of, and easy access to, various forms of capital that are privileged by the formal school curriculum and pedagogy. These theorists all put forward similar arguments that it is the education system that needs to change and not the students, and so Sweeney and Dunne (2003) talked of “the need for schools to innovate so as to acknowledge and compensate for the uneven ‘preparedness’ or ‘readiness’ for school with which their students start” (p. 27).

Overall, it is clear from both the disadvantage and the inequality literature reviewed, that intergenerational, familial educational disadvantage persists, despite a myriad of interventions. Oakes (2009) put it succinctly:

Despite decades of reforms aimed at promoting social mobility, these core schooling practices most often result in young people replicating the economic and social positions of their parents. Schools have been notably weak instruments for disrupting the intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage” (p. 973).

Differences in educational decision-making across school types.

As the first research question explores the impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation across different school types, and given that guidance primarily deals with helping young people make educational, career and personal decisions (Chapter One), the literature in this section looks at the links between habitus, capitals and young people’s decision-making in relation to education.

In the 1970s, Bernstein researched the ‘disadvantaged school’, articulating the class identities of working-class pupils, and examining how different their worldview was from that of middle-class students. Bernstein (1970; 1971) argued that the modes of socialisation experienced in the home determine the form of language used by children, which in turn impacts on school performance. He contrasted the ‘restricted’ language codes of largely working-class homes, where social control was established and maintained with minimum use of verbal language, with the ‘elaborated’ codes in middle-class homes, where social control was based on linguistically elaborated meanings. He found that that because schools in general require an elaborated language code for students to achieve academic success, working class-children find themselves disadvantaged by the dominant language code of schooling.

Forty years on, though Bernstein's theories of deficit have been overtaken by inequality discourses, he does offer a relevant insight into the educational choices and career decisions that students need to make. In 1971, he wrote of the stark reality of the 'choice' available to them, of whether to take up the opportunities for advancement through education or to decline, leading to a likely continuation of their disadvantage. He showed how schools offer the promise of social advancement and a way forward, but in order to obtain this, students have to engage with schooling. He explained how the experience of school leaves many children from disadvantaged backgrounds devalued and excluded, and rather than engaging with school, they resist it which limits the educational choices open to them.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) described the effects that institutional habitus and familial habitus can have on educational choices. They articulated how for middle-class children, the familial habitus of the home and the institutional habitus of the school are very similar, because middle-class culture dominates in the school. On the other hand, for working-class students, these cultures are very different. Using a powerful metaphor, they pointed out that if a middle-class child enters a school in her locality (as is usual), her familial habitus "encounters a social world of which it is the product; it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted" (p. 127). Conversely, a working-class student is like a fish out of water in the school environment. Bourdieu and Wacquant noted that institutional habitus can have a significant impact on students' and parents' decision-making processes, making some choices unthinkable and others possible.

Essentially, students in working-class schools and students in middle-class schools, each coming from a different habitus and influenced by their diverse capitals, have been shown to have differing views on school and experience it in diverse way, relative to their habitus, leading to different educational choices and career aspirations. The next section considers some of the influences on educational decision making.

Influences on educational decision-making.

Several factors have been identified as being influential on young people's educational choices. Foskett, Dyke and Maringe, (2008) found that "the influence of both individuals and of the culture and ethos of the school shape the choices and preferences that emerge" (p. 38), while Smyth and Banks (2012) noted that how an individual exercises agency in their response to choice and to external influences will reflect their individual and familial habitus.

The main focus in this thesis is on the influence of the following three factors on educational decision-making: the influence of social class and capitals; the influence of the institutional habitus of school, and the mediating influence of guidance in schools.

The influence of social class and capitals on educational choices.

In recent decades, many social theorists (Lareau 1987, 1989, 2003; Wilson 1987; Walkerdine & Lucey 1989; Allat 1993; Massey & Denton 1993; Reay et al. 2001; Rudd, 2003; O'Brien 2005a, 2005b, 2011; O'Brien & Ó Fathaigh 2005) have linked school choice and school success with social class, familial habitus and cultural / social /economic capitals, where middle class parents (mostly mothers) who have the economic capital, actively spend the necessary time engaging in "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2003, p. 3) of their children's "credentialised

capital” (Feeley, 2008, p. 87) to ensure educational success and progression.

Feeley (2008) contrasted the added benefits that children from more privileged backgrounds bring with them to schooling, with those children who are economically disadvantaged:

In privileged circumstances, mothers’ and fathers’ costly and time-consuming emotional labour inculcates children into the education culture and supports them to learn and to value the importance of credentialised capital. Conversely, those who are economically disadvantaged possess less human, material, temporal and corporal resources and correspondingly less accrued cultural capital to invest in young learners (p. 87).

The processes that shape and perpetuate inequality are complex but one of the key factors is that different ‘habitués’ have been found to exist in working-class communities between the school and the family compared to middle-class environments (O’Brien, 2005b). O’Brien found that working-class children are disadvantaged largely due to a lack of knowledge and familiarity with the predominantly middle-class codes and practices dominant in the educational system, such as “curricula, codes of behavior, dress and speech and extracurricular activities” (p. 47).

Lareau (1987, 1989, 2003) did not use the term habitus, but essentially the locus of her research was firmly rooted in a middle-class American habitus. Lareau’s eloquent, rich observations showed that schools were primarily middle-class institutions which supported middle-class values and where students were best able to succeed if they held values and beliefs that aligned with those of their teachers and schools. Her arguments are resounding and convincing. She remarked that students from working-class families were less likely to possess the requisite attitudes and skills necessary for academic success. Lareau (2003) also showed

how middle-class parents, particularly mothers, through their family practices, material provision, customs and ethos proactively ensured consonance between home, the child and school. It was part of a process which she termed “concerted cultivation” (p. 3) where middle-class parents (again mostly mothers) invested time, resources and money in cultural experiences for their children, ensuring that their cultural capital was embodied in their children, which in turn paid dividends when their children went to school, leaving them in a position to navigate their way successfully through the education process and climb the social class ladder.

Others such as Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) emphasized how the availability of wealth and economic capital enabled middle-class families to invest in additional private educational resources to better their children’s chances, while Allat (1993) described the efforts of middle-class mothers to engage in supplementary educational pursuits and extra-curricular activities to ensure that their children retained a middle-class outlook. Rudd (2003) also found that middle-class parents were more likely to realise the value of schooling, “thus increasing the likelihood of reproducing their position” (p. 7).

In contrast, research conducted in urban working-class settings (Wilson, 1987; Massey & Denton, 1993) demonstrated that social norms modelled by adults and adolescents who are living in poverty and experiencing social isolation can have profound socialization effects on children that undermine their educational attainment, and their educational and career aspirations. A lack of employment prospects and high rates of unemployment were also shown to limit the positive role models young people have access to. Rather than observing and learning behaviours and attitudes that would lead to success in school and the job market, children in such communities are likely to be socialized in a manner that

reproduces the inequalities already in place.

With regard to educational decision-making, several researchers have demonstrated how rooted in social class these decisions are. Reay et al., (2001) noted that those who worked closely with young people making career and occupational decisions and transitions at the end of second-level education, appreciated just how unfeasible the prospect of attending certain third level institutions was for many working-class students. O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh (2005) considered how social class influenced decision-making around schooling and how it "powerfully affects consumption and lifestyle patterns, including, significantly, the exercise of educational choice" (p. 69).

In other research on school choice, O'Brien (2005a; 2005b) demonstrated the influence of social class and capitals at the point of transition between primary school and secondary school. She found that it was " 'classed' more than 'gendered' " (2005a, p. 36) and that there were significant class differences in how parents (again particularly mothers) dealt with choosing a second-level school for their children. She found that mothers in middle-class areas appeared to play a more pro-active, hands-on and dominant role in the choice of second-level school than in disadvantaged areas: "middle class parents seek to use their cultural, social and economic capitals to obtain what they believe to be the 'best' second-level school for their children" (2005a, p. 21). They also undertook much "time-consuming and energy-consuming research" (2005b, p. 232), in contrast to working-class mothers who invariably opted for the local school, or a school their children wanted to attend because they felt the children would be happier there.

The influence of the institutional habitus of the school on educational decision-making.

Much research has been carried out on the influence of institutional habitus on educational decision-making (Cookson & Persel, 1985; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Thrupp, 1999; Reay, David & Ball, 2001, 2005; Ghosh, Michelson & Anyon, 2007; Smyth & Banks, 2012). This research has demonstrated that students and their parents have been shown to make educational choices based on a matrix of influences linked with institutional habitus including social class, familial habitus, friends, peers, learning experience, and career guidance.

Important research by Thrupp (1999) on class-based relationships, school choice and school failure showed clearly the powerful impact of institutional habitus (though he himself did not use this term). His argument is that a rising tide of quality educational provision and resources in a school can lift all boats:

Working-class students who attend a working-class school may often fail not only because of their own background but also because they are attending working-class schools which cannot offer middle-class types of school resources and processes. Conversely working-class students who attend a middle-class school are likely to succeed because they are exposed, despite their individual class backgrounds, to the contextual benefits of a middle-class school mix (p. 125-126).

Institutional habitus has been shown to influence students' higher education choices, where perceptions and expectations of choice are formed over time in relation to school friends, teachers' views and advice, and learning experiences. For middle-class children, Reay et al. (2001) found a "high degree of congruence between familial and institutional habitus" (Section 3.3). In a subsequent study, Reay, David and Ball, (2005) demonstrated "an institutional influence over and above the direct impact of family background" (p. 36) for working-class children,

even though their third level choices were heavily influenced by finances, and in particular travel costs, part-time jobs and time constraints linked to family commitments. They also found that the institutional habitus of third-level institutions had a significant impact on working-class students choices, where decisions were influenced by students' subjective ideas around class authenticity "making some choices virtually unthinkable, others possible and yet others routine" (p. 47).

The social class mix of schools influences student achievement and student retention, both of which are inextricably linked with progression (Smyth, Dunne, McCoy & Darmody, 2006) Stanton-Salazar (1997). So schools serving middle-class areas both intentionally and unintentionally reinforce middle-class parental ambitions (Ghosh, Michelson & Anyon, 2007). Through their institutional habitus, schools may convey differing opinions of higher education to students, and they may even display (unconscious or subliminal) prejudices towards specific high-profile or important third-level institutions (ibid).

Individual habitus and institutional habitus have been shown to interact and influence student career decision-making (Bourdieu, 1990; McDonough, 1997; Reay et al. 2001, 2005). One recent study replicated these findings for Irish students: Smyth and Banks (2012) regarded individual (and familial) habitus as an embodiment of the various dispositions, preferences and orientations developed by the young person over time. They saw the institutional habitus of the school as reflecting the influence of a predominant social group on individual student behaviour and decision-making in the school, with this ethos having becoming ingrained in the fabric, organization and culture of the school over several years.

Smyth and Banks contrasted how the institutional habituses of two schools, a fee-charging middle-class school and a working-class school impacted differently on students' career decision-making. In two findings that are important for research question one in this study, they reported that students in the middle-class school based their career decision-making "on the multiple habituses of family and school" (p. 271). Their decision to pursue third level education was one that was largely taken for granted by them, with the students reporting that it was considered normal or expected of them to go to third-level. This replicated findings from outside Ireland by Cookson and Persell (1985) which showed that middle-class schools helped prepare students for third-level education through a process of socialization. Secondly, Smyth and Banks (2012) reported that students in disadvantaged schools who "lack the social access to information about higher education available to their more affluent peers" (p. 272), depended more on the habitus of the school than the home, and in particular on the guidance counsellor for help with career decision-making. Similar findings outside of Ireland were reported by McDonough (1997), Perna and Titus (2004), and Foskett et al. (2008).

Guidance as a mediating factor in educational decision-making.

As discussed in Chapter One, guidance in second level schools in Ireland is concerned mainly with supporting students in making various life decisions based on a range of relevant and feasible choices. This is true whether the choice is around educational matters such as whether or not to do Transition Year; career matters such as whether or not to choose to study engineering in a university, or personal matters such as whether to come out to family and friends as being gay.

Evidence also suggests that in-school guidance provision, such as individual guidance interviews, group-work sessions, access to career-related information and

a wide range of work-related activities, can have a positive impact on the development of students' career-related skills and career decision-making (Morris, Golden & Lines, 1999). While Bloom (2007) highlighted the importance of both formal guidance (at school) and informal guidance (particularly from family and peers) in shaping student decisions about what to do when they leave school.

The influence of guidance is mediated by institutional habitus.

The literature provides evidence of how schools with a differing institutional habitus view guidance differently (McDonough, 1997; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Foskett et al., 2008; Mullen, 2009; McCoy, et al., 2010; Smyth & Banks, 2012). McDonough's (1997) research on second level students' third level college choices, developed Bourdieu's notion of habitus to describe how social class and school resources (including guidance) shape college choice decisions. The findings from this piece of research have particular significance for this thesis as she illustrated not only how the institutional habitus of a school is apparent through its guidance provision (among other factors), but also how the socio-economic culture of a school's catchment area influences a school's guidance provision.

McDonough's study is particularly important with regard to research question one of this thesis as she found evidence of a major focus on the career guidance element of guidance provision in middle class schools. She found that the institutional habitus of a middle-class school is evident in the amount of career guidance offered, the focus on subjects that facilitate college entry and in the guidance facilities available, which reinforce student beliefs and parental ambitions on progression to higher education. For example, students who attended the more elite high schools were more likely to attend selective colleges because they were

more likely to be positioned to do so, first by parents and then by high school resources directed toward that end.

In working-class schools, guidance was viewed in a more positive light by students in non-academic schools than in academic schools (Foskett et al., 2008). They found that for young people from social backgrounds with no family traditions of, or experience of post-16 education, guidance can act as a counter to existing attitudes, knowledge and perception by informing students of the variety and range of courses they could do. By opening up windows onto non-traditional career areas, career guidance was “a critical factor in helping students make a choice to pursue a higher education (HE) pathway” (Foskett et al., 2008, p. 39). Guidance has been found to be a very significant factor in influencing students from non-academic backgrounds to consider higher education by providing career advice which may not be available in the home, and by challenging the assumptions of students and their parents (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

Students in disadvantaged schools needed proportionately more information and advice than middle-class students to make up for the familial and social gaps (McCoy, et al., (2010):

Young people, particularly those from the lower non-manual backgrounds, felt they had insufficient information about higher education ... (because) parental experience of HE was not there, while siblings and peers were also not necessarily familiar with the HE process and choices therein (p. 165).

Working-class students, whose families had no history of HE entry “were more reliant on the guidance counsellor” (Smyth et al., 2011, p. 139) for information on subject choice than those from professional or farming backgrounds. Smyth et al.

(2011) concluded that “the guidance counsellor is as important an influence for those in working class schools as their mothers” (p. 231). This draws some parallels with O’Brien’s (2005) finding on the impact of mothers’ emotional labour on school choice. In contrast, Smyth et al. (2011) found that in middle-class schools, progression to HE appeared to be a given, with students “drawing on detailed information from their siblings or parents who had been to third-level education” (p. 175).

With regard to differences in the type of guidance provided to students in schools in different neighbourhoods, Mullen (2009) in a US study, found that middle-class schools tended to provide more career guidance support for college application than working-class schools. Significantly, as is discussed in the next section of this chapter in relation to affective support, Smyth and Banks (2012) found that guidance in working-class schools was more associated with personal counselling than career guidance.¹⁸

The Importance of Student Care and Guidance Counsellors in Second Level Schools

Given the substantial reduction of 59% in one-to-one guidance appointments in schools (IGC, 2013b), the second major theme of this literature review is that of student care in schools. As guidance counsellors work in what Lynch et al. (2009) call the “affective domain” (p. 15), caring labour and how it has been trivialised and neglected over the years is discussed, particularly in the field of education. I make distinctions between care labour and other types of work. My arguments here are informed by feminist and egalitarian discourses on care and care work. I locate

¹⁸ See Rosenbaum, Miller and Krei (1996) for similar findings outside Ireland.

guidance and counselling within a framework of concentric circles of care relations and I show that the quality of affective care is linked with resource limitations of time and space (Lynch et al., 2009).

The extensive counselling and care dimension to guidance work in Irish schools are explored, and I examine research that suggests that schools are ideal locations for affective care and mental health provision. I note the increase in mental health problems reported in Ireland and elsewhere, as well as the high levels of cyberbullying in Irish schools and recent suicides by Irish teenagers. Given the current prevalence of adolescent mental health issues, and how schools are considered to be ideal locations for mental health provision, I discuss the importance of counselling in schools.

The research literature showed that affective care has been neglected in schools and that care labour has been trivialised. In such an environment, self-care of the carers (in this case guidance counsellors) can be impacted by factors such as role ambiguity and role conflict. I discuss some ways in which these issues increase guidance counsellor stress and which in turn may ultimately affect students negatively.

The trivialisation and neglect of the affective domain in education.

Scandinavian feminists were the first to develop and dwell on the concept of caring labour, emphasising the ways in which it departs from more traditional economic-centred definitions of work (Waerness, 1987). Caring labour is regarded as a type of work that requires personal attention, and /or services that are normally provided on a face-to-face or first-name basis (Badgett, Folbre and Folbre, 1999). It is distinguished from other work as it involves having an intrinsic motive for performing that work – such as a sense of emotional attachment and connection to

the persons being cared for. Their definition emphasises the personal nature of care labour:

Care services are services that involve personal contact between provider and recipient. In activities such as teaching, nursing and counselling, personal identity is important. The service provider generally learns the first name of the service recipient (p. 312).

Lynch et al. (2009) outlined how education has usually been defined as being about the development of reason. They cited the influence of Piaget in particular, who focused on the development of logical mathematical intelligence and abstract reasoning. From the time of the Greeks, emotions have been suspect and rationality privileged. This has led to the neglect of the emotions in education, with schools preparing the student “for economic, political and cultural life in the public sphere but not for a relational life as an interdependent, caring and other-centred human being” (p 16). Lynch et al. (2009) also argued that the close and ever-increasing connections between formal education and employment have contributed to the neglect of affective work, or affective dimensions of work, where “only work for pay, or work within the market economy, has been defined as real work” (p.16).

The invisibility of affective work.

Lynch et al. (2009) considered that not only has caring labour been largely ignored in research, but affective inequalities have also been in the main ignored by social scientists until recent decades, including in the domain of education.

Guidance in schools can also be considered as invisible affective work. Halperin (1987) gives an example of how guidance in schools has been regarded as nonessential and expendable, when compared with academic pursuits. He reported on research conducted in New York City schools in 1975, where, faced with

bankruptcy, 40% (or 1,400) of the guidance counsellors in the city were laid off. Halperin argued that guidance and counselling was deemed to be an expendable budget item by the authorities as it had “so few quantifiable outcomes by which to justify its existence” (p. 8). The effects of the 1975 New York City cutbacks included the elimination or severe reduction of counselling in 50% of the responding schools and the elimination or severe curtailment of client referrals to other agencies in more than 60% of the responding schools. Tangible effects in the affected schools included increases in reported cases of violence, an increase in suspensions, a decrease in student attendance, and an increase in truancy. One principal wrote that “there are not enough words in the English language to describe the devastation wrought by the decision to curtail guidance” (Halperin, 1987, p. 9).

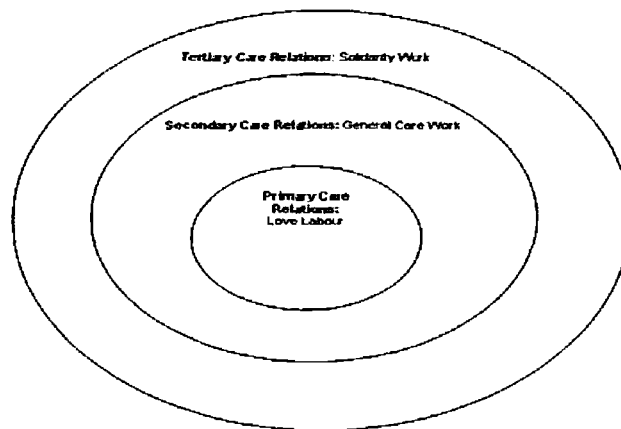
Locating guidance within a framework of care relations.

Lynch, Lyons, and Cantillon (2007) theorised a model of care relations¹⁹ where the care networks that human beings operate in are visually represented by three concentric circles of care (Fig. 3.2). They categorised these as primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care, which they called love labour, general care labour and solidarity work.

¹⁹ A later development of this model by Feeley (2008) has previously been discussed (Fig. 3.1).

Figure 3.2

Concentric Circles of Care Relations (Lynch et al., 2007)



Considering guidance and counselling in schools in terms of care labour is a new conceptualization of guidance. The placing of school guidance and counselling in this framework of concentric care circles has not been done before, so this is somewhat problematic as guidance consists of paid care work as opposed to volunteer work. It would appear to fit best into the secondary care circle, though Lynch and Walsh (2009) did stress that the lines between the care circles are not rigid and mark “more of a continuum than a division” (p. 46). Without doubt, guidance and counselling is emotional work, but like all types of work, it can be undertaken with varying degrees of emotional engagement. However what distinguishes guidance in schools from love labouring (inner care circle) is that it is contingent on an employment contract, and while it most certainly involves responsibilities and attachments, it can be said to operate (borrowing a phrase from Lynch and Walsh) “at one or more removes from the intimate in terms of trust and expectation” (p. 46).

Quality of care is inextricably linked with emotional / time resources.

Care labour differs from other work with regard to resources of time and emotion. Tronto (2003) observed that it is difficult to try and make caring practices conform

to the control models of time that pertain in most other non-care labour areas, where time is thought of in terms of money, is used to measure productivity and where attempts are made to control it. In contrast, in care labour, time itself is a resource: “time assumes a different aspect from the standpoint of care. Time spent caring is not about mastery and control but about maintenance and nurturance” (p. 123), and it is the time spent in the presence of another that allows for trust and understanding to develop. Folbre and Bittman (2004) determined that if and when attempts are made to condense or reduce the amount of time available for caring, then the quality of the care work is reduced. In this thesis where one of the research questions examines one-to-one guidance time as a resource, then the findings of Tronto (2003) and Folbre and Bittman (2004) are highly relevant.

O’Brien (2005b) viewed emotion as an essential resource needed for caring, and found that students require an investment of emotional care resources particularly during periods of educational transition such as entry to second-level education:

In order to care we have to engage our emotions and emotional resources are required by the carer. Educational work and the care work involved at transfer include emotional work and require access to emotional resources” (p. 226).

In O’Brien’s (2005b) research, the carer was invariably the mother, but guidance counsellors in school perform a similar form of care labour in the transition from Primary to Second Level in the absence or in addition to that of the mother. A core feature of their work is providing such care at other major transitions such as moving from Junior to Senior Cycle (educational guidance, involving subject and programme choice) and moving from Second Level to Third Level (career guidance). Indeed it was for this specific purpose that the extra DEIS guidance allocation was introduced in 2005 (part one of this chapter).

Lynch and Walsh (2009), echoing Baker et al. (2004) argued that good care requires adequate resources. They link inequalities in affective care with inequalities in other social systems such as the economic, political or cultural spheres where “structural injustices exacerbate affective deprivations” (p. 41). They also make the point that because love, care and solidarity relations involve a certain amount of giving and receiving, they are largely other-centered, and it is counter-productive to put a market value on this type of work: “they cannot be entirely marketised without undermining the care and solidarity they embody” (p. 49). Neither can they be commodified: “the nurturing work that produces a sense of support, solidarity and well-being is generally based on intentions and feelings for others that cannot be commodified” (p. 51).

Within the affective domain, Lynch et al. (2009) were of the opinion that because personal relationships form the basis of care, there is a limit to how far these resources can be stretched:

It is unlikely therefore that society can reduce the total amount of time devoted to caring labour across the whole economy without damaging the quality of care provided. An example of this aspect of equality is the educational sector, where the desire to reduce the ratio of teachers to children is sometimes put forward as an economic efficiency objective (p. 20).

Lynch et al. (2009) also make the point that affective care is “embedded in relations of time and space” (p. 41) and they argue that because time is a finite resource, it limits the range of care relations that a person can engage in:

Moreover, each human being is indivisible in terms of his or her person. She or he is not able to bilocate and most people have a limited capacity to complete more than one task at a time. The way care is organised therefore is deeply bound up with time and space. It is governed by the rules of finiteness, and by the limitations of energy and resources (p. 41).

Lynch et al.'s finding that quality care is resource dependent is an important one in this thesis, particularly in relation to research question two which examines affective care in schools.

The importance of counselling and affective care in schools.

The need for care systems such as a counselling service in schools has been advocated by Cohen (2006) who argued that children need to be listened to more in schools and given support with emotional and mental health difficulties. O'Brien, (2008) argued (citing Nussbaum, 1995, 2001; Kittay, 1999; Kittay & Feder, 1983) that "we are interdependent affective beings who are vulnerable and dependent at specific times in our lives" (p. 104) and as such we have a need to give and receive care for our well-being. By extension, I would argue that this also applies to students in schools, in particular teenagers who suffer mental health problems. As O'Brien (2008) suggested (citing Tronto, 1998; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Reay, 2000; Bubeck, 2001; O'Brien, 2005b; Griffith & Smith, 2005), because schools offer possibilities "for well-being and development", it is necessary "that emotional care be carried out and received" (p. 104) in schools.

Increase in mental health issues in adolescence.

Several major studies involving adolescent mental health were undertaken prior to the change in guidance allocations in September 2012. Two of these were conducted in Ireland. A common theme emerging from these studies was that reported adolescent mental health issues were rising in Ireland and elsewhere. In this regard, it would appear somewhat paradoxical that the reduction in one-to-one guidance appointments (IGC, 2013) in second-level schools has come at point in time when such services were increasingly in demand.

One of the reasons given by O'Brien (2008) for the need to invest in emotional resources was the apparent "increase in mental health challenges faced by young people" (p. 88). She listed depression, suicide, aggression and anti-social behaviour as some of the prevalent issues in adolescent lives, particularly among those groups who suffer from social exclusion. She argued that "interrupting poor mental health as soon as possible is necessary for positive living during adolescence" (p. 73).

Cannon, Coughlan, Clarke, Harley and Kelleher (2013), in a study of youth mental health in Ireland for the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, showed that by the age of 13 years, one third of young people in Ireland is likely to have experienced some type of mental disorder, and by the age of 24 years, that rate will have increased to over one in every two. The report found that young people between the ages of 15-25 did not fit well into the adult mental health services model and that there was a need for specialist mental health services catering to young people in this age bracket. It found that over 1 in 15 young people had engaged in deliberate self-harm and that, by the age of 24 years, up to 1 in 5 young people has experienced suicidal ideation. The findings also suggested that Irish young people may have higher rates of mental disorder than similarly aged young people in other countries. Cannon et al. recommended early prevention and intervention initiatives:

Progressive early prevention and intervention initiatives in the field of youth mental health have the potential to reduce the economic burden associated with mental ill-health among Irish people. More importantly they also have the potential to minimise the personal, relational, social and vocational impact of mental ill-health on young people, their families and wider society (p. 7).

In 2012, a major international study of depression in teenagers was published in *The Lancet* (Thapar, Collishaw, Pine & Thapar, 2012), which brought home the importance of counselling therapies in treating depression in adolescence, amidst

concerns regarding the prescribing of anti-depressants to teenagers. The research stressed that more needed to be done to identify and treat adolescents with depression, as failure to intervene and provide support early on can have disastrous consequences. The study argued that if left untreated, adolescent depression increases the risk of suicide, substance abuse and obesity; leads to serious social and educational and can result in lifelong health difficulties. The research stressed that the lack of interventions and resources directed to tackling and preventing depression in many countries was a major concern.

The 'My World Survey' (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012), which was the first national study of youth mental health in Ireland from age 12-25 years, involving over 14,000 young people, reported that one of the strongest predictors of good mental health in the lives of young people was the availability of at least one adult who knew them and was available to them especially in times of need:

The data showed that a young person with very low access to support had depression levels that were not in the normal range, whereas depression levels for a young person with high support from a good adult are well within the normal range. We saw the same pattern for anxiety. These variables are key indicators of psychological distress (p. 113).

An IGC policy paper (IGC, 2008) cited research in Ireland that as many as “one in five second-level students at any one time may require counselling intervention” (p. 10). In subsequent research that was conducted with guidance counsellors in Ireland prior to the educational cutbacks, Hayes and Morgan (2011) found that there was “a huge demand for counselling among second-level students” (p. 79). However, such was the demand for counselling in schools, that finding the time and space to do the counselling work was a major issue for almost a third of the guidance counsellors they surveyed. Given all the other issues that guidance

counsellors were required to deal with during the school day, the authors felt that there were “not enough resources currently available to meet their needs” (p. 79). In one of the four recommendations from the research, Hayes and Morgan (2011) urged the DES to maintain and strengthen the practice of counselling in schools “through additional supports such as reducing the ratio of students to guidance counsellor” (p. 97).

In reviewing the literature on affective care in schools, several important themes emerged which suggested four sub-themes for my research and indeed some survey questions, these were: the fact that outside of Ireland, arguments were made for locating mental health services within schools; that students preferred one-to-one guidance than group or class guidance; that guidance in Irish schools was too focused on senior years; that guidance counsellors who also teach classes experience role conflict and more stress than those who are full-time counsellors.

Schools are ideal locations for mental health provision.

In other countries, where having a counsellor in the schools is not the norm, a strong argument has been made for placing mental health services in schools in order to increase accessibility to the service, thus improving the chances of educational success (Ghuman & Sarles, 2002; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998, both cited in Hayes, 2006). Other researchers have stressed that schools are in a unique position to initiate and lead mental health promotion in a community (Tinzmann & Hikson, 1992; Head, 1997; Weist, 1998; Dornbusch et al., 1999; Frydenberg, 1999 – all cited in Hayes, 2006).

In Ireland this type of service has been in place for over forty years (see Appendix B), where the school-based guidance counsellor has played the lead role in looking after the care needs, well-being and emotional health of the students, as s/he is

usually one of the few staff members with any professional training in counselling. The guidance service in Irish second-level schools has been constantly developing and responding to a plethora of community and societal expectations, which have placed an increasing pressure on schools to compensate for societal (Coolahan, 2000). Coolahan credited guidance counsellors with having built up a vast amount of expertise and knowledge in dealing regularly with a range of counselling issues.

More recently, in the post-Celtic Tiger era, some of the more prevalent concerns that young people were bringing to the guidance counsellor were listed by Lucy Hearne, Course Director of the MA in Guidance and Counselling in the University of Limerick as “instability of parental employment and family income, retention of family home, risk-taking behaviour, self-harm, substance misuse, anxiety, depression, identity crisis, examination pressure, and difficult career choices” (Hearne, 2011, Para. 4).

It strikes me as incongruous that just as research in other countries was pointing towards schools as ideal locations for youth mental health services, in Ireland where this type of service successfully existed for 40 years in schools, policy decisions meant that such a service was reduced, at a time when demand for it was increasing.

Individual guidance preferred over classroom-based guidance.

Given that the IGC (2013) audit revealed that one-to one guidance provision has decreased and that guidance counsellors are increasingly involved in classroom teaching, recent research by Smyth, Banks and Calvert (2011) is important as it found that many students preferred to engage with the guidance counsellor on a one-to-one basis, rather than in a classroom or group situation, as it provided “the chance to ask questions without embarrassment” (p. 114) and allowed them “access

information relevant to their own specific interests” (p. 229). These findings mirror earlier findings (McCoy, Smyth, Darmody & Dunne, 2006; Forfás, 2006) with respondents expressing a preference for individual career counselling as opposed to class or group-based guidance.

Guidance needs to start earlier than senior cycle.

Smyth et al. (2011) found that many students felt that guidance had been provided too late in their schools and at a time when they had already chosen their subjects and subject levels. They felt that too much of the guidance counsellor’s time was devoted to the sixth year students and highlighted the need to “provide guidance on the choice of subjects and subject levels at an earlier stage” (p. 214). This finding concurred with earlier studies (McCoy et al., 2010; Keys et al., 1998; Maychell et al. 1998) which found that young people would have found it more useful to have received career guidance at an earlier stage in their school career.

Role conflict and role ambiguity can lead to stress, which in turn can effect student care.

The one aspect of care in schools that has not been discussed thus far, is the context of the carer. With a substantial number of guidance counsellors reporting an increase in stress levels in 2012-13, which they ascribed to working in the dual role of teacher and counsellor, it is not unreasonable to expect that this could impact negatively on the students that they are caring for. As O’Brien (2011) notes:

It seems quite obvious from a care perspective that, if one does not care for oneself fully as a human being, one will not be capable of assessing the needs of others for their flourishing (p. 48).

The dual role of teacher and counsellor was examined in the literature, but due to a lack of research on counsellors specifically, the review also took into account

others working in a pastoral care role in schools. Hendry (1975) asserted that ambiguities existed for teachers of non-academic subjects because such teachers are not regarded as “central to the goals and function of the organisation” (p. 466). Dunham (1984) found that role conflict and role ambiguity were major sources of stress for teachers who have pastoral care responsibilities, such as guidance counsellors and chaplains. He described how the time demands of one role can impact negatively on the other and also how the constant juggling of pastoral and teaching roles takes its toll and increases stress. Dunham, using the metaphor of “fairy godmother and wicked witch” (p. 27) described how the dual role is difficult to maintain and gave an example of the type of stressful situation which arises in schools when teachers have a dual pastoral / teaching role, where they are:

Faced with the decisions over dealing with the problems immediately, as soon as they come to light, and thus neglecting one’s other duties e.g. teaching, or delaying dealing with the problems until time is available. Each solution, or the compromise which often results, brings some anxiety or stress. (p. 26).

O’Leary and Adams (1986) stated that “the problem of role confusion can be traced back to the beginning of formal guidance in Ireland” (p. 28) when guidance counsellors were allocated guidance hours based on the number of students in the school (see Appendix C). As a result, in smaller schools many guidance counsellors also taught academic classes. O’Leary and Adams argued for the need for “a separate existence and identity” (p. 28) for guidance counsellors.

Freeman (1987), in a study of teachers involved in pastoral care, reported that they experienced difficulty in discharging their pastoral role to their own satisfaction, partly because they had to fulfil the pastoral care role alongside the demands of their teaching duties.

Much teacher stress was found to be linked to the degree of control that teachers feel they have over their professional day-to-day lives (Kyriacou, 1989):

The degree of control teachers feel they have over the demands made upon them is of crucial importance. Where teachers feel they have some control over the frequency and nature of the demands made upon them and over the ability to deal successfully with these demands, stress is likely to be minimized. (p. 28).

Role conflict and role ambiguity have been cited as stressors for guidance counsellors. McCoy et al. (2006) showed that guidance counsellors who had dual guidance and teaching roles in schools found it difficult to manage both roles. They reported guidance counsellors who felt that teaching an academic subject impinged on their capacity to deliver a comprehensive guidance service to their students, and that balancing the disciplinary role of a teacher with the “caring, supportive, non-disciplinarian image” (p. 192) of the guidance counsellor was difficult. This dual role was also seen as affecting the levels of trust, confidentiality and respect between students and their guidance counsellor, given the blurred boundaries between the teacher role and the counsellor role. It is worth including a quote from a student in the McCoy et al. (2006) study which illustrates clearly how the two roles did not mix:

I think if there's a guidance counsellor at the school they shouldn't be teaching you the subject, they should be just solely advising you. So you can go to them but if [you] have them for a subject you are not going to go to them, I don't feel I could trust them (p.182).

Smyth et al. (2011) reported several issues related to the dual role of guidance counselling and classroom teaching, where students described difficulties in being able to meet with the guidance counsellor, especially where counsellors were ‘juggling’ subject teaching, guidance and personal counselling.

Summary of Literature Review

The review of the literature presented in this chapter was informed by two major discourses: the literature around disadvantage and inequality in education, and the literature on affective care and caring labour.

Contemporary concepts of inequality, notably those in relation to inequalities of love, care and solidarity were reviewed. Factors associated with disadvantage were considered and the gradual policy shift from disadvantage towards equality was outlined. There was a discussion on the reproduction of inequality in education and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capitals were explained.

Some of the factors influencing educational decision-making such as social class, capitals, institutional habitus and career guidance were considered. The literature demonstrated that students in socio-economically disadvantaged schools and communities lack the social and cultural capital of those in middle-class schools and neighbourhoods.

The familial habitus of the home and the institutional habitus of the school were shown to be very similar for middle-class children, but very different for working-class students. Institutional habitus was demonstrated to have a significant impact on students' decision-making processes, making some choices virtually unthinkable and others possible. Students in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged communities were shown to have a poor concept of self, finding it difficult to identify with people who have prestige, status and power. This creates a challenge for adolescents from a disadvantaged background, who have restricted opportunities or little cultural/social capital available to them, to integrate their identity with a particular career outside their own habitus.

Students in working-class schools were shown to have different requirements of a guidance service to those in middle-class schools, with a much bigger demand for counselling services than in middle-class schools. On a fundamental level, career guidance can fill in any information gaps that students may have, and guidance counsellors in schools in working-class communities can offer some suggested career paths that may be little known in these communities. Guidance was seen to be a significant factor in influencing students from a non-academic background to consider higher education by challenging their assumptions, and acting as a counter to existing attitudes, knowledge and perceptions. Students in middle-class schools generally receive more career guidance than in working class schools, these schools focus on subjects that facilitate college entry and they may have more advanced guidance facilities available, which reinforce student beliefs and parental ambitions on progression to higher education.

Evidence has also shown that guidance counselling in schools can have a positive impact on the development of students' career-related skills. In addition, guidance counsellors have been found to be especially important sources of college-related information for young people with no family traditions, or experience, of higher education

With regard to the second major discourse, the literature on affective care and care labour was discussed. Guidance and counselling was located within the context of care labour, which was shown to be different from other types of work. Care labour was shown to have been trivialised and neglected in the field of education. The quality of affective care was linked with resource limitations of time and space.

Given the demand for counselling in schools, and an increase in mental health issues, schools were discussed as being ideal locations for counselling and affective care. The importance of caring for the carers was also highlighted, as guidance counsellor stress has been shown to be impacted by factors such as role ambiguity and role conflict. This in turn may then possibly affect students negatively.

CHAPTER FOUR:
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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The research topic for this thesis explored the experiences and perceptions of guidance counsellors in second level schools during a year of change for many in the profession (2012-13). The change was due to the changed method of allocating guidance resources that came into effect with Budget 2013. The objectives of the study were to explore guidance counsellors':

- views on the impact of the change in guidance allocations across different school types
- concerns and issues regarding the care of students, and
- perceptions of their students' main concerns and issues.

The methodology chosen was a mixed method sequential exploratory model in two-phases. The first phase, conducted in May 2013 focused on a broad exploration of the issues and it involved gathering data using an online survey of 273 guidance counsellors. The second phase of the research emerged and evolved from the first phase and its exact format was not determined until the data from phase one were collected and analysed. At that stage, there were several unanswered questions which remained and it seemed that the best approach to deepening an understanding of guidance counsellors' experiences would be to conduct a series of interviews. Phase two took place in November/December 2013, after a six-month gap which allowed for reflection (on my behalf and the participants) and consisted of individual interviews with 12 guidance counsellors. Appendix D provides a more detailed account of the research timeline.

In this chapter I describe the phenomenological approach and research strategy that I adopted, I describe the research context, and outline the research methods chosen and the rationale for choosing these approaches. I also outline some ethical considerations. I then describe how the research was designed and how the data

were collected. I describe the research participants, the sampling procedures and the data collection methods in each phase separately. I explain the procedures for data analysis and I consider quality assurance.

Phenomenological Approach

This research on inequalities in guidance provision and the loss of affective care in schools is mediated through several social, cultural and historical contexts, as detailed in Chapters Two and Three. These include educational disadvantage, habitus, equality and affective care. My overall approach to the research was phenomenological, an approach which can result in a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by many individuals. Phenomenology is concerned with how humans experience different phenomena, through our senses: “It is seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted. It is experienced directly, rather than being conceived in the mind” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 97).

Various other research approaches were researched and explored. These all had advantages and disadvantages. So, for practical and pragmatic reasons, approaches such as ethnography and case studies were quickly deemed unsuitable, as the literature on research methodology suggested that these approaches were more suitable to research conducted over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2009). I then spent a long time researching grounded theory approaches; in particular I felt that the constant comparative approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) would be a very useful way of interpreting this kind of data.

A phenomenological strategy seemed to be the best fit with the aims and objectives of the research. As I researched the approach, I realised that I would be able to incorporate aspects of the constant comparative method in my research

methodology. In trying to make a decision, I kept returning to the aim of the research which was exploratory - to elicit guidance counsellors' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and feelings about a year of change in their working environments, where very little research had been conducted on the changed situation and none of it was qualitative. In this respect, Denscombe regarded a phenomenological approach as being particularly suitable for researching experiences that are "pure, basic and raw in the sense that they have not (yet) been subjected to processes of analysis and theorizing" (p. 97).

Essentially, phenomenological research aims to generalise a range of individual responses to a human experience in order to get a "grasp of the very nature of the thing" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). Data is collected from individuals who each have different experiences of a phenomenon (in this instance a change in the method of allocating guidance resources), this data is then synthesised, thematised and summarised in order to obtain "a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals" (Creswell, 2009, p.58). This description consists of 'what' they experienced and 'how' they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological research has a strong philosophical basis; it focuses on describing the lived experience of participants' daily life and routine - "how people manage to do the everyday things" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 98) but not on explaining or analysing these experiences. It searches for wisdom, not empirical scientific evidence (Moustakas, 1994).

After much research I determined that a phenomenological approach was suitable for my research objectives. It was important to me to research many individual experiences of a common phenomenon (the changed guidance allocation). I wanted

to concentrate on participants' subjective perceptions, attitudes, and feelings.

I wanted my research to be at least partly in contrast with two other large-scale research studies of the same phenomenon that were entirely quantitative (IGC, 2013; NCGE, 2013), and therefore I wanted to include an additional qualitative focus away from exclusively positivist approaches such as measurement and statistics.

A further reason for choosing this approach was that one of my research questions focused on differences between school types. Phenomenological approaches acknowledge the existence of multiple realities, that "things can be seen in different ways by different people at different times in different circumstances, and that each alternative version needs to be recognized as being valid in its own right" (Denscombe, 2003, p.100).

In attempting to comprehend and report on the impact of change in the professional working lives and workplace settings of guidance counsellors, it was important from a phenomenological approach, to try and understand the "complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Denzin & Lincon, 1998, p. 221). In this respect, I felt that a phenomenological approach was fitting for the research as it was one which could portray how guidance counsellors reacted to and dealt with a situation that was forced upon them; how they interpreted events and, how they made sense of their experiences over the year.

I also regarded a phenomenological approach as being suitable for pragmatic reasons, as it is suited to small scale research in places such as schools, "where the budget is low and the main resource is the researcher him/herself" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 106). A phenomenological perspective also influenced the mainly open-ended questions in the online survey and the individual interviews, where the

emphasis was on the verbal rather than the numerical, and on discourse rather than statistics. Finally, such an approach appealed on a personal level, as description interests me more than analysis, interpretation appeals to me more than measurement and agency interests me more than structure.

Putting a phenomenological approach into practice.

Once a decision on adopting a phenomenological approach was made, I set about looking for practical guidelines to its use. I decided to use Moustakas's (1994) systematic step-by-step phenomenological approach to the data analysis procedure. One of the first steps was to 'bracket' or set out my own experiences (see Chapter One). Qualitative data is then collected from participants. The research literature informed me that this can include "formal written responses" (Creswell, 2009, p. 61). So, with regard to this thesis, written answers to broad open-ended questions in the online survey were sought in phase one of the research.

In order to obtain rich qualitative data about the lived experience of the participants, this first phase was followed up with in-depth interviews. Moustakas recommended interviewing "between 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon" (ibid), and in this research 12 such interviews were conducted.

The next practical stage of a phenomenological approach involved going through the transcribed data and highlighting particular sentences or comments that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Then, "clusters of meaning" (ibid) were interpreted by me and developed into themes. Lastly, I wrote a composite description which attempted to represent the essence of the phenomenon, focusing on the common experiences of the participants. The aim was that readers should come away with the feeling that they "understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

Self-Reflexivity

In order to describe a research context fully, it is important to give some consideration to the researcher's perspective. As Wilkinson (1988) argued, the importance of the personal voice, interests and the experience of the researcher cannot be ignored: "for the individual, his or her research is often an expression of personal interests and values ... thus the topics one chooses to study are likely to derive from personal concerns" (p. 494). Denscombe (2003) noted "a growing acceptance among those involved in qualitative data analysis that some biographical details about the researcher warrant inclusion" (p. 272) in research methodology accounts. In particular, the cultural, social and personal experiences of the researcher play a central role in mediating all aspects of the research:

As researchers, the meanings we attach to things that happen and the language we use to describe them are the product of our own culture, social background and personal experiences. (Denscombe, 2003, p. 87).

I was one of those guidance counsellors who experienced a fundamental change to my working life in 2012-13 and this change was a catalyst for the research focus of the thesis. As outlined in Chapter One, I have worked as a guidance counsellor for almost two decades, both in an urban fee-charging²⁰ school in a middle-class area of South Dublin, and in a rural DEIS community school in North Donegal which includes in its catchment area, the most deprived rural local electoral area (LEA) in Ireland (Haase, 2006). Through these very diverse and opposed work environments, I have witnessed at first hand the structural inequalities that exist in Irish second-level education, which persist in offering advantage to the most

²⁰ The term 'fee-charging school' was first used in an ESRI report '*Governance and Funding of Second-level Schools in Ireland*' in Autumn 2013. It replaces the more commonly used term 'fee-paying school'.

privileged members of our society while continuing to fail the most socially excluded and marginalized members (Baker et al., 2004, Lynch et al., 2009). These experiences have informed my thinking and my understanding of equality issues in education and have fed into the development of the research questions in this study.

The research design and methodology chosen for this study have also been influenced by personal circumstance and the impracticalities of living in an isolated rural area. I live near Malin Head in North Donegal, which is a one hour drive from the nearest large town, Letterkenny. As the crow flies, I am more than three times closer to Scotland than to Dublin, which is a four-hour drive away. Therefore, for reasons of time, distance, practicality and financial cost, I required suitable research methodologies that would transcend the physical distance between me and the rest of the guidance counsellors in Ireland I wished to engage with.

For the first phase of research, I made a decision to use an online survey as a means of reaching all guidance counsellors instantly, regardless of geographical distance. An added benefit was that this method also ensured that their responses were available instantly, without the additional expense of postage or travel. I had had three years' experience of doing annual student evaluations via an online provider called Survey Monkey and I learned a lot about the pitfalls and benefits of using such surveys in order to obtain good quality end-of-year evaluations from students. Therefore an online survey was deemed a suitable methodology.

For phase two of the research, the guidance counsellors who had volunteered to participate were also geographically dispersed throughout the country, with a high number of volunteers from the Munster area. In order to overcome the practical and logistical difficulties associated with conducting face-to-face individual interviews

in a dozen locations across the country, telephone interviews offered a pragmatic solution.

In choosing these methodologies, I was mindful that the options for conducting rigid statistical analysis would be restricted unless a random sample was obtained. However, in trying to balance obtaining robust quantitative data with acquiring good qualitative data, I decided to focus more on the latter, as a contrast to the entirely quantitative approach adopted in the two other national studies that had already taken place involving the same population (IGC, 2013; NCGE, 2013). The issue of being unable to conduct statistical analysis of any quantitative data became a secondary concern.

Research Strategy

I chose a mixed method approach (MMR) for this thesis as I felt that it would be a good fit for the research questions: the first one required a mix of a quantitative and qualitative approach, and the second question required a qualitative methodology. Both qualitative and quantitative methods encompass intrinsic strengths and weaknesses, and I felt that in employing an MMR design, it would create balance, by offsetting “the weakness inherent within one method with the strengths of the other” (Creswell et al., 2009, p. 229).

On examining the very limited recent research that had been carried out on the experiences of guidance counsellors in Ireland since the implementation of the guidance cutbacks (IGC, 2013a, 2013b; NCGE, 2013), I found that it was all quantitative. This thesis offers an additional qualitative perspective, in an attempt to document and analyze guidance counsellors’ perceptions and experiences of the impact of this change, across different school types and the impact of the loss of care in schools.

Having decided that an MMR strategy was appropriate, the next step involved researching an appropriate methodology to be applied. Ascribing to the philosophy that the research questions dictate the methods used (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), I decided to utilize a sequential exploratory approach (Leech et al., 2010) to understand the phenomena under investigation.

The purposes of exploratory research include finding out what is happening, seeking new insights, asking questions, generating ideas and hypotheses for future research (Robson, 2002, p. 59). These sentiments seemed to me to be a good fit with the research objectives, where the phenomenon under investigation was new and current and had not been researched qualitatively. I expected that the exploration of issues through an online survey would in turn lead to more questions, which is what transpired. In order to answer these new questions a second phase of the research needed to take place.

A sequential approach is useful to understand a phenomenon or processes that are current and changing (Creswell, 2009), and as this thesis was examining an issue that was recent and current, I felt that this methodology was appropriate. A further reason for choosing a sequential approach was its suitability for data collection from a large population (in this case 837 guidance counsellors), as it is “easy to implement and straightforward to describe” (Creswell, 2009, p. 212). Both phases are now described.

Research strategy in phase one of research.

The first phase of the research involved a large-scale online survey of guidance counsellors, which was piloted initially. The benefits of using an online survey as a data collection instrument include greater accuracy in responses and fewer missing entries than paper-based surveys; greater authenticity of responses because of

volunteer participation (i.e. an absence of coercion); economy of design, and rapid turnaround in data collection (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2007). Primarily, I felt that the main value of using an online survey was in obtaining an indication of broad perceptions, attitudes and experiences of guidance among participating guidance counsellors from all over the country.

Like any research method, surveys have downsides and it was important to be aware of these. In this instance, some of the pitfalls highlighted by Berends (2006) were applicable: for example there was no way of knowing in advance how comfortable the population would be with filling in an online survey with sensitive questions – despite the guarantees of confidentiality provided, and furthermore it was impossible to gauge whether many guidance counsellors would have the motivation, time or energy to fill in another survey on the guidance changes, on top of two similar surveys from the IGC and NCGE at the end of a busy year:

“respondents to educational surveys are often not willing to spend too much of their precious time filling out surveys” (p. 632). I also made an assumption that their points of view could be “described or measured accurately through self-reporting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 124). Taking these potential weaknesses into consideration, I felt that the benefits of an online survey outweighed the negatives as it would enable a large number of guidance counsellors’ preferences, opinions and beliefs to be measured efficiently and confidentially.

For the online survey to provide a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data, it was necessary to ask a mixture of closed and open questions. While some closed questions were necessary in order to obtain the necessary demographic and quantitative data, the majority of the questions were formulated as open-ended, so as not to limit the scope of the answers.

Research strategy in phase two of research.

The second phase of research was a series of 12 structured one-to-one interviews which were planned to take place in November and December 2013, six months after the online survey. The six months gap had two benefits: it gave me adequate time to reflect, report on and analyze the findings from phase one, and it also gave the interview participants time to reflect back on the previous school year with the benefit of some hindsight.

The benefits of including oral data in research are well documented (Van Manen, 1990):

Sometimes it is easier to talk than to write about a personal experience, because writing forces the person into a more reflective attitude, which may make it more difficult to stay close to an experience as it is immediately lived (p. 67).

Though a second phase of data gathering was always intended, I was unsure whether this would involve focus groups or individual interviews, until after I had analyzed the phase one data. I researched fully both of these methods of obtaining the oral data, before I decided to conduct individual interviews. Merriam (1988) summarised the value of interviews:

Interviewing is a major source of qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study ... For the interview is the best way – and perhaps the only way – to find out “what is in and on someone else’s mind” (p. 86).

The literature on research methods provided several other arguments for choosing individual interviews over focus groups from (Patton, 1990; Kvale, 1996; Robson, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009; B2B Insights Blog, 2013) and these reasons are presented in Table N.1 in Appendix N.

Once a decision was made on using interviews, the next decision was whether to conduct face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews. Denscombe (2003) cited findings that people are as honest in telephone interviews, as they are in face-to-face evidence. Further specific research on telephone interviewing by Thomas and Purdon (1995) claimed that “in some situations they are more valid” (p. 4) than face-to-face interviews. In light of these findings, I decided to use telephone interviewing, which also had practical and pragmatic benefits:

The main attraction of telephone interviewing is that it enables data to be collected from geographically scattered samples more cheaply and quickly than by field interviewing, but avoids the well-known limitations of postal surveys (Thomas & Purdon, 1995, para 1).

One of the benefits of the MMR approach was that it enabled triangulation, where the purpose is to aim for convergence and corroboration of data from different methods. The approach was also developmental. The quantitative and qualitative data from one data collection method (the online survey) were analyzed first. Then these findings informed, supported and shaped the second phase in the research process (structured interviews) six months later. This ensured that both phases of the study were “connected” (Creswell, 2009, p. 208).

Awareness of possible limitations in research methodologies.

No research method can be 100% perfect, and researchers need to be aware of the limitations of each one chosen. From the research literature (Archer, 2007; Armstrong, n.d; Berends, 2006; Fanning, 2009), I identified some shortcomings for survey methods and interviewing and several of these findings were applicable to this thesis.

I was conscious of one weakness of questionnaires mentioned in the literature: that the length of time required to complete the survey may prove too long for busy participants. This was a particular worry for me as the survey was scheduled for the last month of the school term in 2013, and it followed separate surveys for the IGC and NCGE on the same issue. Another common finding in the research literature was that some respondents may abandon the survey after one or two questions and some, due to time pressures may provide answers lacking in detail.

In the case of the online survey, five respondents started it but gave up after several minutes having answered only one or two of the demographic questions. These responses were discarded. It was also important to keep in mind that some responses provided in surveys may be ambiguous and all responses are subject to the subjective interpretation of the researcher.

Interviews have limitations too (Thomas & Purdon, 1995), and these relate particularly to the researcher's role: the questions are not neutral, as the interviewer has chosen the questions with a particular purpose in mind. For the participant, there is always the potential for misunderstanding the question; while the interviewer's tone of voice and any emphasis expressed can influence responses.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards in research have been described as having "respect for persons" and "respect for truth" (Bassey, 1990, p. 18). I felt that it was important to give ample consideration to these and other ethical concerns such as informed consent, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of data. This thesis also gave rise to specific

ethical issues such as my professional relationship with the participants, often referred to as 'insider research' (Branick & Coghlan, 2007).

In establishing the research relationship and gathering data, I adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) in St. Patricks College, Drumcondra and I followed its Code of Practice in Research Ethics. These guidelines and the Code can be accessed at

<http://www.spd.dcu.ie/main/research/InformationonEthicalResearch.shtml>

Before embarking on the research phase, I completed a St. Patrick's College Research Ethics Proposal in May 2012, which was approved by the REC in June 2012.

I carried out both phases of research taking cognisance of current Data Protection (Ireland 1988, 2003a) and Freedom of Information legislation, (Ireland 1997, 2003b) and I advised participants of the limitations to confidentiality in respect of this legislation both in Informed Consent Forms and by Email.

I also checked the survey instrument against the Equal Status Act (Ireland, 2000b) and the Equality Act (Ireland 2004), to ensure that there was no inherent bias in the language or terminology used, on any of the nine grounds of discrimination.

Ethical considerations in phase one of research.

In phase one of the research, in order to get a breadth of data which would portray the experiences and perceptions of guidance counsellors at the end of a year involving change for many in the profession, several ethical issues were paramount: confidentiality of data, anonymity of respondents, informed consent and non-coercion. These are now discussed.

Confidentiality and anonymity.

An online survey offered a relatively anonymous method of data collection across the whole professional body of guidance counsellors working in second-level schools nationwide. The survey was restricted to those who were registered members of the IGC. The members were contacted by email independently of me but on my behalf, by the IGC office administrator. In order to preserve anonymity, respondents were specifically requested not to identify their schools or themselves. This necessary guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity created a difficulty as the online survey was also going to be used to obtain names of volunteers for phase two of the research. To circumvent this, interested guidance counsellors were asked to indicate their interest (if any) in participating in phase two of the research by email and a hyperlink was provided at the end of the online survey. This external email link ensured that the anonymity of participants was not compromised.

Informed consent.

Informed consent was a “key consideration” (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 24) of the research. In this respect, I drew up an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E), as recommended by Creswell (2009, p. 89), to explain what participation in the research would involve. This was sent as an email attachment to each potential participant with the invitation email. Each participant was requested to read the attachment before completing the online survey. In addition, at the start of the survey, participants were reminded of the need to read the Informed Consent Form. In this way the process of informed consent was assured.

Non-coercion.

The voluntary aspect of participation in the research was clearly explained to potential participants in writing. There was no coercion placed on any guidance

counsellor to complete the online questionnaire, other than the first invitation email and two reminder emails, which were sent out at weekly intervals.

As a guidance counsellor of 18 years' experience in several different settings, I was very conscious in the pilot phase of my existing relationships with many of the participants. In the pilot phase, a convenience sample was used to pilot the paper version of the questionnaire and all these participants were well known to me as they were in my counselling supervision group. I felt that there was a risk that they might be too polite to make constructive criticisms, so to reduce this risk, I asked them to return the pilot survey anonymously by post, and a stamped-addressed envelope was provided.

Ethical considerations in phase two of research.

In phase two of the research, my aim was to answer questions posed by the findings from phase one, and to delve deeper into the research questions through a series of one-to-one interviews. For Noddings (1986), educational research should exemplify caring, and in particular trust and mutual respect. In attempting to be faithful to this view, it was vital to gain the participants' confidence and trust, so that they would be comfortable sharing their experiences. My main aim was to establish a trustful working relationship with the 12 participants, in order to obtain rich data from the process.

Confidentiality and anonymity.

Interview participants were given a written guarantee of confidentiality in the form of an email, to which they had to reply stating that they were aware of the guarantee, and that they were willing to proceed with the interview. All emails received were saved by me, all audio recordings and transcripts were also saved and will be securely retained until the awarding of the EdD in Autumn 2015, when

they will be destroyed. The audio recordings were provided on a CD to the examiners, but for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, this CD does not accompany the thesis copy in the Cregan Library.

At the beginning of each telephone interview, I read out a statement repeating the guarantee of confidentiality, and participants were given an opportunity to withdraw from the interview. At the end of each interview, each participant was required to choose a pseudonym from a given list of names (derived from nature). The purpose of this was twofold, firstly to demonstrate to the participants that their anonymity was being protected, and secondly to allow the participants to keep a record of their assumed name, should they in the future wish to track any comments attributed to them.

Insider research.

It was important to consider the issue of 'insider research' in this thesis, as effectively I was an 'insider researcher'. This is where "the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research" (Rooney, 2005, p. 6). While conducting the research, I continued to work as a guidance counsellor and experienced many of the same impacts that the respondents and participants described to me.

Historically, in positivist research, this paradigm would have been seen as problematic as it left open the contention that such a researcher lacked objectivity. More recently however, there has been a growing acceptance of the impossibility of any researcher remaining 100% objective, and an increasing recognition that the personal beliefs and values of the researcher need to be acknowledged (Branick & Coghlan, 2007). I was minded to heed Denscombe's (2003) advice that:

The researcher's values and beliefs play a role in the production and analysis of qualitative data and therefore researchers should come clean about the way their research agenda has been shaped by personal experiences and social backgrounds (p. 268).

Familiarization with a society or group of people under study can be “hugely beneficial” to a study (McCracken, 1988, p. 22), not least at a pragmatic level. I had the practical and useful insider benefits of a large network of fellow guidance counsellors. This operated at the micro level in my pilot study, in which most members of my supervision group participated; and at the macro level, where through my professional contacts, I was able to use the IGC email database to send the online survey to its members. I was also able to use my professional contacts in phase two when I needed to purposefully select four additional guidance counsellors for interview, in order to satisfy the demographic criteria that I had set out.

The fact that I was ‘on the inside’ greatly facilitated my contacts with the respondents and participants, and played a part in building a sense of rapport and ease with them. This in turn enabled me enter their world to a small degree and comprehend their lived experiences of guidance cuts. Careful scrutiny of the interview transcripts, for example, reveals that often the participants addressed me by my first name and said things like “ah look at, Liam”, and “I don’t really know Liam”, which suggests they were relaxed in the interview situation.

Research Design

The steps taken in designing and setting up each of the research phases are now described. A detailed account of the research timeline is provided in Appendix D.

Research design in phase one of research.

Best practice in survey design was adhered to in all stages of the survey drafting (Fanning, 2005; Berends, 2006; Greene, 2007; Harris & Brown, 2010; Armstrong, *n.d.*). The literature review provided the source for the majority of questions in the online survey. With the exception of five questions relating to demographics (1, 3, 9, 16 and 17), the questions were all derived from the literature relating to inequality, disadvantage, guidance policy, guidance best practice, and workplace change. The source in the literature for each question is given in Appendix F. There were four types of question in the survey as summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Question Types in Survey

Question type	Example of question
Factual demographic questions with yes/no answers	<i>Does your school have DEIS status?</i>
Structured items with a range of given answers using a Likert-type scale	<i>What is the difference (if any) between your allocated guidance hours in 2012-13 and previous years?</i> The possible answers were arranged using a seven-point scale which ranged from: <i>my guidance hours were increased by five or more</i> <i>to my guidance hours were reduced by five or more.</i>
Open-ended questions	<i>Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of working as a guidance counsellor from September 2012 to May 2013?</i>
Open-ended questions but with some constraints	<i>Based on the contact you have had with students during this school year, what do you consider to be the main concerns and issues of your students this year?</i>

The question set underwent three drafts before I finalised it in paper format.

Piloting of survey.

I conducted two pilot studies on the questionnaire. The first of these was in paper format. This was followed by an online live pilot version on the Survey Monkey

website, where it remained open for one week. Full details of the design of the pilot survey, the sampling procedures, a copy of the pilot survey, and the feedback from the two pilot surveys are provided in Appendix G.

Research design in phase two.

The online survey findings raised many new questions. In order to get answers to these, I carried out a series of structured interviews by telephone. I derived a series of 29 questions from the online survey findings, and I prepared an interview transcript. The first section of the transcript included some preliminary questions that were required in order to obtain informed consent before proceeding. This section was followed by five closed questions about school demographics that were essential in order to ensure the sample of interviewees was representative. The interview questions were mostly open-ended. The full interview transcript is presented in Appendix Q in three different formats – audio recordings of the twelve interviews, transcripts of the recordings in MS Excel format and in MS Word format.

I arranged for two pilot interviews to take place, I conducted the first interview face to face and the second one over the telephone. Neither participant reported any difficulty understanding the questions and neither made any recommended changes or suggestions to the wording or format of the interview. The length of the face-to-face interview was 21' 11" and the length of the telephone interview was 17' 42". This enabled me to say to the interviewees that the interview would take at least 15 minutes of their time.

At the end of each actual interview, I thanked each participant for participating. In the interests of anonymity, I informed the participants that each recording would be

saved under a fictitious name and that any of their comments which would be used would include this name. I presented them with a list of pseudonyms derived from nature and invited each participant to choose one. The names chosen by the participants were: Basil, Hazel, Heather, Holly, Jasmine, Lily, Olive, Poppy, Rose, Rosemary, Rowan, and Violet.

Research Participants (sampling)

The sampling frame for phase one of this research was the complete, up-to-date list of registered guidance counsellors in second-level schools in Ireland in May 2013. This is held by the IGC and permission was obtained from the organization to use its email database (IGC, 2012) to contact potential respondents. I utilized three types of sampling in the research, which resulted in non-random samples. In the pilot phase I chose convenience sampling, in phase one I used self-selection (volunteer) sampling, and in phase two I used a combination of purposive sampling and self-selection sampling. The sampling in the pilot phase of the research is described in Appendix G, Section 2; while the sampling I used in the other phases is described below.

Sampling in phase one of research.

The sample that I chose for phase one of the research was a self-selected (volunteer) sample, where every guidance counsellor who was a registered paid-up member of the IGC in May 2013, and who was working in the second-level system was contacted by email and invited to participate. Thus the population was the total number of registered, experienced and qualified guidance counsellors working in second-level schools in Ireland. In order to obtain the sample, I first obtained permission from the IGC to send an email to all guidance counsellors on its

database, inviting them to participate in the research. However the manner in which the IGC database was set up did not allow for a targeted email to be sent to the 837 guidance counsellors in second-level schools, so the online survey was distributed to all 1145 guidance counsellors on the IGC database. This meant that guidance counsellors in settings other than second-level schools also received the email invitation. For this reason, I emphasized in the invitation email that only those who were working in second-level schools should complete the survey. I also clearly restated this requirement at the beginning of the online survey (Appendix J). In addition, as several survey questions related to guidance counsellors' experience of guidance in previous years, I made it very clear that those who were new to the role should not respond to the survey. I can therefore state with a high degree of confidence that virtually all experienced guidance counsellors in second-level schools were contacted.

Return rate of sample in phase one.

Concerns have been expressed about the decreasing response rates from online surveys (Cook et al., 2000) and the adequacy of response rates (Dommeyer, et al., 2002; Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Recent research has also found that online surveys are much less likely to achieve response rates as high as surveys administered on paper, which elicit an average response rate of 33% (McNulty, 2008).

For this survey, it became apparent to me that there were two ways of interpreting the return rate – in terms of guidance counsellors and in terms of schools. I stated clearly in the instructions that if there was more than one guidance counsellor in a school, then only one should reply. The return rate in terms of guidance counsellors is examined firstly, followed by the return rate for schools.

Rather than focus too much on levels of response, Denscombe (2003) recommended that researchers evaluate levels of response by several other criteria. He suggested looking at similar studies as a way of gauging whether the response rate is acceptable, so recent surveys involving the same population were examined. A paper survey of guidance counsellors for an NCGE research project by Hayes and Morgan (2011) achieved a return rate of 36%. The return rate for the paper-based IGC National Audit (2013) of guidance counsellors in second-level schools, which had three separate phases was 36%, 38% and 29% respectively. The average return rate for these four postal surveys was 35%.

Even though I had not planned to conduct any tests of statistical significance, I did calculate an acceptable sample size using an online sample size calculator to have a sample size to aim for (www.surveysystem.com/ssalc.htm). With regard to respondents, and given the population size of 837 guidance counsellors, a minimum sample size of 264 was required in order to provide a 95% confidence level, with a margin of error of 5. This equated to an acceptable return rate of 32%. The actual number of guidance counsellors who responded was 280. On examination of the answers, I found that 7 of these respondents were not working in second level schools so I excluded their answers. This gave a valid sample size of 273, which equated to a return rate of 33%. Using Nulty's (2008) findings on online survey return rates as a benchmark, it would appear that 33% for an online survey is within an acceptable range of the average of 35% achieved for postal surveys involving the same population. To look at the return rate in terms of schools rather than guidance counsellors, the population was 778 second-level schools. With guidance counsellors in 273 second-level schools having responded, this equated to a valid return rate by school of 35%.

Whether one interprets the population in terms of guidance counsellors, or in terms of schools, the return rate can be deemed acceptable, as it was 35% in terms of schools, or 33% in terms of guidance counsellors.

Representativeness of sample in phase one.

Regarding the adequacy of the sample, having one that is representative of the population is more important than having a high return rate (Creswell 2009), if one wishes to “make claims about the population” (p. 145), however as the survey sample was a non-probability one, generalizability was not a prime consideration. Nonetheless, I checked the representativeness of the survey sample against the different school types and I found the response rates to be very representative. Full details are given in Chapter 5 (Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.5).

I also checked the representativeness of the online survey sample in terms of the geographic location of the school and I compared these data with the response rate from the IGC National Audit (2013) which targeted the same population. I found both datasets to be very similar. I received at least one reply from every Local Authority Area (LAA) in the country. However it must be borne in mind that 29 respondents did not answer the question on the geographic area of their school (it is possible that some respondents avoided the question for reasons of anonymity). The responses received from some areas such as Co. Tipperary and Co. Donegal seemed to me to be a little over-representative of the number of guidance counsellors working in those counties (16/28 for Tipperary, 18/29 for Donegal). The fact I live in Co. Donegal may explain the high number of responses from that county, but I have no explanation for the high rate from Tipperary (see Table 5.2 in Chapter 5).

Sampling and representativeness of sample in phase two of research.

For practical reasons, it was not possible to obtain a random sample for the individual interviews and therefore the findings are not applicable to the general body of guidance counsellors. The sample can both be described as a “nested” volunteer sample of eight (Collins & O’Cathain, 2009, p. 5) combined with a purposive sample of four. With volunteer sampling, one has to be very cautious in making any claim for generalizability, and this is another reason why I make no such claim regarding this phase of the research. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) explained, “volunteers may have a range of different motives for volunteering” (p.116).

On completion of the online survey in May 2013, 26 of the participants sent an email back expressing a willingness to participate in phase two of the research. I was not in a position to inform them at that stage, whether phase two would involve focus groups or interviews, as I had not made that decision at the time. I did however send an acknowledgement of their interest in a return email.

I decided to conduct 12 interviews in November and December 2013. In choosing the 12 participants, my main criterion was representativeness, and prior to inviting these volunteers to participate, I conducted extensive research to make sure that the 12 invitees were as representative of the population as possible. Using their names, it was possible to obtain demographic information on the schools where the 26 volunteers from May 2013 worked, from the published IGC directory of guidance counsellors. Then, using this information and combining it with official school lists published on the DES website, it was possible to create a targeted list of names in order to satisfy a wide range of representativeness criteria: ‘historical’ school type,

DEIS / non-DEIS, FES school / fee-charging school, school gender composition, and local authority area.

Once I had identified the 12 most representative guidance counsellors from the 26 volunteers, I contacted them by email to invite them to participate in individual telephone interviews. Of those contacted, nine replied and agreed to participate.

This cohort of the sample can therefore be described as a nested volunteer sample. I decided to proceed with these nine interviews while waiting for the remaining three to get in touch. These three did not reply and I decided not to contact them a second time. The reason for starting the interview process without the full planned sample of 12 guidance counsellors, was that I wanted to ensure that the sample also contained a mix of urban/rural and a mix of socio-economic backgrounds. As it was not possible to obtain this information from any published data, I made a decision to obtain this information through questioning at the start of each interview. I intended to monitor these demographic details as the interviews progressed, and then choose the final participants taking all of the demographic data into account.

Unfortunately, while transcribing the recorded interviews, I accidentally deleted one of the recordings before transcription, this left eight completed transcribed interviews. When these eight interviews were analyzed, it was possible to check how representative they were of the population. Gaps were identified which were not possible to fill using the remaining 14 guidance counsellors who had volunteered in May 2013. This meant that I had to search elsewhere in order to strengthen the representativeness of this sample.

I made a decision to target four additional non-volunteer participants from the IGC membership directory in order to ensure that the overall sample for the individual

interviews was representative. These four were guidance counsellors who were known to me. The final sample for phase two therefore contained eight self-selected volunteers and four who were purposefully selected. A table outlining the representativeness of the interviewees is given in Appendix I, minus the location details as requested by two of the participants.

Data Collection and Data Handling

As the research strategy was exploratory and sequential, I collected the data in two separate phases. For the first phase I used an online survey, hosted on an online service called Survey Monkey. For the second phase, I used telephone interviewing. This section describes how both sets of data were collected and handled.

Data collection and handling in phase one of research.

Denscombe (2003) recommended that suitable steps be taken “to follow up non-respondents, to encourage them to collaborate with the research” (p. 21). To this end, I monitored and recorded the response rate daily while the survey was live. This enabled me to detect patterns (such as slowdowns) in the rate of responses, to the extent that it was possible to determine with confidence when the responses had stopped and when it would be necessary to issue a reminder by email. Methods recommended to boost the response rate of online surveys include issuing a number of reminder emails (Kittleson, 1997; Archer, 2007; McNulty, 2008). Kittleson (1997) found that it was possible to double the survey response rates with reminders, so I followed this course of action. After seven days, when the response rate was 62 guidance counsellors / schools (c. 7% of guidance counsellors / 8% of schools), I decided to send a reminder email on day eight (via the IGC database),

and this resulted in 61 replies on that day (c.14% / 16%) – almost as many responses in one day (61) as I received over the whole of the first week (62). After 14 days when the total number of replies stood at 141 (17% / 18%), I contacted the branch secretaries (14) of every individual IGC branch and I asked them to send out an email reminder to every member in their local branch (each branch secretary has access to the official IGC database which is protected using individual usernames and passwords). As each secretary sent out reminders at different times, the effect on the responses was not as dramatic, but had a steady and more gradual impact. As the deadline for survey completion was approaching, I felt that one final reminder was needed in order to achieve the desired response rate, so I sent a third reminder by email (again via the IGC database) during the last week of May. This had the effect of achieving the targeted number of responses. Appendix H contains a table showing the number of responses received daily and the impact of email reminders. The fact that the data were all available straight away on the final day of the survey was a big advantage. The need to transcribe the data was also eliminated, and they were available for analysis using QSR NVivo10 software immediately.

Data collection and handling in phase two of research.

I conducted 12 individual telephone interviews in November and December 2013, where the participating guidance counsellors reflected back on their perceptions and experiences of working through the first year of a changed guidance allocation in their schools. Before the start of each interview, I explained the purpose of the research, I gave a guarantee of anonymity and I obtained informed consent to record the interviews electronically.

I then proceeded to conduct the interviews via mobile phone, which allowed me to turn on the speaker and record the conversation easily. To record the interviews, I used an iPad voice recorder app; this enabled me to focus completely on the interviewee, rather than attempting to take notes during the interviews, and it also ensured the transparency and accuracy of the data. Apart from one interview which I accidentally deleted before transcribing it, and another interview where parts of the phone conversation were indistinct on the recording due to a weak phone signal, the interview process went smoothly. The average length of the interviews was 20' 26", with the shortest interview lasting 14' 00" and the longest continuing for 27' 46". The recordings were saved to a CD which accompanied the copies of this thesis sent to the examiners; however the audio recordings are to be destroyed by Autumn 2015 under the terms of the Ethical Agreement entered into with the interview participants.

I transcribed each interview as soon as possible after recording; this was a very useful exercise as it enabled me to become very familiar with the data, which proved invaluable when it came to analysis. When I had the interviews transcribed, I sent each participant a copy of what they had said by email. I gave them the opportunity to make comments on it, add to it, clarify it or suggest changes. None of the participants requested any changes to be made to their transcript. Several participants expressed embarrassment at the content of their transcript, saying that they came across as being incoherent and inarticulate; though as Patton (1990) observed, this is far from unusual: "the grammar in natural conversations is atrocious. Sentences begin and are then interrupted by new sentences before the first sentences are completed" (p. 379-380). Once each transcript was approved, I saved it for analysis. Transcripts for the interviews in MS Word are provided in

Appendix Q and the accompanying CD provides this information in MS Excel and in .wav audio recordings (not in copy in Cregan Library).

Data Analysis

As with all data analyses, the purpose here was to summarize the data so that it would be easily understood and so that it would provide answers to the research questions. This involved reducing a lot of detail into manageable summaries, collapsing the data into categories or values, adding them together, and converting to proportions.

I developed different analytical strategies for the qualitative and quantitative elements of the thesis. The first phase of research contained a mixture of mostly qualitative and some limited quantitative data, while the second phase contained only qualitative responses. Both analytical strategies are now described separately:

Quantitative analytical strategy.

One of the purposes behind the first phase of research was to obtain evidence in quantitative terms about the amount of guidance time lost and the areas of guidance and counselling impacted across different school types. In addition, as similar information had also been obtained in other recent national studies, I also wanted to see if this research would replicate any of the previous findings.

Descriptive statistics.

As the survey was an online one, the data were available electronically immediately at the end of May 2013. The data were firstly checked for accuracy and then were cleaned as appropriate, before coding began. To generate descriptive statistics, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was then used. Only very basic descriptive statistics were calculated in order to describe the

representativeness of the sample, such as: response rates; representativeness by local area authority; representativeness by 'historical' school type; representativeness by fee-charging / FES school; representativeness by DEIS/non-DEIS school.

Tests of statistical significance or inferential statistical tests were never intended, so the following descriptive statistics were not calculated: the range, the mean, variance, standard deviation, standard error, skewness or kurtosis. My reasons for not calculating these were fourfold: firstly the number of respondents to each question varied, and some respondents failed to provide complete data for the survey. Secondly, group data were not evenly balanced by school type, and this would have made conducting statistical significance tests problematic (i.e. there were much bigger valid percentages in some groups than others). Thirdly, the sample for the online survey was a volunteer sample which meant that it did not meet the criteria necessary to run statistical tests of significance. Fourthly, it was not intended to generalise the findings to the population of guidance counsellors or to the full cohort of schools.

Quantitative analysis related to research question one.

The first research question involved researching the impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation across different school types. It must be clarified that time and resources did not permit the exact same sample to be obtained from each of the different school types. Therefore there was a large variation in sample size (n) from school type to school type and for this reason, it was not possible to make direct 'like with like' comparisons between the different school types. However differing proportions within each category are reported and it is possible to gauge generally if there are any trends from these data.

I made a decision to use valid percentages in order to make judgements about whether there were differences between the various school types. My reason for using valid percentages was that valid percentages were also used in the analysis of quantitative data employed in two other recently published studies involving the same population, both of which dealt with a very similar research topic (IGC, 2013; NCGE, 2013).

First of all, the overall sample size (n) was established, then raw frequencies for the different samples were added up and thirdly the valid percentages were calculated from these figures. In several instances, 5-point or 7-point Likert scales were used to differentiate responses, here too, the sample size was obtained first, followed by valid percentages. On occasion, to simplify the analysis and to provide clarity, these categories were sometimes reduced to three: agreement, disagreement and neutral. These quantitative data were then summarised and presented in tables (see Chapter Five).

Qualitative analytical strategy in phase one.

I based the qualitative analytical strategy on the constant comparative method as developed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994), which in turn drew on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). In analysing the data generated by the open-ended questioning in part of the online survey and in the follow-on interviews, I did not group the responses according to pre-defined categories; instead, the main categories of meaning and any relationships between these categories were derived from the data through a process of inductive reasoning.

Constant comparative method: overview of process.

The constant comparative method involved breaking down the data into separate 'incidents' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or 'units' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and then coding them into categories. These categories were in two broad forms: descriptive categories that were derived from the language used by the participants in their responses, and explanatory categories that were identified by me as being important. As I compared and categorised the data, the categories changed constantly and expanded as my understandings and interpretations developed or became refined during the analysis. As Taylor and Bogdan (1984) summarised:

In the constant comparative method the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts; by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model (p. 126).

I used a qualitative data analysis software package, QSR NVivo10, to assist in the coding and management of the qualitative data. It must be stressed that I did not hand the task of interpretation and analysis over to this software programme; rather its main benefit was as a tool for managing the data efficiently.

The use of QSR NVivo10 also aided transparency. It enabled all data movements and coding patterns to be logged and conceptual categories and thought progression to be mapped. This ensured that all stages of the analytical process were traceable and transparent. It assisted in the production of an audit trail, where all data could be traced back to an individual survey respondent or interview participant, which is a key criterion with which the trustworthiness and plausibility of a qualitative study can be established. All respondent comments used in the results chapters include a

respondent identifier (e.g. Respondent 17) and all comments used from interview participants include the pseudonym chosen by the participant (e.g. Lily).

The qualitative analytical strategy for phase one.

The qualitative analytical strategy I chose for the open-ended questionnaire data encompassed a coding plan with four distinct stages. This plan contained several cycles of coding moving from initial open coding which was largely descriptive and participant led to interpretive hierarchical coding. The four stages were:

Stage one – open coding.

In this stage I deconstructed the data from its original chronology in the questionnaire and rearranged it by units, within each open-ended question of the survey instrument. As outlined above, I did not pre-conceive these emergent units but they were derived from the data as I read. Next, I categorized these units into recurring themes or interconnections, and I then arranged these themes in order of frequency of occurrence using valid percentages.

Stage two – categorization of codes.

In the second stage of coding I reconstructed the data into a framework for analysis. This involved reorganizing the codes by grouping them together, by renaming certain groups of codes, and by merging some codes together.

Stage three – coding on.

In the third stage I broke down some of the reorganized codes into sub-codes so as to better understand the meanings in them.

Stage four – data reduction/consolidation.

In the fourth and final coding stage, I reread and rechecked the units and the themes. I eventually reduced the data further still and consolidated it into more generalized themes and relationships, in part influenced by the literature review.

The qualitative analytical strategy for phase two.

I also used the constant comparison approach as an analytical strategy for the interview data. The analysis followed a similar pattern of coding to that which I conducted for phase one, where I isolated themes, and repeated the procedure in cycles until no further themes emerged. This involved reading and re-reading the transcripts of the interviews, looking for themes and comparing them to find consistencies and differences. I carried out systematic analyses of the interview data, where I compared these with the survey data. To assist with the analysis of the interview data, I used the QSR NVivo 10 package to help identify the emerging themes and to manage them.

Criteria for Inclusion of Illustrative Comments from Participants

The use of verbatim quotations from research participants has become effectively standard practice in much qualitative social research (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Very early in this research project, I was struck by the quality and level of detail of the responses to the survey and to the follow-on interviews, and it became clear on reading the transcripts, that I was going to be blessed with a surfeit of excellent illustrative comments to choose from.

Once the transcribed content of the survey responses and the interview responses was uploaded to NVivo10, the process of breaking down each comment into units of meaning enabled all the comments to be classified under one or more themes or issues. As I went through this process, whenever I came across any comment that stood out in any way, whether it was a particularly strong opinion, or an unusual turn of phrase, or a succinct summary of other comments that reflected a particular theme or issue, a note was kept in NVIVO highlighting it as a quotation that could be used to illustrate a particular point at a later stage.

I viewed illustrative quotations as a way of providing evidence for my interpretation of a qualitative finding. I hoped that it would become clear from the quotations chosen how my interpretations emerged from these data. On several occasions, when I had large numbers of comments that I wished to include, I compiled tables of illustrative quotations, much in the same way that quantitative data are usually presented in tabular format.

I also used illustrative quotations as a means of deepening the reader's understanding of the research questions, by allowing the research participants speak for themselves: "people's spoken words sometimes showed the strength of their views or the depth of feelings" (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006, p.13). However I was also minded by Corden and Sainsbury (2006) that the use of quotations can skew the reader's perspective towards discussion points or issues that are illustrated by particularly good arguments, and I had to remain vigilant to these concerns.

When it came to selecting which comments to include in the findings chapters, I was very conscious of the thesis word count, so if for example there were several quotations to choose from, I invariably chose the one which expressed the view most succinctly. As this process progressed, it became obvious that some participants were more articulate and verbose than others, therefore I also had to remain conscious of the need to balance the choice of these eloquent comments with giving a voice to as many participants as possible, and for this reason, sometimes the most colourful vivid quotations were not used.

Quality Assurance

One of the reasons why I chose the research methodologies adopted, was to conduct the research in as natural a way as was practical with the population in mind (Frankel & Wallen, 1996; Locke et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). I regarded the

online survey in phase one as being an unobtrusive and unthreatening means of obtaining a wide range of beliefs and opinions about the issues under investigation. I also hoped that the anonymous nature of the online survey and the guarantee of confidentiality I gave would build a sense of trust, which would lead to frankness and honesty in respondents' answers.

With the individual interviews, my aim was also to conduct the research in as natural a setting as possible focusing on guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences and how they were making sense of their professional lives in a time of change for the profession. As it was not possible for pragmatic and practical reasons to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants, I made a big effort to conduct the telephone interviews with them at a time and in a place that was convenient for them. I felt that this would contribute in a small way to enabling a relaxed conversation to develop with them.

Overall, I made every effort to ensure that the methods used to obtain the data were sound, valid and rigorous, in order to obtain data which were dependable, credible, confirmable and transferable, that would establish the "truth value" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290) of the research.

Limitations of the Methodology Chosen

While this research is very representative of guidance counsellors in Ireland, the findings are not transferable to this professional body as a whole, because, as has been already explained, tests of statistical significance were not conducted. Instead valid percentages were used.

As has been discussed above, there were several factors which contributed to this decision. Firstly, for practical and pragmatic reasons, mostly to do with time, location and resources, it was too difficult to obtain a random sample of participants. Neither the online survey sample, nor the interview sample was a random one. The online survey was a volunteer / self-selected sample which meant that it did not meet the criteria necessary to run statistical tests of significance. In addition, the sample in phase two was a combined volunteer / purposive sample, and it was also too small to run statistical significance tests.

The number of respondents providing data varied by question. Some respondents failed to complete data for the survey. This resulted in the group data being unbalanced (i.e. there were not equal numbers of participants from each school type) and this would have made conducting statistical significance tests problematic. This also meant that it was not possible to make direct comparisons between one school sector / school type and another.

The findings for the participants, who were all guidance counsellors, are specific to a particular year (2012-13) and are not expected to be representative of future (or past) cohorts of guidance counsellors.

Issues with self-reporting.

As both phases of the research involved self-reporting, it is important to acknowledge that there are several issues with regard to self-reporting by research participants that researchers need to be cognisant of when undertaking this type of research. These include accuracy, attitude, convenience, retrospective bias, timing and truthfulness. I tried to remain conscious of these issues throughout both phases of research, and in particular in the reporting and analysis phases. These issues are briefly discussed below.

Accuracy.

One of the issues with self-reporting involving surveys is the need to question objectively how accurate participants' perceptions or memories are of past issues and events. This has been found to be problematic with regard to surveys in particular. While this methodology has undoubted advantages when it comes to the representativeness of the data that it can produce, the emphasis on wide and inclusive coverage "limits the degree to which the researcher can check on the accuracy of the responses" (Denscombe, 2003, p.27). In this research, I had neither the time nor the resources to check on the accuracy or honesty of the responses, and had no option but to accept them at face value.

Attitude.

Another pertinent issue is that it is virtually impossible to gauge the participant's attitude to the survey completion - whether the respondent is giving it serious attention, or whether s/he regards the task as "a tedious chore to be completed in a perfunctory manner (Robson, 2002, p. 253). One of the only ways I was able to assess this aspect was by looking at the amount of time that each survey participant spent filling in the survey online, as this was recorded electronically. Longer times would tend to suggest a greater engagement by the participant in the research.

Convenience.

There is no doubt that self-reporting by research participants is a convenient option for the researcher, due to limits of time and resources. This was particularly true in this instance due to my work commitments and geographic isolation. Denscombe (2003) argued that faced with alternative research methodologies which are equally suitable, "it is reasonable for the researcher to select the one(s) which involves the least travel, the least expense and the least difficulty when it comes to gaining

access" (p. 33). This statement gave me confidence in the methodologies chosen for both phases.

Retrospective bias.

This has been identified as a common issue in self-reported research, where we may "reconstruct the past by consulting the present and projecting it backwards, assuming more stability in the characteristic or behaviour than it actually exhibits" (Stone et. al., 2009). On the other hand, sometimes people exaggerate the amount of change that may have happened. This research referred to the past, participants' current work situations were not researched, so it is entirely possible that participants' memories were inaccurate or exaggerated. In general, however Stone et al. argued that at best "what we 'recall' is in fact a kind of estimate" (p. 43).

Timing.

The survey in phase one was emailed to prospective respondents at the end of the first year of the changed guidance allocation, and the phase two one-to-one interviews took place 15 months after the changed guidance allocation came into force. While the timing of phase one and phase two was intentional, as the aim was to capture attitudes and perceptions at the end of the first school year under the new allocation arrangements, the timing of the survey and the interviews may have influenced the responses as the perceptions surveyed were retrospective.

Truthfulness.

As with accuracy, when it came to the views expressed, the comments made, and the disclosures given by the participants in both phases of the research, I had no way of judging how truthful or otherwise any of the comments were. As Malin and Birch (1997) argued, "however carefully interviews and questionnaires are structured, there is always the likelihood that people will not respond truthfully" (p.

37). I had no way of knowing what help or comments were "solicited from or given by other parties" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.221).

It must be acknowledged that the guidance counsellors who participated could be also be described as having a vested interest in providing details and information which would give a negative impression of their experiences of the first year of the changed guidance allocation. It is therefore entirely possible that some comments provided were either exaggerated or fictitious. However I had no overt reason to query or be suspicious of any individual comment or set of responses and therefore I had no option but to make the decision to accept all comments at face value.

Summary of Research Methodology

In this chapter the research methods I chose were described. I established that the online survey and the follow-on interviews were appropriate methods with which to answer the research questions. These methods enabled the participants to describe their lived perceptions and experiences of a year of change in guidance, and the impact of that change. The methods also allowed me to interpret these experiences and impacts. The next two chapters report on the findings for both research questions separately.

CHAPTER 5:

THE IMPACT OF THE REMOVAL OF THE EX-QUOTA

GUIDANCE ALLOCATION ACROSS DIFFERENT SCHOOL TYPES

CHAPTER 5: THE IMPACT OF THE REMOVAL OF THE EX-QUOTA GUIDANCE ALLOCATION ACROSS DIFFERENT SCHOOL TYPES

The IGC National Audit (2013a, 2013b) reported quantitative differences between school types in the way guidance hours were reduced, but that research did not investigate the qualitative impact of the reduction. As discussed earlier, this finding inspired one of the two research questions in this thesis, and this chapter presents findings linked with this question, '*What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?*'.

Throughout this chapter, reference is made to different school types. Four different ways of defining school types were used in the thesis. These were:

- 'historical'²¹ school types, defined in terms of school ownership and management;
- single sex schools v. co-educational schools;
- DEIS schools v. non-DEIS schools;
- fee-charging schools v. schools in the Free Education System (FES)

For detailed explanations of all of these school types, see Appendix L.

The research was in two phases, it involved an initial large-scale online survey followed by a series of individual interviews. The findings from the online survey posed a further set of questions which necessitated a series of follow-on individual interviews with guidance counsellors.

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In Ireland, second-level schools have historically been classified in three main ways: (a) Voluntary Secondary Schools; (b) Community and Comprehensive schools; and (c) schools owned and managed by VECs (now ETBs) such as Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the online survey for this research question are presented first; then the qualitative findings from the follow-on interviews are presented. The quantitative findings reported are shown in valid percentages unless otherwise stated. These take into account only those respondents who provided an answer to a particular question and ‘*n*’ designates the number of respondents which varies by analysis.

To provide a robust data trail, any comment used from the online survey is identified by a unique respondent number (e.g. Respondent 17), and any comment used from the individual interviews is identified by a pseudonym (e.g. Poppy).

The survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix J.

Phase One of Research: Descriptive Statistics

Phase one of the research comprised an online survey. There were 273 online questionnaires received and all of these were included in the analysis. This represents a response rate of 38% for all second-level schools. See Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Response Rate for all Schools (n= 273)

School Type	Population Frequency (National)	Percent	Sample Frequency	Valid Percent
All second-level schools	722*	100%	273	38.00%

*DES (2012), DES (2013a)

This rate compares favourably with the 33% typically reported for online surveys (Nulty, 2008). It exceeds the 28% response rate reported for the IGC’s *National Audit* in 2013, which was a postal survey involving the same population (i.e. all

guidance counsellors in second-level schools) and which was conducted at the same time of the school-year.

The survey achieved an overall response rate for the questions of 92%, and the average non-response rate was 8%. There were four questions which had response rates greater than 99%, while the lowest response rate was 77% for one question, indicating that respondents were selective of the questions answered. Questions which involved ticking a box achieved an average response rate of 95%, while those that required respondents to write an answer achieved an average response rate of 89%.

Representativeness in phase one of research.

In qualitative research, judging the adequacy of a response rate, by ensuring that respondents are representative of the population is more important than achieving a high response rate (Creswell, 2009). Therefore the representativeness of the sample was examined in terms of school location, 'historical' school type, DEIS/non-DEIS school, and fee-charging school / school in the FES. Under all of these criteria the sample in phase one was very representative of the population.

Geographic representativeness.

In order to determine if the sample was geographically representative, respondents to the survey were asked to indicate the local authority area (LAA) their school was located in, and 244 respondents out of 273 answered the question (see Table 5.2). The data were compared with the response rate from the IGC National Audit (2013) as this audit targeted the same population. Both datasets were found to be

very similar, with analogous percentages for most LAAs, and both samples including at least one respondent from each LAA in the country.

Table 5.2

Representativeness of Online Survey Sample Compared with Similar Sample (n =244)

Local Authority Area (LAA)	Survey Responses	Survey %	IGC Audit	Audit %
Carlow	3	1.2%	3	1.4%
Cavan	4	1.6%	3	1.4%
Clare	5	2%	6	2.7%
Cork (City & County)	31	12.7%	34	15.5%
Donegal	18	7.4%	7	3.2%
Dublin (All four Local Authorities)	48	19.6%	46	20.8%
Galway (City & County)	20	8.2%	12	5.5%
Kerry	8	3.3%	12	5.5%
Kildare	3	1.2%	5	2.3%
Kilkenny	4	1.6%	8	3.7%
Laois	4	1.6%	2	0.9%
Leitrim	1	<0.5%	1	<0.5%
Limerick (City & County)	11	4.5%	9	4.1%
Longford	2	0.8%	3	1.4%
Louth	7	2.9%	7	3.2%
Mayo	8	3.3%	8	3.7%
Meath	6	2.5%	6	3.7%
Monaghan	5	2%	5	2.3%
Offaly	6	2.5%	6	2.7%
Roscommon	1	<0.5%	1	<0.5%
Sligo	4	1.6%	5	2.3%
Tipperary (North & South)	16	6.6%	11	5.0%
Waterford (City & County)	6	2.5%	2	0.9%
Westmeath	2	0.8%	3	0.9%
Wexford	12	4.9%	7	3.2%
Wicklow	7	2.9%	7	3.2%
Total	244	100%	219	100%

Representativeness by 'historical' school type in the FES.

Of the 271 respondents who answered this question on school type, 146 (54%) indicated that they worked in a voluntary secondary school (VSS), 83 (31%) in an Education and Training Board (ETB) school (formerly VEC), and 42 (15%) in a community/comprehensive school. These percentages²² in the sample are very close to the national population, and thus can be considered very representative, see Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Breakdown of Response Rate for all Schools (n = 271)

<i>School Type</i>	Frequency Population*	Percent Population	Frequency Sample	Valid Percent
VSS	376	52%	146	54%
ETB Vocational School/ Community College	254	35%	83	31%
Community/Comprehensive	92	13%	42	15%
All second-level schools in FES	722	100%	271	100%

*ESRI 2013

Response rate for fee-charging schools / schools in the FES.

The response rate was then examined in terms of whether the respondents worked in a fee-charging school or in a school in the FES. Of the 271 respondents who provided this information, 93% worked in a school in the FES, while 7% worked in a fee-charging school. This is very close to the national profile, see Table 5.4.

²²

All percentages in this and subsequent tables are rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Table 5.4***Response Rate for Fee-Charging Schools / Schools in the FES (n= 271)***

School Type	Frequency Population*	Percent	Frequency Sample	Valid Percent
Schools in FES	667	92.00%	252	93%
Fee-charging Schools	55	8.00%	19	7%
All second- level schools	722	100%	271	100%

*ESRI 2013

Response Rate for DEIS schools / non-DEIS schools.

Of the 268 respondents who answered this question, 27% of them indicated that they worked in schools with DEIS status. This is very representative of the national population, see Table 5.5.

Table 5.5***Response Rate for DEIS Schools / non-DEIS Schools (n= 268)***

School Type	Frequency Population*	Percent	Frequency Sample	Valid Percent
DEIS	200	28.00%	73	27.00%
Non-DEIS	522	72.00%	195	73.00%
All schools	722	100%	268	100%

*DES (2012), DES (2013a)

Quantitative Findings from Phase One

The quantitative findings on the impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation on schools in general are presented first, to provide an overview of the impact. Then the findings across different school types are presented. To obtain these findings, an analysis was carried out of data from responses to the questions

on school demographics (Q.2, Q.3, Q.4 and Q.5) plus responses to questions on any change in role (Q.10, Q.12, Q.14 and Q.15).

Impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation on schools in general.

Guidance counsellors were asked if their role had changed during the school year 2012-13 (which was the first year under the new guidance allocation system).

There were two possible answers, 'Yes, my role changed' or 'No, my role did not change'. For those who answered 'Yes', three further questions related to the change were asked. A total of 264 responses were received to this question and 81% of guidance counsellors (214) said that their role had changed during the year, see Table 5.6.

Table 5.6

Did Guidance Role Change in 2012-13? (n = 264)

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Role changed	214	81
Role did not change	50	19
Total	264	100%

The guidance counsellors were asked if they did anything differently in 2012-13 as a result of the changed guidance allocation. A large majority (77%) reported that they did something differently, while 23% said that they did not do anything differently, see Table 5.7.

Table 5.7***Did You Do Anything Differently in 2012-13? (n = 262)***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Did something differently	201	77
Did not do anything differently	61	23
Total	262	100

The respondents were asked to describe their perceptions of the impact of the change in their role using a 5-part Likert scale, where the answers ranged from 'The change is definitely for the worse' to 'The change is definitely for the better'. The results, which show a strong negative perspective, are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8***Perceptions of Impact of Role Change in 2012-13 (n = 216)***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
The change is definitely for the better	13	6
The change is slightly positive	7	3
The change makes no difference	2	1
The change is slightly negative	43	20
The change is definitely for the worse	151	70

Looking at the cumulative responses for negative perceptions, and those for positive perceptions (i.e. omitting the respondents who chose 'The change makes no difference'), it is clear that the overall perception is overwhelmingly negative. These data are contained in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9***Cumulative Perceptions of Impact of Role Change in 2012-13 (n = 214)***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
All positive responses	20	9
All negative responses	194	91
Total	214	100

In order to see if the reality of any reduction or increase in guidance hours matched respondents' perceptions, they were then asked if there was any difference in their guidance hours in 2012-13 compared with the previous year. The responses show that relatively few guidance counsellors experienced an increase in guidance hours under the new allocation system, while most experienced a reduction. These findings are presented in Table 5.10 and show a similar negative pattern to that in Tables 5.8 and 5.9.

Table 5.10***Difference in Guidance Hours from 2011-'12 to 2012-13 (n = 268)***

Guidance Hours	Frequency	Valid Percent
Increased by 5 or more	6	2
Increased by 3-4	6	2
Increased by 1-2	9	3
Remained the same	71	27
Reduced by 1-2	37	14
Reduced by 3-4	58	22
Reduced by 5 or more	81	30
Total	268	100

When the differences in guidance hours are cumulated into either 'all increased hours' or 'all decreased hours' (i.e. omitting those who chose '*My guidance hours*

remained the same'), the findings are extremely negative, with 89% of respondents having experienced a reduction in allocated guidance hours. The combined responses are shown in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11

Cumulated Positive and Negative Responses for Differences in Guidance Hours from 2011-'12 to 2012-13 (n = 197)

Guidance Hours	Frequency	Valid Percent
Increased	21	11
Reduced	176	89
Total	197	100

All of these indicators demonstrate that the change in the method of guidance allocation had a negative impact across second-level schools in general:

- most guidance counsellors did something differently in 2012-13, compared with previous years;
- a majority of them felt that their role had changed;
- respondents' perceptions of the change were very negative;
- the majority of respondents had their guidance hours reduced.

Impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation across different school types.

The impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation across different school types was then assessed in terms of the same criteria as above. These were:

- whether or not guidance counsellors did anything differently in 2012-13;
- whether or not their guidance role changed;
- guidance counsellors' perceptions of any changes;
- the actual changes in allocated guidance hours reported.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, different ways of interpreting the notion of 'school type' were considered:

- by 'historical' school management;
- by DEIS/non-DEIS status;
- by student gender, and
- by fee-charging / FES school

Findings linked with each of these categories of school are now presented separately.

As explained in Chapter Four, time and resources did not permit the exact same sample to be obtained from each of the categories of school which have been outlined above. Therefore the 'n' varied quite substantially from category to category. For this reason, it was not possible to make direct 'like with like' comparisons between the different categories. However differing proportions within each category are reported and it is possible to evaluate generally if there are trends from these data. In order to clearly point out any small sample sizes in the various categories in these tables, the sample size as a percentage of all schools is given in a separate column in the data tables.

Differences between 'historical' school types.

Responses to the survey question on whether guidance counsellors did anything differently in 2012-13 were analysed in terms of 'historical' types (based on school management) to see if there were any differences. Only small differences of 5% or less were found between the different types of school and thus these details are not presented here.

Did guidance counsellors' roles change?

Guidance counsellors were asked if their roles had changed or not, as a result of the changed guidance allocation policy. The main finding was that the proportion of respondents who reported a change in their guidance role was bigger in community and comprehensive schools (92%) than in the other two schools types, however as with all these data, it must be remembered that the sample of community and comprehensive was much smaller than the other two school types. See Table 5.12.

Table 5.12

Guidance Role Did Change: 'Historical' School Types (n = 233)

School Type	Sample n	As a % of schools overall	Sample Frequency	Valid Percent
VSS	144	144/233 = 62%	120	83%
ETB Vocational School/Community College	77	77/233 = 33%	63	82%
Community /Comprehensive School	12	12/233 = 5%	11	92%

Guidance counsellors' perceptions of the impact of the change in guidance allocations.

While perceptions of the impact of the change in guidance allocations were found to be predominantly negative across all 'historical' types of school, the most negative trend was in the VSS sector. A greater proportion of respondents in the VSS chose "definitely for the worse" than in the ETB sector or in the community/comprehensive sector.

When the VS schools were split into fee-charging schools and FES schools, a very clear trend emerged, with respondents in FES VS schools expressing a much higher degree of dissatisfaction with the change in guidance allocation than those in fee-

charging VS schools. Caution needs to be expressed with any interpretation of the valid percentages expressed here, due to the fact that ‘n’ is quite small for fee-charging schools. So for example, 81% of respondents in FES schools perceived the change to be “definitely for the worse”, while in fee-charging schools the figure was 46%, however the actual number of respondents from the fee-charging VSS sector was only 13, see Table 5.13. This difference will also be examined in a separate category presently.

Table 5.13

Respondents’ Perceptions of Change in Guidance Allocation by Historical School Type (n = 195)

The change is ...	As a % of schools overall	Definitely for the better	Slightly positive	Neutral	Slightly negative	Definitely for the worse
All VSS (n = 119)	119/195 = 61%	3% (3)	2% (2)	-	18% (22)	77% (92)
FES VSS (n = 106)	106/195 = 54%	1% (1)	2% (2)	-	16% (17)	81% (86)
Fee-charging VSS (n = 13)	13/195 = 7%	15% (2)	- (0)	-	39% (5)	46% (6)
ETB Vocational School / Community College (n = 65)	65/195 = 33%	11% (7)	6% (4)	2% (1)	21% (14)	60% (39)
Community / Comprehensive (n = 11)	11/195 = 6%	18% (2)	9% (1)	9% (1)	9% (1)	55% (6)

When the responses for “slightly negative” and “definitely for the worse” were taken together (omitting the responses that were neutral), it was possible to see clearly different patterns in respondents’ perceptions for the three sectors. The cumulative percentage of all negative perceptions in the VSS sector was 96%, in ETB Vocational Schools /Community Colleges it was 83% and in Community and Comprehensive Schools it was 70%. See Table 5.14 for full details.

Table 5.14***Cumulative Responses for Respondents' Perceptions of Change in Guidance******Allocation (n = 195)***

The change is ...	As a % of schools overall	Positive	Negative
All VSS (n = 119)	119 / 195 = 61%	4% (5)	96% (114)
FES VSS (n = 106)	106 / 195 = 54%	3% (3)	97% (103)
Fee-charging VSS (n = 13)	13 / 195 = 7%	15% (5)	85% (8)
ETB Vocational School / Community College (n = 64)	65 / 195 = 33%	17% (11)	83% (53)
Community/Comprehensive (n = 10)	11 / 195 = 6%	30% (3)	70% (7)

Actual changes in allocated guidance hours.

As perceptions are subjective, the respondents were asked to provide actual details of the changes to their guidance hours to provide a more objective perspective (Q.12). They were given a 7-point Likert-type scale to choose from, ranging from an increase of five or more hours, to a reduction of five or more hours. These responses were then cross-referenced with the type of school the guidance counsellor worked in. The responses from guidance counsellors were examined across the three 'historical' school types. The findings are presented in Table 5.15 and show a mostly negative impact in all the school types, though the proportion of negative responses was more evident within FES schools in the VSS sector than in the other school types. The proportion of positive answers was highest within fee-charging schools in the VSS sector.

Table 5.15 Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by Historical School Type (n = 230)

Actual Changes in Hours	As a % of schools overall	+5↑	+ 3-4	+ 1-2	Same	- 1-2	- 3-4	- 5↓
All VSS (n = 144)	144 / 230 = 63%	1% (2)	1% (2)	-1% (1)	26% (37)	13% (19)	28% (40)	30% (43)
FES VSS (n = 129)	129 / 230 = 56%	2% (2)	- (0)	-1% (1)	24% (31)	12% (16)	31% (40)	30% (39)
Fee-charging VSS (n = 15)	15 / 230 = 7%	- (0)	13% (2)	- (0)	40% (6)	20% (3)	- (0)	27% (4)
ETB Vocational School / Community College (n = 74)	74 / 230 = 32%	3% (2)	3% (2)	3% (2)	27% (21)	16% (12)	15% (11)	34% (25)
Community / Comprehensive (n = 12)	12 / 230 = 5%	8% (1)	-- (0)	-- (0)	33% (4)	8% (1)	25% (3)	25% (3)

When the results for increased and reduced hours were cumulated separately, it became clearer that a greater proportion of respondents within the VSS sector in the FES (73%) reported an actual reduction in guidance hours than within the other school types. Within ETB schools, 65% of respondents recorded a reduction in hours, in the Community/Comprehensive sector, the figure was 59%, while 47% of respondents within fee-charging schools experienced a reduction in guidance hours.

See Table 5.16.

Table 5.16***Cumulative Scores for Changes in Guidance Hours by Historical School Type******(n = 230)***

	As a % of schools overall	Increased Hours	Same Hours	Decreased Hours
All VSS (n = 144)	119 / 195 = 61%	3% (5)	26% (37)	71% (102)
FES VSS (n = 129)	106 / 195 = 54%	3% (3)	24% (31)	73% (95)
Fee-charging VSS (n = 15)	13 / 195 = 7%	13% (2)	40% (6)	47% (7)
ETB Vocational School / Community College (n = 74)	65 / 195 = 33%	8% (6)	27% (20)	65% (48)
Community / Comprehensive (n = 12)	11 / 195 = 6%	8% (1)	33% (4)	59% (7)

Summary of findings for differences between 'historical' school types.

For the most part, any differences which did emerge between respondents in different school types, for whether or not their guidance role had changed, were small. The most notable finding was that a greater proportion of respondents within the Community / Comprehensive school sector reported that their guidance role had changed than in other school types.

With regard to respondents' perceptions of the changes, the VSS sector showed the most negative trend, followed by the Community and Comprehensive sector and thirdly the ETB sector.

The findings for actual changes in the guidance hours in 2012-13 showed a negative impact for respondents across all the school types. The proportion of respondents from within FES schools in the VSS sector who recorded a reduction in guidance hours was 73%, the proportion in ETB Vocational Schools / Community Colleges was 65%, in the Community/Comprehensive sector, the ratio was 59%, while respondents from fee-charging schools recorded a reduction in guidance hours of 47%.

Differences between DEIS Schools / Non-DEIS Schools.

As with the data on 'historical' school types, no attempt was made to obtain equal numbers of respondents from each school type, so no direct comparisons can be made between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. Responses to the survey question on whether guidance counsellors did anything differently in 2012-13 were analysed to see if a greater proportion within DEIS schools or non-DEIS schools reported a reduction.

Change in guidance role.

The question of whether guidance counsellors' roles had changed or not was assessed, and the valid percentages of respondents in these two school types who reported a change in their roles were of similar proportions. See Table 5.17.

Table 5.17

Guidance Role Did Change: DEIS v. non-DEIS Schools (n = 261)

School Type	Sample <i>n</i>	As a % of all schools	Sample Frequency	Valid Percent
DEIS School	70	70 / 261 = 27%	55	79%
Non-DEIS School	191	191 / 261 = 73%	157	82%

Perceptions of change.

In the case of guidance counsellors' perceptions of the impact of changes in guidance allocation, there were no variations in the responses between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools.

Actual changes in guidance hours by DEIS / non-DEIS school.

Next, the actual changes to guidance hours allocated in both school types were compared. The results are summarised in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18

Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by DEIS / non-DEIS Schools (n = 259)

	As a % of all schools	+5↑	+ 3 -4	+ 1-2	Same	- 1-2	- 3 -4	- 5↓
DEIS schools (n = 68)	68 / 259 = 26%	1% (1)	1% (1)	1% (1)	35% (24)	15% (10)	18% (12)	29% (20)
Non-DEIS schools (n = 191)	191 / 259 = 74%	3% (5)	2% (4)	2% (4)	24% (46)	14% (26)	24% (46)	31% (60)

When the negative, positive and neutral answers are cumulated, no clearer trends emerged, so it can be concluded that it is not possible to distinguish any

particular trend or difference in guidance hours between respondents in DEIS / non-DEIS schools.

Table 5.19

Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by DEIS / non-DEIS Schools (n = 259)

Changes in Hours	As a % of all schools	Increased	Same	Decreased
DEIS schools (n = 68)	68 / 259 = 26%	3% (3)	35% (24)	62% (42)
non-DEIS schools (n = 191)	191 / 259 = 74%	7% (13)	24% (46)	69% (132)

Summary of differences between DEIS /non-DEIS schools.

There were no differences observed between respondents' perceptions of changes in guidance between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools. With regard to actual changes in guidance hours, it was not possible to conclude if any changes are statistically significant as the number of respondents was different for each sector.

Differences between single-sex schools and co-ed schools.

The responses were analysed in terms of school gender composition (single-sex/co-ed) to see if there were any broad differences between respondents' answers. The valid percentages for all single-sex schools were very similar to that for co-ed schools. However within all-boys schools, 85% of respondents reported that they did something differently, whereas within all-girls schools, 69% of respondents reported that they did something differently. However it must again be acknowledged that the samples for the different school sectors differ substantially. These findings are presented in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20***Did Something Differently: School Gender Composition (n = 261)***

School Type	Sample n	As a % of all schools	Sample Frequency	Valid Percent
Co-ed School	157	157 / 261 = 60%	122	78%
All single-sex schools	104	104 / 261 = 40%	79	76%
Single-sex Male School	46	46 / 261 = 18%	39	85%
Single-sex Female School	58	58 / 261 = 22%	40	69%

Change in guidance role: Single-sex schools v. co-educational schools.

A greater proportion of respondents within single-sex schools (87%) felt that their role had changed than within co-ed schools (78%). With regard to gender differences within single-sex schools, a greater proportion of respondents working in all-boys schools (93%) felt that their role had changed compared with those in all-girls schools (82%). See Table 5.21.

Table 5.21***Guidance Role Did Change: School Gender (n = 263)***

School Type	Sample n	As a % of all schools	Sample Frequency	Valid Percent
All single-sex schools	107	107 / 263 = 41%	93	87%
Female single-sex schools	61	61 / 263 = 23%	50	82%
Male single-sex schools	46	46 / 263 = 18%	43	93%
Co-ed schools	156	156 / 263 = 59%	121	78%

The respondents who reported that their guidance role had changed were asked to describe the change in either a positive or a negative light. The responses in single-sex schools show a more negative trend than in co-ed schools. Just over three-quarters of respondents within single-sex schools viewed the change as being “definitely for the worse”, while with just over two-thirds of guidance counsellors within co-ed schools who shared this opinion. See Table 5.22.

Table 5.22

Guidance Counsellors' Perceptions of Impact of Change in Guidance Allocation by School Gender Composition (n = 216)

The change is ...	As a % of all schools	Definitely for the better	Slightly positive	Neutral	Slightly negative	Definitely for the worse
All single-sex schools (n = 93)	93 / 216 = 43%	3% (3)	2% (2)	-	18% (17)	77% (71)
Male single-sex schools (n = 43)	43 / 216 = 20%	7% (3)	-- (0)	-	16% (7)	77% (33)
Female single-sex schools (n = 50)	50 / 216 = 23%	-- (0)	4% (2)	-	20% (10)	76% (38)
Co-ed schools (n = 123)	123 / 216 = 57%	8% (10)	4% (5)	2% (2)	21% (26)	65% (80)

When the results for the two positive responses were combined separately from the two negative responses (i.e. omitting the neutral responses), it became apparent that the overall trend was more negative in single-sex schools than in co-ed schools (see Table 5.23).

Table 5.23

Perceptions of Change in Guidance Allocation by School Gender - Cumulative Answers (n = 216)

The change is ...	As a % of all schools	Positive	Negative
All single-sex schools (n = 93)	93 / 216 = 43%	5% (5)	95% (88)
Male single-sex schools (n = 43)	43 / 216 = 20%	7% (3)	93% (40)
Female single-sex schools (n = 50)	50 / 216 = 23%	4% (2)	96% (48)
Co-ed schools (n = 123)	123 / 216 = 57%	13% (15)	87% (106)

Actual changes in guidance hours by school gender composition.

The actual changes in hours in single-sex schools and co-ed schools were compared to see if these changes matched the guidance counsellors' perceptions. The findings show a definite negative slant for all school types (see Table 5.24).

Table 5.24

Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by School Gender Composition (n = 261)

Changes in Hours	As a % of all schools	+5↑	+ 3-4	+ 1-2	Same	- 1-2	- 3-4	- 5↓
All single-sex schools (n = 107)	107 / 261 = 41%	2% (2)	-	5% (4)	20% (23)	12% (13)	28% (30)	33% (35)
Male single-sex schools (n = 46)	46 / 261 = 18%	2% (1)	-	7% (3)	15% (7)	9% (4)	30% (14)	37% (17)
Female single-sex schools (n = 61)	61 / 261 = 23%	2% (1)	-	2% (1)	26% (16)	15% (9)	26% (16)	29% (18)
Co-ed schools (n = 154)	154 / 261 = 59%	2% (4)	-	3% (5)	31% (47)	16% (24)	18% (28)	30% (46)

When the responses showing an increase/reduction in guidance hours were cumulated (see Table 5.25), evidence for a more negative trend in single sex schools than in co-ed schools emerged: 73% (78/107) of respondents within single-sex schools reported experiencing a reduction in guidance hours, while in co-ed schools 64% (98/154) recorded reduced hours. Within all-boys schools, a greater proportion of guidance counsellors (76% or 35/46) experienced a reduction in guidance hours than within all-girls schools (70% or 43/61).

Table 5.25

Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by School Gender – Cumulative Answers
(*n* = 261)

Changes in Hours	As a % of all schools	Increased	Same	Decreased
All single-sex schools (n = 107)	107 / 261 = 41%	7% (6)	20% (23)	73% (78)
Male single-sex schools (n = 46)	46 / 261 = 18%	9% (4)	15% (7)	76% (35)
Female single-sex schools (n = 61)	61 / 261 = 23%	4% (2)	26% (16)	70% (43)
Co-ed schools (n = 154)	154 / 261 = 59%	5% (9)	31% (47)	64% (98)

Summary of findings for differences between respondents in single-sex schools and co-ed schools.

A greater proportion of respondents in single-sex schools felt that their roles had changed than in co-ed schools. Within single-sex schools, a greater proportion of guidance counsellors in all-boys schools felt that their roles had changed than in all-girls schools.

Perceptions of the changed guidance allocation were more negative within single-sex schools than within co-ed schools, with more respondents in all-girls schools expressing negative perceptions than in all-boys schools.

With regard to actual changes in guidance hours, a greater proportion of respondents within single-sex schools reported a reduction in guidance hours than those in co-ed schools. The perceptions of the changes did not match the reality, as the proportion of respondents who reported an actual reduction of guidance hours was greater in all-boys schools than all-girls schools.

Differences between fee-charging schools and schools in the FES.

As before, changes in the guidance role, changes in perceptions and actual changes in guidance hours are examined in this section.

Change in guidance role

A greater proportion of respondents who worked within fee-charging schools (89%) reported that their role had changed, compared with the proportion of respondents from schools in the FES (80%). See Table 5.26.

Table 5.26

Guidance Role Did Change: Fee-Charging Schools v. FES Schools (n = 263)

School Type	Sample <i>n</i>	As a % of all schools	Sample Frequency	Valid Percent
Schools in the FES	245	245 / 263 = 93%	197	80%
Fee-charging Schools	18	18 / 263 = 7%	16	89%

Perceptions of change: Fee-charging schools v. schools in the FES.

The perceptions of guidance counsellors with regard to the change showed that 73% of respondents in schools in the FES perceived the change as being 'definitely for the worse'. The proportion within fee-charging schools was 44%. The results are presented in Table 5.27.

Table 5.27

Perceptions of Change in Guidance Allocation – Guidance Counsellor in Fee-Charging Schools v. Guidance Counsellors in Schools in the FES (n =215)

The change is ...	As a % of all schools	Definitely for the better	Slightly positive	Neutral	Slightly negative	Definitely for the worse
Schools in the FES (n = 199)	199 / 215 = 93%	5% (10)	3% (6)	1% (2)	19% (38)	73% (143)
Fee-charging Schools (n = 16)	16 / 215 = 7%	19% (3)	6% (1)	-	31% (5)	44% (7)

When both sets of negative responses and both sets of positive responses were combined, the proportion of negative perceptions for guidance counsellors within fee-charging schools was 75% (12/16) and the proportion within FES schools was 92% (179/194). See Table 5.28.

Table 5.28

Cumulative Responses – Guidance Counsellors' Perceptions (n = 210)

The change is ...	As a % of all schools	Positive	Negative
Fee-charging Schools (n = 16)	16 / 210 = 8%	25% (4)	75% (12)
Schools in FES (n = 194)	194 / 210 = 92%	8% (15)	92% (179)

Actual changes in guidance hours by fee-charging / FES school.

The actual changes in guidance hours allocated in fee-charging schools and in schools in the FES were then calculated. The results are summarised in Table 5.29.

Table 5.29

Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by Fee-Charging Schools / Schools in the FES

(n = 261)

	As a % of all schools	+ 5↑	+ 3-4	+ 1-2	Same	- 1-2	- 3-4	- 5↓
Schools in the FES (n = 243)	243 / 261 = 93%	2% (5)	1% (2)	2% (5)	26% (64)	14% (34)	24% (57)	31% (76)
Fee-charging Schools (n = 18)	18 / 261 = 7%	5.5% (1)	-	11% (2)	39% (7)	17% (3)	5.5% (1)	22% (4)

When the findings for increased hours and for reduced hours were cumulated separately, it was found that 69% (167/243) of guidance counsellors who worked in schools in the FES reported a reduction in guidance hours. The figure for respondents within fee-charging schools was 44% (8/18). See Table 5.30.

Table 5.30

Cumulated Percentages for Actual Changes in Guidance Hours by Fee-Charging Schools / Schools in the FES (n = 261)

	As a % of all schools	Increased Hours	Same Hours	Decreased Hours
Schools in the FES (n = 243)	243 / 261 = 93%	5% (12)	26% (64)	69% (167)
Fee-charging Schools (n = 18)	18 / 261 = 7%	17% (3)	39% (7)	44% (8)

Summary of findings for differences between respondents in fee-charging schools and schools in the FES.

A greater proportion of respondents within fee-charging schools reported changes in their role than in schools in the FES. A higher proportion of respondents within FES schools reported negative perceptions than respondents in fee-charging schools. The proportion of respondents within FES schools who experienced actual reductions in guidance was 69% (167/243), while the proportion of respondents within fee-charging schools was 44% (8/18).

Qualitative Findings from Phase One

While the quantitative findings showed that the majority of respondents had negative experiences of the changed guidance allocation, with regards reduced guidance hours. In terms of balance, it is interesting to examine some of the comments made by the minority of respondents in the survey (19/217) who had positive experiences in 2012-13. Common to these respondents was that their guidance hours stayed the same or were increased. It must be remembered that the number of respondents for FES schools was 245 (93%), while the number of respondents for fee-charging schools was 18 (7%). This comment is from one such respondent in a fee-charging school:

Enjoyed work immensely. In a privileged position to have 1.5 guidance counsellors in the school normally and we have not experienced any cuts. [Respondent 176]

While another guidance counsellor in another fee-charging school wrote:

Very good with no negative changes for me but I know that is not the experience for many guidance counsellors but little has changed I think in the private fee paying schools as parents demand a professional service as they consider they are paying for it. [Respondent 161]

It was not exclusively guidance counsellors in fee-charging schools who reported positive experiences, a minority of guidance counsellors in FES schools also made positive comments. There was a sense from this guidance counsellor in such a school that s/he considered himself / herself lucky and appreciated the decisions the school management had made not to cut back on the guidance hours:

I do believe that the management in our school has done everything to keep a dedicated guidance and counselling service in the school at a very difficult time, in terms of funding and teaching allocation so I feel we are trying our best to give the best service in these difficult circumstances. [Respondent 188]

The fact that it was entirely up to the school principal to decide on the number of guidance hours is highlighted in this response from a respondent in a FES school:

I was allocated the same timetable and hours that I have had for the past fourteen years. I acknowledge this as a credit to my Principal and school. [Respondent 219]

These qualitative findings show how the impact of the changed guidance allocation policy is largely dependent on decisions made by individual school managements and that the decision made in most cases was to reduce guidance hours.

Summary of Findings from Phase One of Research for Research Question One

The findings from the online survey were that:

1. The change in the method of guidance allocation had a negative impact on schools in general. Most guidance counsellors did something differently and most of them felt that their role had changed in 2012-13, their perceptions of the change were very negative, and most experienced a reduction in guidance hours.

2. There were some differences reported within 'historical' school types for the impact of the changed guidance allocation. A greater proportion of respondents within Community and Comprehensive schools than in other school types reported that their guidance role had changed. Despite this, respondents' perceptions of the changes showed the least negative trend in Community and Comprehensive schools and most negative trend in the VSS sector. A greater proportion of respondents (69%) within FES schools in the VSS sector experienced a reduction in guidance hours than in fee-charging schools, where the proportion of respondents recording a reduction was 44%.
3. There were very few differences found between the proportions of respondents in DEIS and non-DEIS schools who did something differently in 2012-13, while the proportions of respondents who reported experiencing changes in their roles were similar. There were no differences between the proportions of respondents who experienced negative/positive perceptions of changes in both school types. With regard to actual changes in guidance hours, a greater proportion of respondents in non-DEIS schools reported a reduction in hours than in DEIS schools.
4. A greater proportion of respondents in single-sex schools reported:
 - a. that their roles had changed
 - b. negative perceptions of the changes, and
 - c. a reduction in guidance hours, than for respondents in co-ed schools.

Within single-sex schools, a greater proportion of respondents in all-boys schools

- a. felt that their roles had changed, and
 - b. experienced a reduction in guidance hours, than in all-girls schools.
5. With regard to differences for respondents within fee-charging schools and schools in the FES, a greater proportion of respondents in fee-charging schools reported changes in role than in schools in the FES. Despite this, the perceptions of respondents within FES schools were found to show a much greater negative trend (75% or 12/16) than within fee-charging schools (92% or 179/194). With regard to actual reductions in guidance hours, a greater proportion of respondents within FES schools experienced reduced guidance hours than within fee-charging schools. the proportion of negative perceptions for guidance counsellors within fee-charging schools was and the proportion within FES schools was

There was evidence that different school managements dealt with the loss of the guidance allocation in a variety of ways, with widely differing outcomes for different school types and individual schools.

Qualitative Findings from Phase Two of Research

In this section, the qualitative findings from phase two of the research which relate to research question one are presented.

Participant Characteristics

Phase Two of the research consisted of 12 individual interviews with guidance counsellors. In May 2013, 26 guidance counsellors who took part in Phase One of the research volunteered by email to take part in Phase Two. At that stage, it was

not possible to indicate to them whether Phase Two would involve interviews, focus groups or some other form of participation.

In November 2013, twelve of these volunteers were contacted by email and invited to participate in individual interviews. They were a 'nested' volunteer sample, as described in Chapter 4. This sample was targeted using demographic criteria in order to obtain as representative a sample as possible. The aim was to have six guidance counsellors from the VSS sector, three from schools managed by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and three from the Community/Comprehensive sector. Within this mix, a representative sample of other school-types was also targeted: DEIS/non-DEIS schools; fee-charging / FE schools; male, female and co-ed schools; urban, rural and mixed catchment areas; middle-class, working class and mixed socio-economic profiles, and a wide geographic spread.

Nine of the twelve guidance counsellors who were contacted agreed to participate. As described in Chapter Four, one of these interviews was accidentally deleted, so I required four other participants to make up the 12 that I had initially planned. A purposive sample of four other guidance counsellors was then specifically targeted in order to obtain an interview sample that would be as representative as possible of the population. Given the small sample size, and that it comprised both those who were volunteers (8) and those who were purposefully selected (4), it is not possible to generalise any findings or comments to the population of guidance counsellors.

Representativeness of interview sample.

The representativeness of the sample was examined in terms of: 'historical' school type; fee-charging schools / schools in FES; DEIS schools/non-DEIS schools.

Representativeness by ‘historical’ school type.

Six of the participating guidance counsellors worked in voluntary secondary schools, three in ETB vocational schools / ETB community colleges, and three in community / comprehensive schools. While bearing in mind that the sample size was very small (12), nevertheless, this is quite representative of the population. See Table 5.31.

Table 5.31

Interviews Sample: School Type (n = 12)

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools	722* (100%)	12 (100%)
VSS	376 (52%)	6 (50%)
ETB Vocational School / Community College	254 (35%)	3 (25%)
Community/Comprehensive	92 (13%)	3 (25%)

* ESRI 2013

Representativeness by fee-charging schools / schools in FES.

There were three guidance counsellors working in fee-charging schools, and nine in schools in the FES. Fee-charging schools are over-represented in the interviews sample. See Table 5.32.

Table 5.32

Interviews Sample: School Type in FES / Fee-Charging Schools

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools	*722 (100%)	12 (100%)
FES schools	*667 (92%)	9 (75%)
Fee-Charging Schools	*55 (8%)	3 (25%)

*ESRI 2013

Representativeness by DEIS schools / non-DEIS schools.

There were three guidance counsellors working in DEIS schools and nine in non-DEIS schools. This matches the population almost exactly, as in Table 5.33.

Table 5.33

Interviews Sample: DEIS Schools / non-DEIS Schools

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools	*722 (100%)	12 (100%)
DEIS	200 (28%)	3 (25%)
Non-DEIS	522 (72%)	9 (75%)
*DES (2012), DES (2013a)		

Representativeness by other criteria.

No data were available for the national population of guidance counsellors with regard to other demographic criteria, such as guidance counsellors: working in single sex or co-ed schools; working in urban, rural or mixed catchment areas; or working in working class, middle class or mixed catchment areas.

Despite this, an effort was made to ensure a spread of interview participants in all of these criteria. Thus in the final interview sample of 12 participants, there were seven guidance counsellors who worked in co-ed schools, three from all-girl schools and two from all-boys schools. There were six guidance counsellors working in schools within an urban catchment area, four in rural areas and two in mixed urban/rural areas. With regard to the socio-economic profile of their schools, this was not based on any scientific criteria; interviewees were themselves asked to describe the socio-economic profile of their school. Three participants called it

middle class, three felt it was working class and six felt that it was a mixture of both. These data are presented in Table 5.34.²³

Interview schedule.

The guidance counsellors were all interviewed by telephone at a time of their choosing, between the 25th November 2013 and 18th December 2013. To ensure anonymity, each participants chose a pseudonym from a given list at the end of each interview (these were derived from nature). The average interview length was 20 minutes and 26 seconds, with the shortest interview lasting 14 minutes and the longest lasting 27 minutes and 26 seconds. A standard set of interview questions was drawn up and these questions were asked in the same order in each interview (Appendix O). A mobile phone was used which enabled the speaker to be activated and the interview recorded digitally on an iPad. A table is provided below showing the representativeness of the sample, the participants are not listed in chronological order of interview.

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A wide geographic spread of participants was also obtained, with participants from all four provinces.

However these geographic data are not presented as two of the interviewees requested that the location of their schools be kept confidential.

Table 5.34***Phase Two Interviews: Representativeness of Sample***

Pseudonym	School Type	DEIS	FES	Gender	Catchment Area ***	Socio-Economic Profile ***
<i>Poppy</i>	Comm/Comp	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Mixed	Mixed
<i>Holly</i>	Secondary	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Mixed	Mixed
<i>Jasmine</i>	ETB	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Urban	Mixed
<i>Basil</i>	Comm/Comp	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Mixed
<i>Hazel</i>	Secondary	No	Yes	Female	Urban	Mixed
<i>Heather</i>	Secondary	No	Yes	Female	Urban	Mixed
<i>Olive</i>	Comm/Comp	Yes	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Working Class
<i>Violet</i>	ETB	Yes	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Working Class
<i>Rose</i>	ETB	Yes	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Working Class
<i>Rowan</i>	Secondary	No	No	Male	Urban	Middle Class
<i>Lily</i>	Secondary	No	No	Male	Urban	Middle Class
<i>Rosemary</i>	Secondary	No	No	Female	Urban	Middle Class

*** These details were self-reported at the start of each interview.

Method of determining the themes that emerged from the interviews.

The following steps were carried out to determine key themes that emerged during the twelve interviews:

- Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible after completion.
- The content of each transcript was then coded thematically with the QSR NVivo 10 software package, using the constant comparative method as described in Chapter 4.
- Some illustrative comments from the interviewees were then chosen for each sub-theme as being representative of the views expressed by several participants. (See p.128-129 in Chapter Four for an explanation of the selection criteria for these comments.

- As the emphasis in the interviews was on obtaining qualitative data, all of the data were not quantified (i.e. the number of times a similar comment was made).

Source of interview questions.

The survey findings posed three new questions related to research question one, which were put to the twelve participants in follow-on interviews. These were the questions:

- Why in your opinion did a greater proportion of non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools experience reduced hours than other school types? (Source: Tables 5.18, 5.19, 5.24, 5.25, 5.27).
- Why in your opinion were there no major differences in the proportion of guidance hours reduced in DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools? (Source: Table 5.15).
- Why in your opinion did a greater proportion of schools in the Free Education System reduce their guidance hours, than in the fee-charging sector? (Sources: Tables 5.18 / 5.19, 5.30, 5.31).

The findings from the interviews for these three questions, related to research question one are presented below.

Reasons why a greater proportion of non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools experienced reduced hours than other school types.

There was no overriding reason given by guidance counsellors as to why a greater proportion of non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools experienced reduced hours than other school types. A range of contributory factors was suggested as

explanations; these included funding issues, the need to retain particular academic subjects, and the flexibility/inflexibility of school management structures.

Two guidance counsellors felt that one possible reason was that capitation grants were less for the VSS sector than for the C&C sector or ETB schools:

I think the funding from the Department is better in the community sector than it is in the voluntary sector, I think there was less cash.
[Rosemary]

One guidance counsellor pointed out that the lower funding received by voluntary secondary schools for special educational needs (SEN), compared with other school types might have contributed to the difference:

Would it be to do with less learning support kids in the school?
[Rosemary]

Two people interviewed explained the difference by saying that the management structure of ETB schools allowed for greater flexibility than in the VSS sector to perhaps share posts between schools or organise timetables:

Well I think the VECs are more autonomous, so they can decide what to do with the allocation that they have, so they're not as restricted, so there seems to be that little bit more leeway. If principals seek more hours they seem to be able to find them somewhere. [Rowan]

The other ones under the vocational schools can possibly juggle hours around somehow or other. [Basil]

Two of the interviewees were of the opinion that principals in the VSS sector might have been under more pressure to keep certain academic subjects than principals in other school types and that this put added pressure on guidance hours in those schools:

Are they trying not to lose some subjects like physics or German or some of these subjects that less people take? I think that might be the reason. [Violet]

And,

The cutback meant that principals had a choice of either cutting a subject - remember they lost posts of responsibility; they also lost teachers, so they were pulling the guidance counsellor into the classroom to teach an academic subject and so you were getting a bigger chop then of the guidance and counselling function in schools. [Rosemary]

Reasons why were there no differences in the proportion of guidance hours reduced in DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools.

Nine of the twelve guidance counsellors interviewed expressed surprise at this finding. The following comment typifies their responses:

I suppose I am a little bit surprised by that because I would have expected DEIS schools would have reduced further. [Lily]

With regard to suggestions for why there were no differences, four interviewees felt that it was simply a management decision for each school:

It is down to a management thing that it just depends on their opinion and their value on guidance you know. I can't think of any other reason why. [Holly]

And,

The guidance service in the DEIS schools was needed more than in the other schools and the principal spent further or juggled his hours to keep the guidance, because it was more necessary. [Rowan]

One guidance counsellor pointed out that any advantage, in terms of greater guidance allocation, that DEIS schools had over other schools, ceased when the DEIS guidance allocation was also removed from September 2012.

In fact, the DEIS schools did not maintain anything, over and above the non-DEIS sector. So that's why the cuts were the same. [Olive]

Reasons why a greater proportion of schools in the Free Education System reduced their guidance hours, than in the fee-charging sector.

A range of reasons was put forward by those interviewed for why a greater proportion of schools in the FES reduced their hours, than in the fee-charging sector. The most common explanations given were:

- (a) access by fee-charging schools to additional finance and funding,
- (b) parent power, and
- (c) that the school management and parents in fee-charging schools placed a greater importance on guidance than those in FES schools.

Access by fee-charging schools to additional finance and funding.

Eleven out of twelve guidance counsellors interviewed (including the three who worked in fee-charging schools) made reference to the extra sources of funding available to fee-charging schools:

Fee-paying schools have far more discretion about allocating their resources, they would have more money and some of them, if they wished, they would have built up a fund perhaps over the years, that they could pull down capital if they wanted to. [Rosemary]

They had the means to employ and they made a decision to keep supports in place. [Poppy]

Parent power.

Eleven of the twelve interview participants, including the three who worked in fee-charging schools, considered that parent power was one of the reasons why the guidance hours were not reduced as much in fee-charging schools as in FES schools:

Parents really really [sic] want that guidance for their children. So these good schools know that they will lose children if they can't have an excellent guidance and counselling service. [Violet]

I suppose I am thinking that if you are paying fees, it's one of the things that people would see, people who are very well educated would see it as being a very important thing, and it would be in high demand and you know it probably is a service that needs to be offered if people are paying fees. [Holly]

Importance of guidance recognised by fee-charging schools.

Some of the guidance counsellors suggested that the parents of students in fee-charging schools realised the importance and benefits of having a guidance service:

Obviously, ironically enough, the fee-paying sector see the need and the necessity for guidance, even amongst some of the well-resourced and privileged children, whereas the public sector did not. [Olive]

Specifically, it was the career guidance element of the service that was viewed as the most important:

Because parents and students indeed who go to ... who send their sons and daughters to fee-paying schools have ... they expect a level of service, and that service is based around progression into third level, and career guidance, teacher-counsellor - whatever the word is used in individual schools is seen as an integral part of getting their sons or daughters into the right course and into the right college. [Lily]

Several guidance counsellors who were interviewed believed that school managements in fee-charging schools viewed a good guidance service as being essential to a school's reputation:

I suppose in the fee-paying schools there would be a very high value, it would be seen obviously as very important, I mean in our own school it is valued. I suppose that's just the way I feel, it's a management thing and the value that management puts on it really. [Holly]

Summary of findings from the follow-on interviews for the three questions which arose from the online survey.

In summary the qualitative findings from the follow-on interviews were that:

1. There wasn't one paramount reason given by guidance counsellors for why a greater proportion of non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools experienced reduced hours than other school types. Several explanations were offered:
 - (a) that capitation grants were less for the VSS than for other school types;
 - (b) that ETB schools had greater flexibility to share posts between schools or organise timetables than schools in the VSS sector;
 - (c) that VSS principals might have been under more pressure to keep certain academic subjects than principals in other school types, and
 - (d) that the VSS sector received less funding for SEN than other school types.
2. The reasons suggested for why a greater proportion of schools in the FES than in the fee-charging sector reduced their guidance hours, were that:
 - (a) fee-charging schools were able to access additional sources of finance and funding that were not available to schools in the FES;
 - (b) that parent power had an impact on decision-making around guidance services, and

(c) that both the school management in fee-charging school and the parents regarded guidance (particularly career guidance) as important.

3. Surprise was expressed in the interviews at the finding that there were there no differences in the proportion of guidance hours reduced in DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools. The most common reason suggested was that this decision was taken individually by each school principal.

Other findings from phase two related to the differing impact of the guidance allocation change on FES schools and fee-charging schools.

At this stage it is clear from an analysis of both the online survey data and the follow-on interview data presented above, that that one of the most important findings for research question one, was that the allocation policy change impacted the guidance service differently according to whether the school was fee-charging or in the FES. The interview data suggested that the different impact was evident in terms of the quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service in these school types.

As revealed in the findings for phase one from earlier in this chapter, a greater proportion of respondents (69% or 167/243) in FES schools had their hours reduced than in fee-charging schools (44% or 8/18). In the interviews, a majority of guidance counsellors from FES schools (8/9) reported reductions in their guidance hours, while the guidance counsellors interviewed from fee-charging schools (3/3) either had their guidance hours increased or their hours remained the same. As one interviewee who worked in a fee-charging school said:

The number of hours given to guidance and counselling related items actually increased. [Lily]

While it must be remembered that the number of individual interviews undertaken was small (12), with nine interviewees from FES schools and 3 from fee-charging schools, the resulting data revealed some other ways in which the cutbacks were perceived to impact very differently on fee-charging schools and schools in the FES. There were perceived differences in the quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service between fee-charging schools and FES schools, and perceived differences in whether the guidance counsellor taught academic subjects or not. These perceived differences are now discussed.

Quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service perceived as different.

The quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service available in fee-charging and FES schools was perceived by the interviewees as being very different. This was apparent in terms of:

- counselling waiting times,
- whether the guidance service was reactive or preventative,
- the ease of access to one-to-one guidance appointments, and
- the pressure of time.

Examples of these issues are presented in Table 5.35, with relevant illustrative comments from the interviewees. The exemplars selected were chosen solely on the basis that they offered good descriptive statements to back up the issues that emerged. The complete volunteer interview sample was Basil, Hazel, Heather,

Holly, Lily, Olive, Poppy and Rose, while the purposive sample comprised Jasmine, Rosemary, Rowan, and Violet.

Table 5.35

Issues of Perceived Differences in Quality, Capacity and Approach

Issue	Fee-charging Schools	FES Schools
	There was no delay in getting an appointment	Having to wait to get an appointment was the norm
Counselling waiting times	<i>It was not difficult. They would ask and they would have it within, if it was a personal situation they would have it that day, if it was careers-related, they would have it within two days - two or three days. [Lily]</i>	<i>There was a bit of a delay, you know there would be between say asking for one and actually getting it, there could be a week or even two weeks of a delay, you know. [Basil]</i>
Nature of counselling - reactive or preventative	When counselling did happen in fee-charging schools, it was mostly preventative. <i>We would have put into that a certain amount of preventative, by looking at you know personal wellness. [Rosemary]</i>	The counselling was predominantly reactive. <i>It was mostly reactive, we were constantly reacting to things that were happening, things that were brought to your attention, there was very little time to pick up on students who you felt could have done with the extra attention. [Olive]</i>
Access to one-to-one appointments	Getting a one-to-one appointment was described as "very easy" [Rowan] <i>In Fourth Year they would all have two appointments per year; in Fifth Year they would have two and in Sixth they would almost have as many as required. [Lily]</i>	It was mostly difficult and sometimes impossible to get one-to-one appointments, and some guidance counsellors were unable to see all students in Sixth Year. <i>Often they came to the door and there was no-one there when they came to the door and then often if they wanted an appointment, I wasn't there to see them anyway. [Hazel]</i>
Pressures of time	There did not seem to be any pressure of time on guidance counsellors. <i>Like I didn't watch the clock, if they needed a little bit more time I gave it and if they needed to come back again that was fine. [Rosemary]</i>	Guidance counsellors were under time pressure and spent their time watching the clock. <i>You were just always conscious of the time, just you've got somebody in and you're kind of half sneaking a look down at your watch to see how much longer can I stay here, you know, I've got a class. [Holly]</i>

Differences in guidance counsellor concerns	Guidance counsellors were more focused on finding time for the career guidance aspect of the role and were not that concerned about the provision of a counselling service.	Guidance counsellors were more concerned with the reduction in time for counselling, which increased the demand for one-to-one counselling.
	<i>I would say that this school here doesn't promote the counselling service as much as the career service, that's probably for two reasons: one is parents of middle-class students attending fee-paying schools often approach support services independently, rather than going through the school. They also have the resources, both the social resources and the financial resources to do that and therefore they are not as dependent on the counselling skills within the school. [Rosemary]</i>	<i>Well you know it's a bottomless pit, it's really a case of prioritising, you're fire-fighting, you do what you can. [Violet]</i>

A dual guidance and teaching role.

The online survey did not contain a specific question asking respondents whether they taught an academic subject or not – in hindsight this was a missed opportunity. However as many respondents indicated that they were engaged in more classroom teaching in 2012-13 than in previous years, it was decided to explore this aspect in the individual interviews. The interview responses provided data which showed that there was a marked difference between the proportion of guidance counsellors in fee-charging schools who also taught academic subjects, and the corresponding proportion for those who worked in FES schools. Nine of the twelve guidance counsellors interviewed said that they had taught academic subjects in 2012-13 as well as working as a guidance counsellor. Eight of these nine guidance counsellors in dual roles worked in FES schools, while one worked in a fee-charging school. Of the three interviewees who didn't teach academic subjects, one worked in a FES school, while two worked in fee-charging schools.

Summary of Findings for Research Question One

The findings from the online survey and the interviews showed that during 2012-13, the nature of guidance and counselling was not equal across school types. The main finding was that there was a difference between guidance counsellors' perceptions in fee-paying schools and schools in the FES about the impact of the change in guidance allocation. A greater proportion of respondents in schools in the FES had a negative perception of the change than in fee-charging schools. There was also a difference in the actual reduction in hours between both school types, with a greater proportion of respondents (69% or 167/243) within FES schools experiencing a decrease in guidance hours than in fee-charging schools (44% or 8/18).

The unequal impact of the changed guidance allocation was evident from the perceived differences in the quality, capacity and approach to affective care provided in FES schools compared with fee-charging schools: in terms of longer waiting times for counselling, the service being more reactive than preventative, and the greater difficulty accessing one-to-one appointments.

From the interviews, comments from interviewees (Violet and Rosemary) suggested that guidance counsellors in fee-charging schools were more focused on the career guidance aspect of the role, while in schools in the FES, guidance counsellors were more concerned with the reduction in counselling provision, which, it was perceived, increased the demand for one-to-one counselling.

Finally, data from the interviews found that one of the three guidance counsellors in fee-charging schools interviewed taught academic subjects, whereas eight of the

nine interviewees in FES schools operated in a dual role. It was perceived that this academic teaching time also impacted on the reduced availability of guidance counsellors in FES schools for one-to-one appointments.

CHAPTER 6:

THE IMPACT OF THE REMOVAL OF THE EX-QUOTA GUIDANCE ALLOCATION ON AFFECTIVE CARE IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS.

CHAPTER 6: THE IMPACT OF THE REMOVAL OF THE EX-QUOTA GUIDANCE ALLOCATION ON AFFECTIVE CARE IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS.

This chapter presents findings linked with the second research question: ‘*What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in second-level schools?*’ These data are mostly qualitative, with the findings from the online survey and from the individual interviews presented side by side, according to sub-themes.

The online survey (see Appendix J) was deliberately explorative in nature, and as a result respondents provided more information than was relevant to this research question. In the interests of clarity, only the findings pertaining to the second research question are presented here. In the survey, open-ended questions (6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16 and 17) were used to explore the impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation on affective care in second-level schools. As in Chapter 5, the responses were coded using the constant comparative method. The QSR NVivo 10 software package was used as an organisational tool to develop emerging themes. Valid percentages were used to quantify some of these qualitative data, based on the actual number responding to each individual question. In order to provide a robust data trail, any comment used is identified by respondent number or pseudonym (e.g. Respondent 17, Poppy).

The guidance service provided in second-level schools in Ireland is a holistic model (as described in Chapter Two), which encompasses educational guidance, career guidance and counselling. To check which of these three areas was most impacted by the changes in guidance allocation, the survey respondents were first asked three separate questions about any concerns or issues they had regarding the three

elements of the guidance service in their schools over the course of the previous year (Q. 6, 7, 8). As this research question focused on affective care/counselling, the findings relating to educational guidance and career guidance are not presented in this chapter, but the complete data from these questions are provided in Tables K1 and K2 of Appendix K.

It was notable that guidance counsellors' concerns about counselling (Q.8) provided a much greater level of detail, contained a much wider variety in terms of concerns and issues, and were much longer in terms of word count than the responses given regarding educational and career guidance. Some of the responses suggested that the priority for schools and school management was maintaining the career guidance service, to the detriment of the counselling element, and therefore this theme was examined more closely in the individual interviews.

Since a range of similar concerns were raised repeatedly in respondents' answers to the remaining open-ended survey questions (9, 11, 13, 16 and 17), and also in the interviews, a decision was made, in the interests of clarity and concision, and to avoid unnecessary repetition, to amalgamate all responses related to counselling and affective care thematically according to three broad themes:

- Guidance counsellors' concerns regarding affective care of students;
- Guidance counsellors' concerns regarding the quality, capacity and approach to their counselling work;
- Guidance counsellors' perceptions of their students' care needs.

These three areas are explored separately in the remainder of this chapter.

Guidance Counsellors' Concerns Regarding the Care of Students

Guidance counsellors were of the opinion that the guidance cutbacks negatively impacted on the counselling service and the care of students, with a lack of time being at the root of the problem. Many guidance counsellors in the survey expressed grave concerns at the loss of care for students, particularly for those who were vulnerable and in need. This respondent gives a good summary of the deficit:

There is still the same amount of need among our students but less time to facilitate them. As a result we have no time to create preventative relationships with our younger students and issues are escalating before we can address them. This creates more counselling need, impacts on the mental well-being of the guidance professional and the quality of the service. [Respondent 198]

One of the guidance counsellors interviewed articulated some disquiet about student vulnerability, given the reduction in personal guidance in schools:

Well first of all, it's the bit that would worry me the most, because from a guidance counselling point of view, to me that's the most important part of the work. The vocational guidance can be done ... somebody who is fairly intelligent can do searching themselves, up to a point. It is important to reflect with a guidance counsellor, but in terms of somebody's emotional well-being, for that to be cut leaves people vulnerable. [Rosemary]

A wide range of similar general comments about the loss of affective care were made, both by survey respondents and by interview participants. In order to present a huge amount of data as succinctly as possible for this and subsequent themes, tables are used. Illustrative comments are included for each finding. Findings of a general nature are presented first in Table 6.1, followed by more specific thematic concerns in subsequent tables.

Table 6.1

The Impact of Reduced Guidance on Student Care in 2012-13

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Students had fewer counselling options.	<i>The reduction in all supports, in schools and externally, has left young people very limited in their options in times of need. [Respondent 135]</i>
Some of the caring systems that had hitherto been in operation in schools were no longer available.	<i>Induction retention and progression were important parts of our role, now systems have been ignored and school is not the caring place it once was. [Respondent 54]</i>
The counselling service, which had been largely preventative, had become more reactive.	<i>It was mostly reactive, I was constantly reacting to things that were happening, things that were brought to your attention, there was very little time to pick up on students who you felt could have done with the extra attention, the stuff... the things that go on in school, even referrals, the staff didn't feel that they would burden you with stuff, such as would you talk to so and so about such and such ... [Olive]</i>
Quieter, more vulnerable students were losing out.	<i>Issues are now highly prioritised, so the quiet, silent lost student is missing out. [Respondent 18]</i> <i>The under the radar students you know. In the past you would have had more time to talk to your leaders and say who you were worried about ... now its ... you very rarely get that far. [Poppy]</i>
Less serious cases were being ignored.	<i>I have many students to see but I find it difficult to follow up on appointments, particularly for the less serious cases, this sends out a very negative signal to students but the message I am getting from management, the IGC and the Dept. is to prioritise. No matter what way I do this, students' needs are not being met and very few people care.....until of course something more serious happens. [Respondent 89]</i>
Routine, everyday problems were being neglected.	<i>Certainly any student that has a little ongoing problem and needs ongoing care and attention is losing out big time. It may not be a major problem, cos if it is, everybody knows about and the parents know about it, and the HSE knows about it, and everyone knows about it. But some kids that would need a little bit of reassurance and under normal circumstances, you'd go out of your way to say hello to them here and there and invite them for a chat and that doesn't happen anymore. That's all, that's definitely gone. [Hazel]</i>
Students had become reluctant to ask for appointments.	<i>There is a division of service and they are cautious of asking for support. They are aware of the reduction of time and the dropout rate has increased, significantly. [Respondent 239]</i>

... / ...

Table 6.1 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Students often tried unsuccessfully to get a counselling appointment.	<i>One parent phoned me yesterday to tell me of a serious issue regarding her child. Unfortunately, her child had been asking me for an appointment last week and I was not able to give her one. [Respondent 230]</i> <i>Often they came to the door and there was no-one there when they came to the door and then often if they wanted an appointment, I wasn't there to see them anyway. [Hazel]</i>
Some guidance counsellors were not accessible for students in times of crisis.	<i>I'm no longer available for emergency appointments and therefore students tend to lose faith in the service. [Respondent 272]</i>
No time available for listening to students properly.	<i>Had to spend less time with students on the one to one. Also found myself trying to fix people rather than listening. [Respondent 132]</i>
Time for one-to-one counselling appointments was not being timetabled.	<i>Obviously, the counselling part, the time just isn't there for a lot of people, so they're in class more so in the counselling area there's just not going to be as much available. [Heather]</i>
Guidance service was diluted or slimmed-down, compared with previous years.	<i>I have not seen all Second Year students this year and instead of seeing them individually I may have to do a 'blitz' and try to see them in small groups, though this does not give them the space to open up, but will give them a chance to experience the guidance room and school guidance counsellor, and to talk about some issues common to the group. [Respondent 230]</i>
Serious problems going unreported.	<i>The reduction in my hours has been felt by students - they say that they are now concerned that I'm 'always busy' and regularly start a sentence with 'sorry to ask when ur always so busy but...' In a school where we have had so many suicide attempts, it's horrifying to think what as a school we are not being told as a result of this 'always busy' presentation to students. [Respondent 42]</i>
Unique guidance counsellor/student relationship has been lost.	<i>Guidance counsellors, because they deal with students everyday in the classroom, on school trips, and around the school generally, are in a unique position for forming relationships with students. This means that most students open up easily to the SGC - more than they would if they were sent to a professional counsellor. [Respondent 230]</i>

In addition to the more general comments presented above, particular themes related to affective care emerged repeatedly from the survey responses and later from the one-to-one interviews. The next section explores these specific themes, with the findings for each main concern presented with illustrative comments.

Firstly, guidance counsellors' main concerns from the survey are outlined in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2*Main concerns from phase one regarding counselling and affective care (n = 265)*

Concern / Issue	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Lack of time for counselling	31%	81
Increased demand for counselling appointments	14%	36
Affective care suffered	14%	36
Counselling neglected, little or none being done	9%	25
Stress for guidance counsellor	8%	20
Referral issues-waiting lists	7%	18
Crisis counselling	5%	14
Follow-up issues	3%	9
Delays in appointment	3%	9
Prioritising	3%	9

Many of the concerns presented in Table 6.2 were also raised in the interviews and, particular themes emerged which were common to both the survey responses and the one-to-one interviews. The most pertinent of these common concerns are listed in Table 6.3 and the findings for each of these prevalent themes are subsequently described in turn.

Table 6.3*Main concerns from both research phases regarding counselling and affective care*

Concern / Issue
Lack of time for counselling
Increased demand for counselling
Counselling not given the priority required
Guidance counsellors disillusioned with guidance
Little or no counselling was being done in some schools
Too much focus on Senior Cycle students
Junior Cycle students losing out
Increase in mental health issues, depression, self-harming and suicide ideation

Lack of time for one-to-one counselling.

The main problem for guidance counsellors in relation to counselling provision was that they did not have adequate time for one-to-one appointments, and this was noted by 81 respondents to the survey. All of these respondents were in FES schools:

Time, time, time. Absolutely snowed under with work - in office or classroom all day, no break or lunchtime off as students are always looking for support. Huge social issues - family breakdown, society changing, dysfunctional homes, alcohol associated problems. All these need time. Discussions are always cut short. [Respondent 157]

A range of particular difficulties associated with the lack of time for one-to-one appointments is presented in Table 6.4. These come from both phases of research. Illustrative comments from both phases of research are also given when appropriate.

Table 6.4

Difficulties Associated with the Lack of Time for One-to-One Appointments

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Not being able to give students adequate quality time in the form of individual appointments.	<i>I feel like I am constantly trying to find time and there isn't enough to fit in those vulnerable children when their issues are current. [Respondent 253]</i>
When individual counselling appointments were provided, they were often cut short and rushed.	<i>I am meeting the students for 20 minute career appointments instead of 40 minutes. In terms of personal counselling I am rushing through the counselling sessions because I always have another student scheduled for the next appointment - and in many cases I then don't get to deal with the real issue. [Respondent 182]</i>
The lack of time difficulties were caused by extra classroom teaching.	<i>The ability to be available to students because of increased timetabling, whether it was guidance or other subjects kept us ... meant that guidance counsellors weren't available. [Olive]</i>
Due to extra classroom duties, there was a sense that guidance counsellors were rushing about the place.	<i>I was in the classroom more so I was racing in between classes to get to see students et cetera. Frustrating and tiring to the extent I had to talk with the principal about it. [Respondent 21]</i>
Some guidance counsellors gave the impression that they were very hard-pressed to do all their work:	<i>You seem to be limping from one situation to ... you know ... and rushing out the door to go to class, and leaving a student with a cuppa because there's no one to actually deal with them, because there's already someone in your office. [Poppy]</i>
Some guidance counsellors spoke of keeping one eye on the clock the whole time.	<i>You know you were just always conscious of the time, just you've got somebody in and you're kind of half sneaking a look down at your watch to see how much longer can I stay here, you know, I've got a class. [Holly]</i>
Many aspects of the guidance counsellor's job were rushed or not done due to the lack of time.	<i>I had very little time to research information on courses and colleges for students. I felt like I wasn't keeping abreast of changes as I would have in previous years. I had no time for admin and note-taking became more rushed. I often had to leave it to the end of the day. I had little time for follow up phone calls with parents. [Respondent 110]</i>

Increased demand for counselling appointments.

The second most common concern reported by respondents (49) to the survey was the increased student demand for counselling compared with previous years. All of these concerns were reported by respondents in FES schools. The following comment is illustrative of many:

I feel this year since the cut backs, that counselling is really suffering as I do not have the time available to do it. Yet there is a bigger demand than ever on it. [Respondent 226]

This sentiment was echoed by many other survey respondents and also by several interviewees, as Table 6.5 outlines:

Table 6.5

The Increased Demand for One-to-One Counselling

Finding	Illustrative Comments
The increased demand was greater for counselling than careers guidance.	<i>Absolutely, we had a massive increase in numbers ... Well when they came seeking help it was more counselling, well careers as well but counselling was definitely a bigger part of the job for me last year, definitely. [Holly]</i>
There was the sense from some guidance counsellors that some of the increased demand was due to the financial recession.	<i>I see a real desperation amongst some students that I do not recall in the past. There are a lot more money issues in homes as well and I feel that students take a lot of that on board. [Respondent 241]</i>
While eight of the twelve interviewees felt that the demand was solely due to the cutbacks in guidance, three felt that the recession was a contributing factor and one felt that it was not.	<i>You see it's a very different time now because of this recession, they really want, people want to get it right, kids are worrying are they doing the right thing. There's a lot of worry being transmitted to children from their parents, and parents worry and they know that we're a service here in the school and I'm more inundated than I ever was. [Violet]</i>
The demand for counselling appointments was so high in one school that one respondent talked of students who eventually gave up trying.	<i>I found students had difficulty accessing the service because they knew how busy I was and would often say - 'I tried to see you last week, but you're a hard woman to catch and I didn't want to bother you'. I feel all students are entitled to be able to talk to the counsellor and to be heard. It's difficult enough for them to come forward, without putting more barriers in their way. [Respondent 12]</i>
... / ...	

Table 6.5 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Often there was no guidance counsellor available.	<i>Often they came to the door and there was no-one there when they came to the door and then often if they wanted an appointment, I wasn't there to see them anyway. [Hazel]</i>
Much of the time, the lack of guidance counsellor availability was due to classroom teaching.	<i>My biggest fear is that due to lack of time, I will not have been able to help a child in need. In my Junior classes there seems to be a wave of self harm happening among students. I am concerned that due to time in the classroom, I cannot see these children. I can no longer provide the ongoing support to students who need it. I can only see students on a two or three weekly basis, but knowing these students need greater support. [Respondent 189]</i>
If there was no counsellor available, students looked for someone else.	<i>They would sometimes go and find somebody else, if it was an immediate personal thing. I would be aware of that. Just in general, some of them would say that it is sometimes getting harder to find me, which is probably true, when you're in the classroom. [Poppy]</i>

Neglect of counselling - little or no counselling being done in schools.

In many schools counselling was practically eliminated (25) or radically reduced (25). Findings related to this theme are presented in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6

Counselling Neglected, Little Being Done.

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Counselling was dramatically reduced in many schools.	<i>Our school has 360 girls, so many are in need of a listening ear. This need is not being met. [Respondent 222]</i>
Virtually no time is provided for counselling.	<i>Time for counselling is nearly non-existent and never more needed. [Respondent 69]</i>
The counselling time is not there as guidance counsellors are in class.	<i>They're in class more, so virtually in the counselling area there's just not going to be as much available. [Heather]</i>
In some cases counselling was effectively abolished.	<i>No counselling hours. [Respondent 110]</i> <i>The complete lack of time to do it. [Heather]</i>

Counselling not given the priority required.

Many guidance counsellors in the survey and in the interviews reported that counselling was not given the same priority as career guidance by their school, as evidenced by the hours set aside for it on the timetable.

When asked in the interviews to clarify this aspect of the reduction in guidance, about half of those interviewed indicated that principals did not exert pressure on them to prioritise career guidance, but that the nature of career guidance was that it effectively took over the time available, especially with Sixth Years. A range of findings for this theme and some sample comments are represented in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7

Were Some Aspects of Guidance Prioritised over others in the School?

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Career guidance appointments prioritised by school.	<i>This is the area that suffered most as I only had seven hours to see all senior cycle students and take counselling clients that come up. The school stated that the Leaving Cert careers interviews were my priority therefore many a student who would have benefited from a one to one session didn't get it. [Respondent 156]</i>
While career guidance was prioritised, it too was reduced with less follow-on appointments.	<i>In conjunction with the principal we prioritised Sixth Years having a one-to-one appointment with their guidance counsellor say between September and Christmas, and we had 189 Sixth Years, but many of them just got one appointment, in previous years they might have got one and we would've got another and we would have finished around the middle of November and done follow-up appointments with lots of them. Lots of them didn't get those follow-on appointments or they got two minutes in the corridor or at lunchtime or something. So those were the ways that we prioritised career guidance. [Jasmine]</i>
Guidance counsellors asked by their principals to reduce counselling and focus on career guidance.	<i>I have had to cut back on counselling and give more time to the career guidance aspect of my role. [Respondent 72]</i>
The other aspects of guidance (educational guidance and career guidance) continue, but counselling has reduced.	<i>Unfortunately the provision of counselling has almost ceased. In the past it was possible to set up a consistent and regular service to students. Now the main focuses of my efforts are in the guidance, study and career options areas. [Respondent 115]</i>

Disillusioned with guidance role.

Strong feelings of disillusionment with changes to their role were expressed by quite a few guidance counsellors (13) in the survey and also by several interview participants. While these findings do not relate directly to affective care, it is important to report the depth of feeling expressed, as guidance counsellor well-being and mental health are essential in order to provide the care that others need. These findings and illustrative comments are presented in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8

Disillusionment with Guidance Role

Finding	Illustrative Comments
A level of disillusionment was expressed, where one respondent felt as if s/he was being prevented from providing affective care for students.	<i>The work of the guidance counsellor has been undermined, sidelined and diminished, with no one to pick up the slack. I have a full counselling qualification, but the reduced hours prevent me from bringing these much needed professional skills to the pupil population.</i> [Respondent 50]
The shift in focus away from counselling left one guidance counsellor feeling somewhat angry that his/her professionalism was being eroded and that s/he was being marginalised.	<i>My title has been changed from Guidance Counsellor to Careers. I find myself 'on the periphery of pastoral care' (excluded from meetings, but called upon when there's trouble); my input is not requested on student class placement - I am being bypassed. (I have, I need to clarify, had absolutely no complaints/ negative comments or questions about my work to date.)</i> [Respondent 239]
There was a sense conveyed by one interviewee that guidance had been devalued.	<i>On a personal level I think it was brought home to me that we would have to examine exactly what we are offering, because there seems to be a sense that particularly the counselling role is not being valued by people who have the capacity to make choices and decide where priorities go.</i> [Rosemary]
A sense of annoyance, dissatisfaction and submission came across from another interview participant.	<i>Just a sense of frustration really at not being able to do the job I wanted to do. I suppose, how would you put it, I had a certain resignation, as it were, towards it.</i> [Basil]
Another guidance counsellor interviewed struck a discordant note, particularly in relation to the DES.	<i>I also felt that there were a number of initiatives last year and like that, guidance now is a whole school - it is everybody's business and nobody's business, and the students are looking at an unprofessional service basically. And guidelines from the Department, in relation to anything, whether it's bullying or whether it's mental health or suicide prevention don't ... can't take the place of the one-to-one relationship with having someone who is professionally trained.</i> [Olive]

Focus on senior cycle students.

One of the very clear findings was that despite cutbacks to guidance provision, the prime focus remained on Senior Cycle students and on Sixth Years in particular. It was unclear in many instances whether it was the school management who insisted on this or whether it was the guidance counsellor's own decision. These findings are presented with illustrative comments in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9

A Focus on Senior Cycle Students

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Some guidance counsellors described making strenuous attempts to see all Sixth Year students.	<i>I limited the individual appointments to Leaving Certs. [Respondent 140]</i>
Although, for some guidance counsellors, even giving all Sixth Years one appointment was not possible.	<i>Previously I would have interviewed all LC students. This year I could not do this. [Respondent 146]</i>
With Sixth Year being prioritised in many schools, very often it was other years in the Senior Cycle such as Fifth Year or Transition Year which lost out.	<i>Usually I would try to see all of the 5th year students on a one to one basis before the end of the year. I have 120 students in 5th year. This year I have to date seen 25 5th year students and the Summer exams are starting in 4 days' time so that's going to be the total for the year. I feel like students are slipping through the net in 5th year and sometimes it can be too late to see a student in 6th year. [Respondent 128]</i>
The focus on Sixth Years meant that the backlog of unseen students from 2012-13 caused difficulties.	<i>To an extent maybe Fifth Years, because I am finding now in Sixth Year that I'm playing catch up because I couldn't get to see Fifth Years when I wanted to last year. [Olive]</i>

Junior cycle students losing out.

With the clear focus on Senior Cycle students, the knock-on effect was that Junior Cycle students came off second best. Several survey respondents and interviewees reported that the Junior Cycle students lost out, while others pointed out that it was First Years, who were making the transition to second-level school, who lost out most. These findings are presented in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10

Junior Cycle Students Losing Out

Finding	Illustrative Comments
No Junior Cert guidance.	<i>Guidance at Junior Cert has been wiped out.</i> [Respondent 5]
No subject choice done.	<i>I was unable to see Junior Cycle students in a meaningful way before they made their subject choices.</i> [Respondent 56]
All Junior Cycle years affected.	<i>Certainly all our Junior Cycle students lost because the guidance counsellor responsible for them, their hours were just gone, and so they suffered badly.</i> [Jasmine]
While for one guidance counsellor it was Second Years who suffered most.	<i>The class group in particular were Second Years. Second Year is probably the most crucial year in secondary school and I did want to sort of hit them as it were with some of the programme but I just couldn't reach on it.</i> [Basil]
First Year students were mentioned more often as being affected, than other year groups.	<i>I did not meet First Years individually.</i> [Respondent 181] <i>I suppose First Years would have been the ones that most missed out because I would always hope to get to see all of them at least once for 40 minutes but that didn't happen.</i> [Rose] <i>We wouldn't have worked as much with First Years last year as we normally would.</i> [Holly]

Mental health concerns not being addressed.

Several respondents and interviewees felt that not being able to give students with mental health difficulties adequate one-to-one time was especially worrying. Of particular concern were depression, self-harming, suicide ideation and even some suicide attempts. See Table 6.11.

Table 6.11

Mental Health Concerns not Being Addressed

Finding	Illustrative Comments
The number of students with mental health concerns was on the increase and there was less time to deal with them.	<i>My greatest concern relates to the number of students presenting with mental health issues and the little time I can dedicate to supporting them - even if only to refer them on. I am particularly aware that students with MH issues and financial issues tend to drop out mid stream. I don't have the time to apply to keeping these students grounded, the needs are getting greater and greater, and the problems more and more complex. [Respondent 91]</i>
A greater number of more serious mental health cases in 2012 - '13 than before.	<i>I have a huge amount of mental health [sic] here too and quite a few kids on medication for depression and I would just find an increasing number on medication for serious psychotic [sic]. I would have more psychotic than the last few years, with voices in their heads and, on medication, and maybe not fully diagnosed with bi-polar, but there's more of that coming into the school, and taking panic attacks. I would have an increase in kids taking panic attacks. [Violet]</i>
Self-harming was the most common mental health concern mentioned in the survey (51 respondents).	<i>Self-harm and suicidal ideation would be the most serious issue I have had to deal with this year with a number of students. I referred some students to counselling services and others ended up with a psychiatric referral. [Respondent 110]</i>
Self-harming was also a concern mentioned by a quarter of the interviewees.	<i>Self-harm was a big, big thing last year, massive, anxiety would have been a big issue and I suppose there seems to have been an increase in depression even, and worries about home and stuff like that, but the big ones would have been self-harm and depression really and feelings of anxiety, would have been the three big ones. [Holly]</i>

... / ...

Table 6.11 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Thirteen of the survey respondents remarked that there had been a big increase in the incidence of self-harming among students.	<i>There has been a major increase in the numbers of students self-harming. It's alarming how many. Also feel that I'm waiting for the morning we get the news that a suicide has occurred. [Respondent 93]</i>
A third of those interviewed also stated that there had been an increase in self-harming.	<i>I would certainly have seen an increase last year in the kids who were self-harming, that was the big one. That's the biggest difference, the issues were mostly about family breakup, separation, attachment, that kind of stuff, but the manifestation has changed and has become self-harming. [Jasmine]</i>
Depression was the second most common mental health concern mentioned in the survey (47 respondents)	<i>I've seen an increase in the number of students diagnosed with depression, or that I have referred to GP with suspected depression. [Respondent 234]</i>
Students who were depressed required intense ongoing support.	<i>I had eight Leaving Cert students whom I knew were on medication for depression and I would have given two of them huge support to keep them in school to get them to the Leaving Cert, and the other six, between myself and the other guidance counsellor, a lot of support. [Jasmine]</i>
Suicide ideation was the third highest concern (32) expressed in the survey.	<i>I had no time to see students at risk, trying to find time was impossible and where I did, my subject area work suffered as a result. The welfare of students is at risk and the suicide rate is up, without the in-house guidance, the rate is only going to rise. [Respondent 134]</i>
Quite a number of suicide ideations and suicide attempts.	<i>Very high number of students with suicide ideation (5) and actual suicide attempts (9) and eight referrals to social services. [Respondent 42]</i>
In one case, there were even suicide attempts made in the school.	<i>This year I had four suicide ideations and two of the students actually did try to take their own life while in the college. [Respondent 91]</i>

Guidance Counsellors' Concerns Regarding the Quality, Professionalism and Capacity of the Guidance Service and the Approach to the Counselling Element of their Work

The second major theme related to affective care was that guidance counsellors felt that they were not providing the same professional, quality counselling service in 2012-13 that they had delivered in previous years. They raised questions about the capacity of the guidance service to deliver and the approach to counselling. Some general concerns are presented in Table 6.12 from both phases of research, and these are followed by some more specific areas of concern that emerged from the data.

Table 6.12

Quality, Professionalism, Capacity and Approach of Guidance Service Affected

Finding	Illustrative Comments
The constant pressure for appointments meant that the quality of the guidance work suffered.	<i>I felt like I was working on a conveyor belt and had very little time to get to know students. I felt under pressure all year and the job was not done the way I would like. [Respondent 167]</i>
The guidance service became more basic and professionalism was also affected.	<i>Yes, I did feel that the professionalism of the service was cut back, it became more of a cut-back, a more essential service, cut back to the essence like, you know. [Basil]</i>
Quite a number of survey respondents (14) expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and guilt that they were not fulfilling their role and that they were struggling to provide a service.	<i>This year I have less guidance hours and this has impacted on the service I give to students. I feel that the service is diluted, and I'm trying to get a bit of this and that done but nothing in great detail compared to other years. [Respondent 273]</i>
One of the interviewees also hinted at a feeling of guilt.	<i>I felt I was letting kids down. [Jasmine]</i>
One respondent felt students were losing out when they tried to fit everything in.	<i>Students suffer, everything done at speed. [Respondent 116]</i>

... / ...

Table 6.12 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
One respondent described his/her work practices at the time as unsafe.	<i>I see the reduction in hours as dangerous as I am forced to work in a way that I cannot describe as best practice. [Respondent 110]</i>
An interviewee made the point that others were now doing the guidance counsellor's work.	<i>The idea that anybody can do pastoral care meant that other people were maybe made available if the guidance counsellor wasn't the person who was made available to students. [Olive]</i>
One guidance counsellor surveyed was worried about the quality of affective care students were now receiving from these other staff members.	<i>Other teachers are dealing with student issues and sometimes in a harmful way and this is simply not good enough. My students are in need of help and they are not getting the help they deserve. [Respondent 89]</i>
Several participants expressed annoyance, that at the launch of a set of mental health guidelines for schools, the Minister for Education had equated school caretakers with guidance counsellors.	<i>Last year, I found the whole idea, it wasn't from school that this was, but from the media and from our employers that they could shove us into the classroom but that other people, including caretakers, you know that whole sense that anybody can do it. I found that very disrespectful. I felt that really hard to marry with the way I know that myself and other guidance counsellors, we work so hard to do our best. [Poppy]</i>

With regard to quality, professionalism, capacity of the guidance service and approach to counselling, several key sub-themes emerged from the responses to the survey and the interviews, these were:

- having to prioritise counselling cases;
- an increase in crisis counselling;
- a stressful work environment;
- the dual teaching and guidance roles proving difficult to manage, and
- the neglect of certain aspects of the counselling work.

These findings for these five prevalent sub-themes are now presented in turn.

Having to prioritise counselling cases.

As a result of the high demand for counselling, guidance counsellors in the survey reported being forced to prioritise students for counselling. This screening of cases as they presented themselves seemed to have become the norm for a large number of guidance counsellors, both in the survey, and in the interviews. They reported that this was the only way they could cope with the demand, with the result that less serious cases were neglected. These findings are presented with illustrative comments in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13

Prioritising Counselling Cases

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Some guidance counsellors surveyed introduced a triage system	<i>I do have a series of questions I ask when a student comes to make an appointment to try and determine if it is urgent, in which case I would postpone a less urgent appointment to meet the student, however, I imagine this does not always work as many students reveal the real reason they are in my office in the 39th minute! [Respondent 234]</i>
Several interviewees described similar scenarios where the more serious counselling cases were dealt with and others postponed until time allowed.	<i>Well you know it's a bottomless pit, it's really a case of prioritising. [Violet]</i> <i>There were times where there was difficulty, when we just had to prioritize, and careers appointments sometimes had to be put on hold. [Poppy]</i>
The intention was to distinguish the non-urgent cases and put them off till a later time.	<i>Then there's times when the appointment isn't urgent and it can be put off to another time. [Holly]</i>
The prioritization of urgent counselling cases meant that there were inevitable delays of up to several weeks for the less serious cases.	<i>Because of time constraints I put off meeting some students I felt weren't at risk and meet those that were first. This often meant putting students off for a couple of weeks or more. [Respondent 120]</i>
One of the survey findings was that due to prioritisation some less serious situations were never dealt with.	<i>Severe prioritisation and unable to deal with a lot of the previously 'ordinary' but genuine issues. [Respondent 186]</i>

... / ...

Table 6.13 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Another guidance counsellor interviewed made essentially the same point that routine counselling cases were not dealt with.	<i>Certainly any student that has a little ongoing problem and needs care and attention is losing out big time ... some kids that would need a little bit of reassurance and under normal circumstances, you'd go out of your way to say hello to them here and there and invite them for a chat and that doesn't happen anymore. So they'd be the kids with not major problems, but the ones who could do with a little bit of attention from time to time or just checking up on them, that's all, that's definitely gone. [Hazel]</i>
Smaller problems not nipped in the bud; but some serious problems such as cyber bullying were not dealt with either and became even bigger.	<i>I have never come across so many students in distress on the corridors as this year. There is a sense of crisis. Huge cyber issues, little sense of prevention. Big problems which should have been dealt with early. [Respondent 18]</i>
The triage system sometimes had the negative effect that students were refused appointments.	<i>In prioritising students I found I had to turn people away. [Respondent 3]</i>
In another school, staff stopped referring students for counselling, and some students who needed affective care were not picked up by the internal pastoral care system.	<i>There was very little time to pick up on students who you felt could have done with the extra attention, the stuff ... the things that go on in school, even referrals, the staff, didn't feel that they would burden you with stuff, such as would you talk to so and so about such and such ... [Olive]</i>
Two-thirds of guidance counsellors interviewed felt that it was the quieter students who were losing out on student care due to the focus on bigger issues.	<i>I suppose students that mightn't be picked up, students that would be very quiet and mightn't be picked up. Some students would be very proactive in getting information and other students wouldn't be, so I suppose the quieter ones would be the ones most in need, or the special needs ones. [Rose]</i>

In the interview phase, in order to clarify what aspects of their work was prioritised, guidance counsellors were asked to describe what always made it to the top of their priority list. Nine of the twelve participants mentioned student care, counselling or one-to-one appointments. One commented:

I suppose student care really, there were others there but if it was a question of one or the other, it would be student care. [Heather]

Another comment was along the same lines:

The one-to-one counselling was at the top of the priority list always in terms of the need, and last year there were a lot of needs. [Holly]

Working in crisis counselling mode.

The prioritising of counselling cases led to a focus on crisis counselling with several guidance counsellors using words such as “fire brigade service” [Respondent 191], “firefighting” [Violet] and “cement/polyfilla” [Respondent 186] to describe their counselling attempts. The findings for this theme are presented with illustrative comments in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14

Working in Crisis Counselling Mode

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Several guidance counsellors explained that they were forced to cancel all proactive or pre-emptive counselling service.	<p><i>Particularly with regards to counselling, the service I provided this year was reactive as opposed to preventative. I had to abandon any mental health promotion programmes I had been engaged with in other years. [Respondent 110]</i></p> <p><i>Really we're dealing with immediate problems, we're finding less time to do preventative stuff. [Poppy]</i></p>
Guidance counsellors reported that they felt like they were on call during 2012 -'13, and only required when a crisis erupted.	<p><i>I was called in to deal with crisis situations such as when a student was self-harming or suspected of suicidal ideation. [Respondent 110]</i></p> <p><i>When a crisis blew up we were called in. [Jasmine]</i></p>
Guidance counsellors in the survey revealed they were mostly dealing with urgent counselling situations which left little time for non-urgent cases.	<p><i>Because of the cut there is now one guidance counsellor for 700 students - it is impossible to give the service needed - fire fighting all the time - students have to be falling through cracks. [Respondent 32]</i></p>
One guidance counsellor gave the analogy of feeling like a plasterer.	<p><i>I felt like a plasterer. I was supposed to plaster over cracks as quickly as I could when they emerged and then I wouldn't see the student again until the rushed plastering job was found not to hold up and the student was in crisis again a few weeks later. [Respondent 10]</i></p>
The hurt and pain that this forced change in counselling approach caused one particular guidance counsellor is self-evident.	<p><i>Doing emergency counselling on corridor between classes. When I ask students why did you not come to me sooner they tell me "you were too busy", this is very sad. [Respondent 191]</i></p>

Increased stress for the guidance counsellor.

The third of the five sub-themes with regard to quality, professionalism, capacity and approach was that some guidance counsellors reported being affected by increased stress, with 16 respondents in the survey mentioning this. The findings for this theme are presented with illustrative comments in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15

Increased Stress for the Guidance Counsellor

Finding	Illustrative Comments
As substantial number of survey respondents reported stress symptoms.	<i>I was pretty stretched for most of the year. I was tired a lot of the time. [Olive]</i>
Some of the interviewees also experienced high levels of stress.	<i>It affected my stress levels definitely. I suppose after Christmas I began to settle down more and said look I can't really let this affect me. No, I did feel very stressed up till Christmas that this was going to happen, et cetera. [Heather]</i>
Some guidance counsellors surveyed were so stressed they were thinking of leaving the job.	<i>Also the first time that I feel I want and need to get out of the job. [Respondent 93]</i>
This finding was also replicated in the interviews.	<i>I really would say, would I be better changing. I'm beginning to think, I know I am very very good at what I do, but at the end of the day you can't be all things to all people and I'm wondering if something else comes up now I think I'd look for it. [Violet]</i>

Dual role was difficult for both students and guidance counsellors.

One of the reasons given by many of the guidance counsellors surveyed, for their increased stress, was that they were teaching more classes and that this was impacting on their guidance role. A large number of survey respondents (39) commented on how incongruous the two roles were, and that combining the two was difficult to manage as the combination of roles created a conflict of interest.

Because of the increased classroom contact, it creates conflict of interest in terms of my role as guidance counsellor. [Respondent 36]

This finding was also explored in the interviews, and was replicated.

It's always a conflict of interest because you are trying to be a disciplinarian in the classroom and then you are trying to be a counsellor five minutes later, maybe after disciplining a student in the classroom, so it's a total conflict. [Rose]

Specific findings related to this theme are presented with illustrative comments in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16

Dual Role was Difficult for Guidance Counsellors

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Students were losing out due to increased time spent teaching.	<i>Due to cutbacks I am back in the classroom teaching therefore reducing the time I have to see vulnerable students. [Respondent 111]</i>
Some were teaching a subject they hadn't taught in years.	<i>More subject teaching, plus now teaching Leaving Cert geography for the first time in 22 years, with no inservice or support from the principal. [Respondent 48]</i>
In the follow-up interviews, nine of the twelve guidance counsellors said that they had taught academic subjects in 2012-13. One of them described the extra pressures this entailed.	<i>I had stopped teaching Religion in the nineties and then last year I was asked to teach it all the way through, I mean as an exam subject in First Year and Second Year and I really hated it. I felt I wasn't competent and you know it was just fierce pressure trying to prepare classes and go in and prepare kids for exams and all that. [Jasmine]</i>
Some guidance counsellors surveyed resented being compelled to spend large amounts of time teaching academic subjects.	<i>I am taking classes I do not need to take and not allocated those that would be useful, e.g. 5th year guidance. [Respondent 64]</i>
Others complained about supervising instead of being available for guidance appointments.	<i>I am spending a third of my time supervising study classes as a result of the loss of guidance hours. [Respondent 112]</i>
One of the survey respondents described the dilemma of having to choose between a student in need and a waiting class.	<i>If I have a student who badly needs someone to talk to and a class to go to, I don't know what to do, I can't leave my class unattended and I can't leave the student who has come with a very serious issue. What should I do? [Respondent 89]</i>

Table 6.16 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
Similarly, one of the interviewees talked about being regularly placed in a similar predicament.	<i>The other thing with counselling is if we have a class off and then you're back in the class again, it's very difficult to ask someone into the room ... or kids who are found on the corridor and they're in distress, because you can't just decide not to go to class. [Hazel]</i>
A guidance counsellor surveyed described having to leave troubled students in order to go to class.	<i>When the bell goes I have to leave them regardless of the state they are in. [Respondent 95]</i>
In the interviews, a guidance counsellor who had been given home economics classes recounted being caught in a similar catch-22 situation.	<i>I have had a few occasions myself when I was in class, when I've had First Years' buns upstairs in the oven and somebody in the office who had self-harmed and threatened suicide and where do you go? [Heather]</i>

Guidance counsellors also highlighted how they perceived that the dual role also caused difficulties for students. These findings, with illustrative comments are presented in Table 6.17.

Table 6.17

Dual Role was Difficult for Students

Finding	Illustrative Comments
The different roles caused uncertainty for students, as one respondent in the survey highlighted.	<i>It is difficult to be a classroom teacher, guidance counsellor and year head, it is confusing for the student. [Respondent 165]</i>
One guidance counsellor surveyed commented that the students' view of him/her had changed fundamentally from that of a counsellor to that of a teacher:	<i>With more class contact time, students see me less as a counsellor. [Respondent 112]</i>
This point was also made in the interviews.	<i>The more time you spend in the classroom, the more you are perceived as a teacher, not as somebody in addition to the teaching staff. [Olive]</i>

... / ...

Table 6.17 (cont'd)

Finding	Illustrative Comments
For some, the caring accessible relationship they had with students previously had been lost, due to a changed perception, where they were now viewed more as a disciplinarian than a counsellor.	<i>As I have more classes and have a discipline role, students do not approach me in the same way.</i> [Respondent 189]
The ongoing tension between the two roles can be sensed in this comment from one of the interview participants.	<i>And the discipline, if you were giving out to someone who hadn't their homework done and midway through it you got a feeling that ah this poor child doesn't need this ... or you'd be giving out to them and afterwards you know they'd tell you something, so it's the clash, between the discipline needed for a subject.</i> [Poppy]

Aspects of counselling work neglected.

Elements of the guidance role that were neglected or not carried out in 2012-13, was the fifth of the sub-themes relating to the quality, professionalism, capacity and approach of the guidance service. In the survey, there was a wide range of responses from guidance counsellors who mentioned that they had stopped doing certain aspects of the job, or that they did less of certain facets of the role (38 respondents). One guidance counsellor summed up the changes:

I failed to complete large amounts of my work. I feel I couldn't support students and unless the allocation changes this will continue. I am very hardworking but totally disheartened. [Respondent 174]

This theme was also explored in the interview phase, where guidance counsellors were asked what aspects of their work always remained at the bottom of their 'to do' list. The vast majority of the responses related to administrative tasks:

Mainly the paperwork and probably again, various ... as you know things that could come in through the post. [Olive]

Many of the professional activities associated with providing student affective care were stopped or reduced. These included the writing up of counselling notes and

the attendance at in-service days or continuing professional development (CPD) training courses. This guidance counsellor recounts how the writing up of counselling notes was an area that she regularly had to let slip:

Good practice would say that you should take time when you have finished with somebody just to reflect and also to write up, and if you have so many people to see, you might have timetabled them one every half hour; this person has revealed something 17 minutes in, so you've overrun with her and then you are very conscious that someone has been sitting outside and has been missing class time. Now I haven't got time at that stage to sit down and reflect and write up a good piece about the one who has gone out the door, I've got the next one in. That could go on for a day and then I am trying to write up from memory in the evening, and that's not best practice. [Rosemary]

Several guidance counsellors interviewed reported being unable to attend outside events, in-service or CPD; one such comment reads:

Various events that were taking place that you wouldn't get to, the other things were even keeping yourself up to date, particularly in regard to mental health; reading would have gone to the bottom of the list. [Olive]

Other issues which arose, due to the lack of time.

There was a range of other issues involving quality, professionalism, capacity and approach that were compounded by a lack of time. These concerns included delays in appointments, problems with referrals, and problems in providing follow-up. It was evident that all of these issues were inextricably linked with time or more precisely the lack of it, and that these issues also impacted on each other. These three themes are now described in turn.

Delays in appointments.

Delays in providing students with appointments were reported in the survey, with long waiting lists to see the guidance counsellor being the norm:

If a student comes to make an appointment it could be up to three weeks before I can see them. Obviously if there is an urgent issue which needs addressing this simply isn't good enough. A student having to wait three weeks to see their guidance counsellor is simply not acceptable. [Respondent 128]

This finding was replicated in the interview phase with almost half of the guidance counsellors reporting waiting lists for counselling, while several revealed that students had to wait one or two weeks. One recounted that:

There was a bit of a delay, you know there would be between say asking for one and actually getting it, there could be a week or even two weeks of a delay, you know. [Basil]

Along the same lines, another guidance counsellor remarked that:

Depending on the time of year, I could be saying come back to me next week or even the week after. The big career times such as CAO, et cetera it would have been very difficult. [Olive]

Referral issues.

School management in one school recommended the guidance counsellor to refer students to outside agencies rather than deal with them in school:

Senior management has also directed us to refer parents to outside agencies, (of which there are extremely few) rather than provide support in school. [Respondent 239]

One of the guidance counsellors interviewed, noted an increase in the practice of outside referrals:

Well, certainly we would have recommended parents to go the GP route and get their children referred on for counselling through CAMHS²⁴ or privately. We would have always done that, but we were doing it more last year. [Jasmine]

When students were referred to outside organisations, long waiting lists were also reported for these agencies, which in turn increased the pressure for guidance counsellors who felt they had to carry the can until referral services were in a position to see a student:

When serious issues arise I feel that the services available to people, especially those depending on HSE²⁵ services are put on long waiting lists and I find myself working on some serious issues while the student is waiting for professional help outside school and often lacking the skills required. [Respondent 13]

Follow-up issues.

Lack of timetabled guidance hours in school meant that it was difficult for guidance counsellors to provide the same level of follow-up that they had hitherto provided.

One respondent in the online survey described how the change was impacting on student care:

I continued to make referrals to outside agencies as I would have in other years but this year once I made a referral, I would find myself not having the time to check in with students and I noticed that more students this year dropped out of these services in other years and I wonder was this because they knew I wasn't checking up on them in school. [Respondent 110]

This inability to provide the necessary follow-up regarding certain students was also pointed out by the interviewees:

You'd certainly feel it could be better; there could have been some more follow-up meetings with people. [Basil]

Another guidance counsellor illustrated the limited opportunities for follow-up:

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As opposed to just being able to meet with a student and following up the following week, and then maybe follow-up again the following week, we didn't, we couldn't meet students like that last year. [Jasmine]

Guidance Counsellors' Perceptions of Students' Concerns

As the second research question specified the impact of the changes in guidance allocation on the affective care of students, and given that the IGC audit (2013c) revealed that one-to-one appointments were reduced by 59%, guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' concerns during the year were explored to see if the reduction in counselling was reflected in these concerns. This offered an additional perspective with which to explore the research question.

Guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' main concerns and issues were obtained from Q. 9 in the survey. Each of these concerns was categorised as career, educational or counselling-related, and these data are presented in Table 6.18, Table 6.19 and Table 6.20. It is informative to compare these three tables, as they show very clearly the breakdown of student concerns. It is evident from the tables that counselling-related issues were students' greatest concern in 2012 - 13, with 28 (74%) of the issues raised being of a counselling nature, whereas only five (13%) of the issues raised were related to education / academic matters, and five (13%) of the concerns were career-related.

Table 6.18***Students' Counselling-related Concerns (n = 266)***

Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Family issues	31	<i>Living in stress-filled homes. [Respondent 269]</i>
Financial issues	28	<i>Undoubtedly financial worries of the senior students hoping to go to college and the difficulties that families in those circumstances have, has increased the number of students that I am seeing in relation to anxiety and stress. [Respondent 164]</i>
Bullying / cyberbullying	24	<i>Bullying - cyber & relational was big. [Respondent 258]</i>
Self-harm	19	<i>Self-harm in younger students was huge, particularly in 2nd Year. [Respondent 234]</i>
Depression	18	<i>Depression amongst brighter students. [Respondent 16]</i>
Emotional difficulties	18	<i>Very high levels of anxiety - not able to cope with minor issues. [Respondent 28]</i>
Stress	12	<i>Stress again more than ever before. [Respondent 156]</i>
Suicide ideation	12	<i>Suicide has been a real concern with some students or their friends. [Respondent 21]</i>
Self-esteem	10	<i>Very low self-esteem issues across the board especially at Senior Cycle. [Respondent 26]</i>
Mental health issues	9	<i>Mental health (we had 5 mental health hospitalisations). [Respondent 198]</i>
Alcohol Drugs	9	<i>Alcohol/drug use in the home is another issue that I dealt with quite a lot. [Respondent 110]</i>
Lack of Friends	9	<i>Feelings of loneliness. [Respondent 149]</i>
Bereavement – Loss	8	<i>There is a lot around bereavement. [Respondent 256]</i>
Eating Disorders - Body Image	5	<i>Eating disorders becoming increasingly evident. [Respondent 128]</i>
Relationship Issues	5	<i>Interpersonal relationships. [Respondent 132]</i>
Belonging - Peer Pressure	5	<i>Feeling different and isolated. [Respondent 141]</i>
Getting Access to One-to-one	5	<i>Each student in Leaving Cert year has only one guidance appointment in the year. Indeed one class has no guidance allocation at all. [Respondent 122]</i>

... / ...

Table 6.18 (cont'd)

Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Sexual Behaviour	4	<i>Premature sexualised behaviour. [Respondent 43]</i>
Abuse - Neglect - Domestic Violence	4	<i>The school had to make a few child protection reports as we had concerns about neglect. [Respondent 110]</i>
Difficulties with Social Media	3	<i>Dealing with the fallout from social media sites, i.e. bullying issues that are happening outside of school and then being brought into the school. [Respondent 220]</i>
Social interaction - Social skills	3	<i>Many have serious problems making friends. [Respondent 96]</i>
Transition Issues	3	<i>1st Years settling into new school. [Respondent 102]</i>
Gender Identity	2	<i>Disclosing sexual orientation. [Respondent 149]</i>
Fear for Safety	2	<i>Community/ neighbourhood social behaviour. [Respondent 177]</i>
Pregnancy	2	<i>Pregnancy. [Respondent 175]</i>
Health Issues	1	<i>Stress related stomach disorders. [Respondent 260]</i>
Immigration - Racial Issues	1	<i>Racism high. [Respondent 232]</i>
Parenting Issues	1	<i>More and more evidence of poor parenting skills. [Respondent 106]</i>

Table 6.19***Students' Career-related Concerns (n = 266)***

Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Future Employment Prospects	18	<i>I've had more students in careers meetings talk about where the jobs will be as opposed to what they would actually enjoy. [Respondent 15]</i>
Career / Course Choice	18	<i>A stronger pressure than ever before to make the right decision in terms of a course. I think this is down to societal pressure in these times and possibly financial pressure at home. [Respondent 156]</i>
Cost of College / Issues re. Grant	11	<i>Many will not go to college because of the lack of finance. [Respondent 205]</i>
Getting a Place in College / CAO Points	11	<i>Worried that they won't get the points for the courses they want. [Respondent 243]</i>
Non-College Options	3	<i>Dearth of opportunities for the more average student, as jobs and apprenticeships dry up. [Respondent 225]</i>

Table 6.20***Students' Educational-related Concerns (n = 266)***

Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Exam Pressure	21	<i>The anxiety associated with attaining the Leaving Certificate standards they want in order to pursue the college courses of their choice. [Respondent 219]</i>
Studying Issues - Study skills	9	<i>Coping with study issues and developing good study skills. [Respondent 153]</i>
Motivation	7	<i>Maintaining motivation for those students who would prefer to go directly into the world of work or apprenticeship training. [Respondent 170]</i>
Subject Choice	5	<i>Problems with wrong subject choices in 5th yr. [Respondent 258]</i>
Absences-Attendance	2	<i>Some students are struggling to stay in school. [Respondent 257]</i>

In the follow-on interviews, the participating guidance counsellors were asked for their reaction to this finding that counselling-related issues were much more frequent for students than career and educational concerns (Q.3a). Three-quarters of interviewees (9) said that this was also true in the case of their schools:

Well when they came seeking help it was more counselling, well careers as well but counselling was definitely a bigger part of the job for me last year, definitely. [Holly]

Summary of Findings for Research Question Two

Many guidance counsellors indicated that students' 'rights' were impacted by a loss of care and by a forced crisis intervention approach to counselling in schools. They reported that there were fewer options for student care and support available in schools in 2012-13. While guidance as a whole was impacted by the cutbacks, it was very clear that the counselling aspect of the service was diluted most. This impact was experienced particularly by those students who were vulnerable, those who needed transition supports, and those with mental health concerns.

The problem was primarily caused by an increase in guidance counsellors' classroom time, which in turn led to a decrease in time-tabled one-to-one appointment time. It became difficult for many guidance counsellors to provide a professional quality guidance service.

The distribution of care suffered, as the common model which emerged during 2012-13 was one which featured a drastically reduced counselling service that in many schools resembled a crisis intervention service. Overall, guidance counsellors' perceptions were that student affective care was not appropriately supported or distributed in second-level schools during 2012-13, as a result of the reduction in the hours they were allocated for counselling.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter, which draws the thesis to a close, presents a summary, discussion and conclusion of the findings. Firstly, I re-visit and address the aims and objectives presented in Chapter One. This is followed by a discussion of the findings linked with the two research questions, where I draw conclusions. A doctoral thesis should contribute to knowledge; therefore I consider the implications of this study for the academic world, for the guidance community and for policymakers and some recommendations are made.

Revisiting the Aims and Objectives

The catalyst for this study was the removal of ex-quota guidance allocation as a cost-saving measure by Government in Budget 2012, with effect from September 2012. The IGC National Audit (2013a, 2013b) had reported differences in the reduction of guidance hours by school type, and an overall reduction of 59% in one-to one appointments in schools but it did not research the impact of these reductions. In addition, as it was an audit, it looked only at quantitative data.

This thesis had two objectives:

1. The first objective was to explore the impact of the change in guidance allocation across different types of school.
2. The second objective was to explore the impact of the changed guidance allocation on student care (through an exploration of guidance counsellors' concerns regarding the care of students, and their perceptions of their students' main issues).

These objectives led to two research questions, these were:

1. What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?
2. What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in second-level schools?

The findings for Research Question One were presented in Chapter Five and the findings for Research Question Two were documented in Chapter Six.

Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question One

The findings in relation to research question one: *What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?* build on the equality arguments of Baker et al. (2004), and in particular Feeley (2008) who found that inequalities of love, care and solidarity in educational institutions acted as impediments to learning. The findings in this thesis are not concerned with teaching and learning *per se*, but rather with guidance in schools, which includes elements of teaching, learning and care.

Main finding: the distribution of guidance care was not equal across schools.

Mindful that direct comparisons could not be made across different school types, due to unequal numbers in the comparison samples, it is nonetheless possible to conclude that there were differences in how guidance was reduced between certain types of school, by examining the different proportions of responses between respondents in fee-charging schools and those in the Free Education System (FES). The proportion of respondents within FES schools, who reported negative perceptions was 17% greater than in fee-charging schools. In terms of reduced

guidance hours, I suggest that if a greater proportion of guidance counsellors experienced a reduction in guidance hours in one school type than in another in 2012-13, then the distribution of guidance care provided in both school types can be said to differ. In this thesis, the proportion of respondents within FES schools who experienced actual reductions in guidance was 69% (167/243), while the proportion of respondents within fee-charging schools was 44% (8/18). The main finding therefore was that the distribution of guidance care was not consistent or equal across fee-charging schools and FES schools

Baker *et al.* (2004) contend that everyone should have an equal opportunity to compete for social advantages: "people should not be advantaged or hampered by their social background" (p. 25). Likewise, if one were to view the changed guidance allocation through a liberal egalitarian lens, it is clear that it is contrary to the spirit of "fair equal opportunity" (Rawls, 1971, p. 73), as it does not afford students in FES schools the same availability of a guidance service that their counterparts in fee-charging schools enjoy. This finding will now be discussed under a number of sub-themes:

- Differing guidance emphases revealed between fee-charging schools and FES schools and how these are related to institutional habitus.
- Differences in terms of the quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service between fee-charging and FES schools.
- Differences in educational decision-making and attitudes to guidance between fee-charging and FES schools.
- Variety of school management approaches to guidance allocation and student care.

- Differences in parental attitudes to guidance evident in fee-charging and FES schools.
- Differences between schools linked with school funding issues.

Differing guidance emphases, related to school habitus.

I found differences both in perceptions and actual reductions of guidance allocations between voluntary secondary schools, ETB schools and Community and Comprehensive schools, though these differences were relatively small. I also found some differences between all-girls schools and co-ed schools. Unlike previous research (IGC 2013), any distinctions between DEIS and non-DEIS schools were negligible. The biggest discrepancy was between fee-charging schools and schools in the FES, where there was a large disparity between the proportion of guidance counsellors' negative perceptions of the changed guidance allocation in fee-paying schools and schools in the FES (92% or 179/194), with guidance counsellors in fee-charging schools expressing less negative perceptions (75% or 12/16). These perceptions also mirrored the reality, where despite considerable differences between respondent numbers from different school types, substantial differences were observed between the proportion of respondents from fee-charging schools who experienced a reduction in guidance hours (44% or 8/18) and those from FES schools (69% or 167/243), with a greater proportion of guidance counsellors in FES schools experiencing a reduction in guidance hours than in fee-charging schools.

Different care focuses in fee-charging and FES schools with regard to counselling and career guidance.

The findings from Phase One revealed that the focus of guidance counsellors' work

(regardless of school type) was firmly on counselling issues, rather than career guidance or educational guidance. In Phase Two I wanted to check if there were any differences between fee-charging schools and schools in the FES, with regard to their guidance provision, as the literature found that institutional habitus, familial habitus and social class influence educational decision-making (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). With specific reference to guidance in schools, the findings from the literature were:

- that the institutional habitus of a school is reflected in its guidance provision where, for example, the institutional habitus of a middle-class school is evident in the amount of career guidance offered, the focus on subjects that facilitate third-level college entry and in the guidance facilities available, which reinforce student beliefs and parental ambitions on progression to higher education (McDonough, 1997);
- that students' career decision-making in middle-class schools is based "on the multiple habituses of family and school" (Smyth and Banks, 2012, p.271), where students take it for granted that they will go to third-level;
- that students in disadvantaged schools depended more on the school than the home, and on the guidance counsellor in particular for help with career decision-making (McDonough, 1997; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2004; Foscett, et al., 2008; McCoy, et al., 2010; Smyth & McCoy, 2011);
- that middle-class schools tended to provide more guidance and support around college application than working-class schools (Mullen, 2009).
- that guidance in working-class schools was associated more with personal counselling than career guidance (Rosenbaum, Miller & Krei, 1996; Smyth & Banks, 2012).

Though the number of guidance counsellors from fee-charging schools interviewed in Phase Two was only three, they all revealed a similar trend with regard to counselling in their schools, which differed from those in FES schools (9), where a more personal and affective care dimension was reported. These three views reflect the findings from the literature as all three related how their focus was on the career guidance aspect of the role, and not on counselling. When asked to comment on these findings for all schools from Phase One; that counselling concerns were more prevalent than either career-guidance or educational guidance concerns, this interviewee from a fee-charging school replied:

Statistically that doesn't stack up for me, I will just explain that, I would see every fourth year, every fifth year and every sixth year in terms of careers, and that's 200 kids, and I'd see sixth years three times a year and I'm counselling about 20 kids, so statistically it is more about vocational stuff than counselling stuff. [Rowan]

This interviewee, also in a fee-charging school was of the same opinion:

Most of the issues brought to my attention would be related to careers or to progression. ... The number of pure counselling, complex counselling issues is probably relatively small. I would say that this school here doesn't promote the counselling service as much as the career service, that's probably for two reasons: one is parents of middle-class students attending fee-paying schools often approach support services independently, rather than going through the school. They also have the resources, both the social resources and the financial resources to do that and therefore they are not as dependent on the counselling skills within the school. [Lily]

In contrast, in schools in the FES, the issues guidance counsellors were presented with were more counselling-related:

Well when they came seeking help it was more counselling ... counselling was definitely a bigger part of the job for me last year, definitely. [Holly]

And similarly:

I would certainly have seen an increase last year in the kids who were self-harming, that was the big one. That's the biggest difference, the issues were mostly about family breakup, separation, attachment, that kind of stuff, but the manifestation has changed and has become self-harming. [Jasmine]

In interpreting these differences in guidance between fee-charging schools and schools in the FES, I use the notions of familial and institutional habitus, and argue that these combine with the influence of cultural, economic, and social capitals to influence career decision-making (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986, Lareau, 1987, 1989, 2003; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Allat, 1993; O'Brien, 2005a, 2005b; Feeley, 2008). This explanation shows how the social, cultural and economic capitals of students in fee-charging schools combined with a middle-class school habitus are contributory factors to the retention of a fully-resourced guidance service in these schools. Thus in fee-charging schools, there was an understanding by the principal / management body of the importance of career guidance. There was also pressure for it from parents, and a greater demand for career guidance than for counselling from the pupils.

This explanation of differences in attitudes to guidance between fee-charging and FES schools points to some of the internal school practices that occur in schools critiqued by Baker et al. (2004), where there is an emphasis on academic learning, with a focus on logical and linguistic intelligence (Gardner, 1987; 1993), which in turn contributes to the reproduction of inequality through schooling.

Differences in the quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service between fee-charging and FES schools.

The impact of the changed guidance allocation was most evident in differences in the quality, capacity and approach of the guidance service between fee-charging

schools and schools in the FES. These were findings from Phase Two of the research where 12 guidance counsellors were interviewed. There were differences in counselling waiting times, in whether the guidance service was mainly preventative or reactive, disparities in access to one-to-one appointments, and diverse experiences of time pressure. These are indicative of increased inequality in access to guidance services (see Table 5.35 for full details).

Firstly, these differences were evident in terms of counselling waiting times, which were non-existent in fee-charging schools (three interviewees) and the norm in FES schools (nine interviewees), with guidance counsellors usually inundated with requests for counselling. Secondly, the counselling service was mostly preventative in fee-charging schools; while in contrast, it was predominantly reactive in FES schools, where guidance counsellors did not have enough time to adopt a preventative approach due to the high demand for counselling. This demand led to the introduction of prioritisation in most FES schools, with crisis cases being prioritized. Thirdly, getting access to one-to-one appointments was “very easy” [Rowan] in fee-charging schools, where students could “have as many as required” [Lily], whereas in FES schools it was mostly difficult and sometimes impossible “as there was no-one there when they came to the door” [Hazel]. Fourthly, guidance counsellors in FES schools were under constant time pressure, with “watching the clock” [Poppy] being the norm. The opposite was the case in fee-charging schools where more flexibility of time was apparent: “if they needed a little bit more time I gave it and if they needed to come back again that was fine” [Rosemary].

The follow-on interviews provided several explanations for these differences in quality, capacity and approach between both school types. Even though the number

of one-to one interviews conducted was low (12), these revealed an interesting trend in the proportion of guidance counsellors who were also timetabled to teach academic subjects in fee-charging/FES schools. Eight of the nine guidance counsellors interviewed from FES schools said that they had taught academic subjects in 2012-13 as well as working as a guidance counsellor, while one did not. Of the three guidance counsellors interviewed who didn't teach academic subjects, two worked in fee-charging schools.

Differences in educational decision-making and attitudes to guidance between fee-charging and FES schools.

The online survey revealed that 69% (167/243) of guidance counsellors who worked in schools in the FES reported a reduction in guidance hours. The figure for respondents within fee-charging schools was 44% (8/18). From the Phase Two interviews, it became clear that all nine guidance counsellors interviewed from FES schools had less availability during 2012-'13 than in previous years, while this was not the case for the three guidance counsellors interviewed from fee-charging schools. For one of these, the reverse was true:

In fact actually it increased, in the number of hours given to guidance and counselling related items actually increased. [Lily]

Consequently students in FES schools and fee-charging schools had unequal support for educational decision-making compared to their middle-class peers. As McCoy, et al., (2010) found, young people, "particularly those from the lower non-manual backgrounds" (p. 165) felt that they had insufficient information about higher education because their parents did not have any experience of it. Important findings from Smyth et al. (2011) showed that in the absence of this kind of information in the home, students from working-class or non-employed

backgrounds, whose families had no history of higher education entry “were more reliant on the guidance counsellor” (p. 139) for information than those from professional or farming backgrounds. In contrast, Smyth et al. (2011) found that in middle-class schools, progression to higher education appeared to be a given, with students “drawing on detailed information from their siblings or parents who had been to third-level education” (p. 175). A recent ESRI study by McCoy, Smyth, Watson and Darmody (2014) corroborated these findings:

Middle-class young people were more reliant on their parents as a source of information while working-class students and immigrant groups were more reliant on school-based forms of guidance (p. 185).

A guidance counsellor interviewed for this study, who worked in a fee-charging school made a similar observation:

I don't recall huge numbers of them being worried about their own future and most people seemed to assume that *'look I will go on and I will do some further kind of studies and what it will be will be down to my interests and whether I can reach what I am aiming for'*.
[Rosemary]

In support of this finding, the literature discussed in Chapter Three found that educational decision-making is strongly influenced by institutional and familial habitus and capitals. Foskett et al. (2008) demonstrated that the influence of both individuals and of the culture and ethos of the school shape the choices and preferences that emerge: “the socio-economic environment of schools influences schools to reproduce inequalities of inputs and experiences that directly influence pupils’ ultimate destinations in life” (p. 59).

As Bourdieu & Passeron (1970) found, working class students do not have the same cultural capital as middle class teenagers. This leaves these students at a disadvantage when it comes to navigating a pathway through second-level

education and making informed career decisions. The assistance of a skilled professional such as a guidance counsellor could provide some support and guidance to students whose parents do not have this kind of cultural capital.

Differing school management approaches to guidance allocation and student care.

As a result of Budget 2012, the decision-making power to allocate appropriate guidance for each individual school was divested in school principals from September 2012 onwards, rather than an ex-quota allocation being made centrally by the DES. The thesis findings provide evidence of how diverse school managements dealt with the loss of the guidance allocation in different ways, with widely differing outcomes for different school types and individual schools. As evidence of the diverse attitudes to guidance observed in this study, a minority of guidance counsellors' schools reported that the school management retained the guidance hours as they were prior to 2012-13 or increased them. This quote, for example, is from one guidance counsellor in a FES school who was in the atypical position of having experienced a positive outcome:

I do believe that the management in our school has done everything to keep a dedicated guidance and counselling service in the school at a very difficult time, in terms of funding and teaching allocation so I feel we are trying our best to give the best service in these difficult circumstances. [Respondent 188]

As another guidance counsellor in a FES school explained in the interviews: "it is down to a management thing, that it just depends on their opinion and their value on guidance" [Holly].

In some schools there was a conscious decision made by the principal and/or guidance counsellor to focus attention on career guidance. The interviews

confirmed that many principals made the decision to remove guidance counsellors from guidance duties and put them in a classroom teaching academic subjects: “so they were pulling the guidance counsellor into the classroom to teach an academic subject and so you were getting a bigger chop then of the guidance and counselling function in schools” [Rosemary]. However, even in schools where such decisions were left to the guidance counsellor, the career guidance element of the work tended to dominate, to the neglect of counselling.

Though principals were not consulted for this research, I contend that the findings illustrate some of the tough educational choices principals were forced to make, and that school timetabling has quite possibly become stretched since September 2012. Given the choice between reducing guidance hours or dropping or reducing programmes (e.g. Transition Year or Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) group), reducing subject choice, or reducing higher level classes, it is not difficult to appreciate the predicament school principals found themselves in.

The difficulties school principals had dealing with the removal of the guidance allocation highlight a worrying lack of capacity in school teaching allocations to introduce planned new initiatives. One such example is the new Junior Cycle Student Award which requires schools to focus on key skills, well-being and personal development - three areas where the guidance counsellor could play a lead role, if given adequate time resources.

The findings relating to differing management approaches to allocating guidance hours show how the priority for many schools was on retaining a focus on student academic achievement and teaching, rather than on student well-being, and on career guidance rather than counselling and affective supports. There is also evidence for Murphy’s (2000) findings that school managements are “not entirely

supportive” (p. 11) of guidance counsellors and that they do not consider them “as an important and essential part of the school team” (p. 11).

In addition, I would assert that these findings also illustrate what Baker et al. (2004) called the peripherality of the emotions in education, and the focus on the rational, the intellectual and the academic (Lynch & Lodge, 2002; Noddings, 2003; Baker et al., 2004). They show the tension between subject teaching and affective care in schools, and are indicative of the dearth of research internationally on student mental health and well-being, compared to the focus on student academic achievement (O’Brien, 2011), as was the case in the Finnish study by Konu et al. (2002) reported in Chapter Three.

This was not an unexpected outcome, as the review of guidance policies in Chapter Two had shown that this happened elsewhere. The Irish government policy decision was shown to have followed closely a recent international policy trend for devolving the responsibility for guidance provision to schools. What was observed in this thesis mirrors what happened recently in several other countries, such as New Zealand, The Netherlands and particularly in the United Kingdom, where the outcomes were seen to have been largely negative, resulting in increased inequality in guidance provision and a lack of quality assurance. As a review of the UK Government's policy of transferring responsibility for careers guidance to individual schools concluded, the guidance service to young people had deteriorated, and that “such a model does not deliver the best provision for young people” (House of Commons Education Committee, 2013, p. 13).

The key problem of devolving responsibility for guidance to schools was clearly pointed out in advance of the policy changes in Ireland by Watts (2011), when he highlighted that it left guidance provision at the mercy of individual school

management priorities: “some managers may see guidance as being very important for the institution and its students; some may not” (p. 35).

Differences in parental attitudes to guidance evident in fee-charging and FES schools.

Some of the guidance counsellors interviewed suggested that parents of students in fee-charging schools recognise the importance and benefits of a guidance service as a way to navigate a successful route through the education system and to secure progression: “obviously, ironically enough, the fee-paying sector see the need and the necessity for guidance, even amongst some of the well-resourced and privileged children, whereas the public sector did not” [Olive]. Other guidance counsellors also believed that school managements in fee-charging schools saw the value of a good guidance service and viewed it as being essential to a school’s reputation: “it’s a huge, huge seller for them” [Violet].

Feeley (2008) called this level of knowledge “credentialised capital” (p. 87), a term indicative of proactive parental engagement with education, which pays dividends in their children’s educational success. This hands-on approach was similar to the “time-consuming and energy-consuming research” that O’Brien’s (2005b) middle-class mothers invested in choosing a second-level school for their children. As O’Brien and Ó Fathaigh (2005) argued, social class powerfully affects consumption and lifestyle patterns, including “the exercise of educational choice” (p. 69). Likewise, Rudd (2003) found that parents “in higher-class groupings are more likely to realise the value of schooling both in the field of education and the occupational field, thus increasing the likelihood of reproducing their position” (p. 7). The online survey found that in fee-charging schools, there was a demand for career guidance from parents: “parents demand a professional service as they

consider they are paying for it” [Respondent 161].

The follow-on interviews reflected this finding, where eleven of the twelve participants, including the three who worked in fee-charging schools, considered that parent power was one of the reasons why the guidance hours were not reduced as much in fee-charging schools as in schools in the FES: “parents really, really want that guidance for their children. So they know, these good schools know that they will lose children if they can't have an excellent guidance and counselling service” [Violet]. While a guidance counsellor who worked in a fee-charging school articulated the importance parents attached to career guidance:

Because parents ... who send their sons and daughters to fee-paying schools ... expect a level of service ... based around progression into third level, and career guidance ... is seen as an integral part of getting their sons or daughters into the right course and into the right college. [Lily]

This finding reflects Annette Lareau’s conclusions in *Unequal Childhoods* (2003), a detailed ethnographic study of twelve families, where she examined the social changes that have turned childhood into an extended production process for many middle-class American families. She found that middle class parents, worried about how their children will progress deliberately try to stimulate their children’s development by engaging in a pattern of “concentrated cultivation ... and foster their cognitive and social skills” (p. 5).

Differences in impacts between schools linked with school funding issues.

The findings pointed out that the issue of school funding may also be an indirect contributory factor to the differences in the impact of the guidance cutbacks across different school types. School funding is essentially what provides the educational

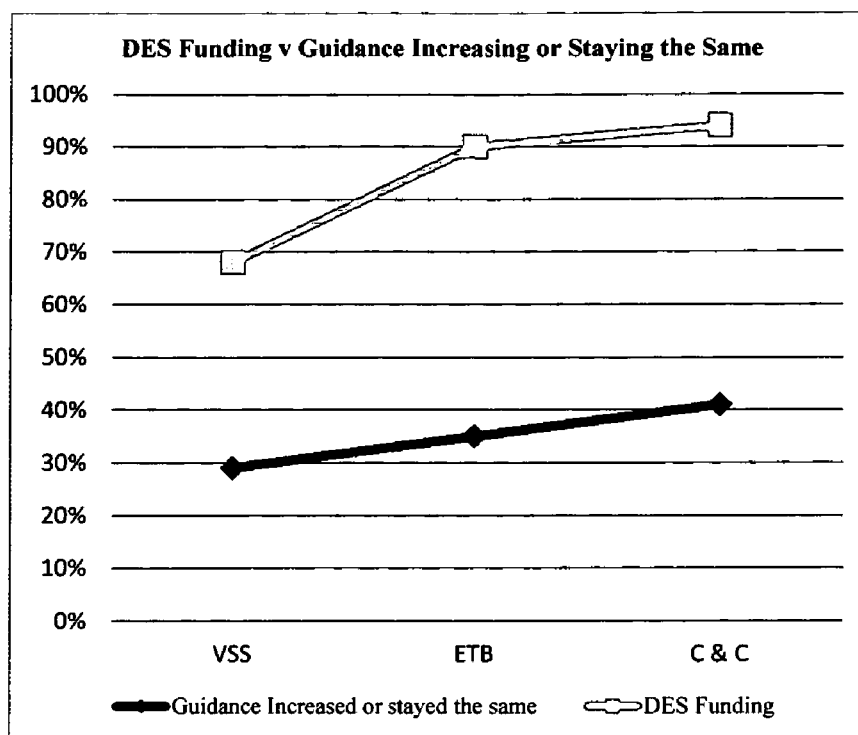
resources for a school, so any differences in levels of funding may lead to inequalities. As Baker et al. (2004) posited, inequalities in educational resources are significant contributors to a person's educational progression.

In exploring this issue in the interviews, it was pointed out by one interviewee that DES capitation grants were different for the three second-level school sectors with Voluntary Secondary Schools receiving less than ETB schools or the Community/Comprehensive sector: “the funding from the Department is better in the community sector than it is in the voluntary sector” [Rosemary]. This comment warranted further investigation of the link between levels of funding and reduced guidance provision. Recent research on school funding by the ESRI (2013) confirmed the interviewee’s assertion, as it found that the VSS sector received 22% less government funding than the ETB sector and 26% less than the C&C sector annually.

In analysing the online survey data, it struck me that it would be interesting to examine trends in each school sector using the data on DES funding and the data on changes in guidance hours (see Fig 7.1) to see if there was any correlation. Once again caution must be expressed as the number of respondents from each school sector in the DES study and in this thesis were not equal. After analysis, these data suggest a possible link between levels of school funding and whether guidance hours in school were maintained or increased, but this cannot be verified using the thesis data. The VSS sector had the lowest level of funding at just under 70%, and had the lowest percentage of schools where guidance hours were maintained or increased. The C&C sector had the highest level of funding at just over 90%, and the highest incidence of guidance hours being maintained or increased.

Figure 7.1

DES Funding v Guidance Hours Increasing or Staying the Same



A separate DES report into the funding of fee-charging schools, also published in 2013, found that they used their ‘discretionary income’ from mandatory fees “to employ additional teachers over and above the exchequer-funded number” (DES 2013b, p. 11). In contrast, schools in the FES did not have this additional capacity to raise income. The issue of access to additional sources of funding in fee-charging schools was noted by a majority (11/12) of the guidance counsellors interviewed (including the three who worked in fee-charging schools):

They would have more money basically and some of them, if they wished, they would have built up a fund perhaps over the years you know, that they could pull down capital if they wanted to. [Rosemary]

With this extra funding, they could afford to pay for extra guidance: “they had the means to employ and they made a decision to keep supports in place” [Poppy].

It appears that this discrepancy in funding is symptomatic of what Baker et al. (2004) termed “wider economically generated inequalities” (p. 151) where fee-charging schools benefit from the economic capitals of the parents who choose to send their children to those schools.

Conclusions for research question one.

Research question one examined the impact of the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation across different school types, using the Baker et al. equality arguments as a yardstick. The research findings showed that the outcomes were inconsistent across fee-charging and FES schools. I have demonstrated that the changed guidance allocation has eroded supports for equalities of care and learning in FES schools. The data have shown that students in FES schools do not have the same opportunities as students in fee-charging schools to identify, discuss or develop their talents and abilities, due to a reduced career guidance service in FES schools, namely that 69% (167/243) of guidance counsellors in FES school experienced a reduction in guidance hours, compared with 44% (8/18) in fee-charging schools.

This reduction in guidance resources may in turn mean that students are no longer given opportunities to have “a real choice among occupations that they find satisfying or fulfilling” (Baker, et al. 2004, p. 34). The thesis also showed that demand for counselling was much greater in FES schools than in fee-charging schools, and that it was impossible to meet the demand in FES schools.

An important finding is that a greater proportion of FES schools (69% or 167/243) reduced their guidance hours than the proportion of fee-charging schools (44% or 8/18). It was clear that school managements in FES schools had different priorities

than in fee-charging schools. This finding concurs with Smith and Banks (2012) that the nature of guidance offered in schools reflects the habitus of the school, with fee-charging schools giving emphasis to career guidance, while FES schools prioritised counselling.

Parent-power, social class and credentialised capital were seen to be influential factors in the retention of guidance hours in fee-charging schools. In contrast, the findings showed that in FES schools, students were doubly disadvantaged. Firstly, parents in FES schools were not mentioned as actively campaigning for the retention of guidance services in the same way as those in fee-charging schools were described. Secondly, the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation reduced the level of guidance supports available to students in FES schools - supports that may not have been available in the home background of some students. This is in contrast to the more privileged backgrounds of students who attended fee-charging schools.

Different levels of state funding to the three main second-level education FES sectors were suggested in the interviews as one explanation for the more negative outcomes for the VSS sector than other sectors. In fee-charging schools, it was felt that cash reserves built up over the years were possibly used to fund the purchase of additional guidance hours in response to parent demand. The outcomes were shown to be different depending on the level of financial resources available to the school to provide guidance services. The consequences for students in these different settings reflected their social and cultural capital and their institutional and familial habituses. A greater proportion of respondents from FES schools experienced negative outcomes than the proportion in fee-charging schools, particularly in relation to aspects of guidance care such as one-to-one counselling.

Recommendations arising from the conclusions for research question one.

I argue that the ex-quota method of allocating guidance to schools was more equitable and more objective than the current system which depends on the subjective judgement of each individual principal (or ETB). In view of this, the ex-quota system should ideally be restored as soon as is possible, as this is the only way to ensure that all students in all schools across the country receive equal levels of guidance support and care. However realistically, I realise that due to ongoing budgetary constraints, if this is to come about, it may only happen in the medium to long term. Until that time comes, I would assert that all of the following recommendations should be considered and implemented by the DES:

1. There needs to be an extensive programme of in-service information and training for principals on the importance and benefits of guidance, as the final decision on school-based guidance services now rests with them.
2. For equality of guidance provision to be guaranteed across all schools under the current method, where school management decides on the allocation, there needs to be a system of checks and balances put in place by the DES.
 - (i) There is a need for formal audits and inspections of guidance allocations in schools.
 - (ii) These should include strong policy levers to encourage more principals to allocate adequate guidance resources to the students in their schools.
 - (iii) For this to happen, there would need to be an increase in the number of guidance inspectors and inspections.
 - (iv) All future Whole School Evaluations (WSEs) should contain a distinct section on school guidance, and the DES should require that guidance is part of any school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

3. As it is possible that the different levels of financial supports given by the DES to the three main school sectors may be indirectly linked to an unequal reduction of guidance across the three sectors, there should be an equalisation of financial supports to all school sectors.
4. In light of the changes to the method of guidance allocation, Section 9(c) of *The Education Act (1998)* relating to students' access to "appropriate guidance" and the subsequent DES *Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998*, should both be reviewed and revised. Under the new guidance allocation system, it appears from this research that it is not possible for FES schools to provide the guidance service envisaged under the Act.

There was a clear inconsistency observed in the level of guidance services available to students in fee-charging schools and FES schools. The changed guidance allocation led to differences in the quality of affective care provided in FES school compared with fee-charging schools: in terms of longer waiting times for counselling, the service being more reactive than preventative, the greater difficulty accessing one-to-one appointments, and whether the guidance counsellor was also timetabled to teach academic subjects. These differences are closely linked with the issue of care in schools and are discussed in full in the second part of this chapter below.

Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question Two

In this section of the chapter I discuss the main findings in relation to the second research question: '*What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in second-level schools?*' The holistic nature of the guidance service in Irish schools was discussed in Chapter Two, it was shown to

encompass aspects of educational guidance, career guidance and counselling. In the first section of this chapter, I interpreted guidance in terms of helping students with educational, career and personal decisions, while in this section I construe guidance more in terms of caring labour. The findings for this research question build on Lynch et al.'s conceptualisation of care (2007; 2009) where guidance counsellors work in "an affective domain" (2009, p. 15) and Feeley's (2008) model of care relations where guidance counsellors can be categorised as working at the second level of care (see Fig 3.1 on p. 53).

Guidance counsellors' concerns regarding the distribution of counselling care in schools.

The main findings were that the distribution of counselling care was not equal across schools and that the quality of affective care provided by guidance counsellors in schools other than fee-charging schools suffered. Many guidance counsellors expressed serious concerns at the loss of counselling care in FES schools and reported that there were fewer options for student care and support available in FES schools in 2012-13. Whilst guidance as a whole was impacted by the cutbacks, it was very clear from the findings that the counselling aspect of the guidance service was diluted most. This impact was experienced particularly by those students who were vulnerable, those who needed transition supports, those with mental health concerns and those attending schools in the FES. Guidance counsellors expressed concerns about the quality and professionalism of the counselling element of their work in light of the reduced time allocated to them.

Lack of time.

Almost one third of all guidance counsellors surveyed were of the opinion that a lack of time lay at the root of the problems related to the distribution of affective

care of students. This was caused by an increase in guidance counsellors' time spent teaching academic subjects, which in turn led to a decrease in time-tabled one-to-one appointment time (see Table 6.4). It became difficult for many guidance counsellors to provide a professional quality guidance service, and the common model which emerged during 2012-13 was one which featured a drastically reduced counselling service, that in many schools resembled a crisis intervention service:

You seem to be limping from one situation to ... you know ... and rushing out the door to go to class, and leaving a student with a cuppa because there's no one to actually deal with them, because there's already someone in your office. [Poppy]

In affective care, the important resources are time (Tronto, 2003; Folbre & Bittman, 2004; Lynch et al., 2009), emotional care resources (O'Brien, 2005b), and personal relationships and energy (Lynch et al., 2009). Time is the most difficult of these resources to retain control over as it is finite. The quality of affective care has been linked with resource limitations of time and space (Lynch et al., 2009), so when time for counselling was limited, or reduced, or in some cases abolished, then the quality of affective care was impacted negatively. Care cannot be rushed and the emotional energies necessary on the part of the carer become more depleted, due to anxiety created by the awareness of a lack of time for relational work with students.

Increased demand for counselling.

The reduction in time allocated by schools/principals for counselling had the effect of creating an increased demand for counselling appointments in FES schools (see Table 6.5), but this did not happen in fee-charging schools, as the reduction in hours was much less. The demand for appointments was impossible to meet in many FES schools:

I found students had difficulty accessing the service because they knew how busy I was and would often say - 'I tried to see you last week, but you're a hard woman to catch and I didn't want to bother you'. I feel all students are entitled to be able to talk to the counsellor and to be heard. It's difficult enough for them to come forward, without putting more barriers in their way. [Respondent 12]

In an effort to gauge the extent of the counselling need among students, the survey phase of the research contained several items on guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' concerns. From an examination of these findings (Tables 6.19, 6.10, 6.21), I obtained clear evidence of the huge student demand for counselling. In analysing these student concerns in terms of guidance category, I found that almost three-quarters (74%) of the issues mentioned by guidance counsellors were counselling-related. This compared with 13% which were related to education / academic matters, and 13% which were career-related. This pattern was replicated in the interviews where 9 of the 12 interviewees (75%) reported that this was also true in their schools.

Many guidance counsellors in FES schools expressed feelings of guilt at not being able to see all students who required counselling appointments, but as Lynch et al. (2009) pointed out, affective care is "embedded in relations of time and space" (p. 41), so therefore the amount of time devoted to caring labour in schools cannot be reduced without damaging the quality of care provided. In fact, Lynch et al (2009) suggested that there is a limit to how far care workers can be stretched, as they are "indivisible ... not able to bilocate and ... have a limited capacity to complete more than one task at a time" (ibid).

Counselling neglected, with little or none being done in schools.

In many schools, counselling was neglected, either deliberately by not timetabling it, or unintentionally due to career guidance being prioritised. Sometimes, the

amount of career guidance required absorbed all the guidance counsellor's time, leaving little, if any time for counselling. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, it was practically eliminated in some schools or radically reduced (see Table 6.6 and 6.7).

This sample comment is representative of many:

Unfortunately the provision of counselling has almost ceased. In the past it was possible to set up a consistent and regular service to students. Now the main focus of my efforts is in the guidance, study and career options area. [Respondent 115]

Research published in 2011, before the cutbacks had also found that there was “a huge demand for counselling among second-level students” (Hayes and Morgan, 2011, p. 79), and that finding the time and space to do the counselling work was a major issue for almost a third of the guidance counsellors surveyed. Given this finding, it is not surprising that the demand for counselling increased in 2012 when there was less time allocated to it. Similar findings emerged from recent ESRI research which was published just before this thesis was submitted. McCoy, Smyth, Watson and Darmody (2014) reported how young people valued the detailed information offered and the personal qualities of the guidance counsellor: “highlighting in particular the importance of one-to-one sessions” (p. 92). The young people interviewed raised issues “regarding constraints on time for guidance, particularly for more personalised, one-to-one discussion” (p. xii).

As has been discussed in the first part of this chapter, this time constraint on one-to-one student care is symptomatic of the neglect of affective care in schools and the trivialisation of care labour (Lynch et al., 2009) where “only work for pay, or work within the market economy, has been defined as real work” (p.16). It also mirrors Murphy's findings (2000) that school managements were “not entirely supportive” (p. 11) of the counselling element of the role.

The distribution of care was compromised as evidenced by the prioritising of counselling cases.

Several terms and phrases were used by the research participants that indicate widespread use of prioritising in FES schools as a means of coping with the demand for counselling, such as 'screening' 'triaging' 'postponing' 'rescheduling' 'putting students on hold for a couple of weeks' and 'putting students off to another time'. The situation was summed up by one survey respondent: "Severe prioritisation ... and unable to deal with a lot of the previously 'ordinary' but genuine issues ... [Respondent 186]. This led to a neglect of the less serious cases. One guidance counsellor was clearly very worried about this change: "I see the reduction in hours as dangerous as I am forced to work in a way that I cannot describe as best practice" [Respondent 110]. I would argue that taken as a whole, all of these comments provide evidence of a service that was severely stretched to its limits and suggest that many guidance counsellors were struggling to cope with the distribution of care that their limited time resources allowed them, given the demands for counselling.

The prioritising led to a focus on crisis counselling with many guidance counsellors using words such as 'firebrigade service', 'firefighting', 'plastering', 'plasterer', 'cement' and 'polyfilla' to describe their experiences. In my opinion these comments are indicative of a feeling of enforced non-professionalism, but also of a sense of embarrassment, shame or even guilt among guidance counsellors, that all they were able to do was fill in the cracks. This survey respondent's self-analogy to a plasterer is very revealing:

I felt like a plasterer. I was supposed to plaster over cracks as quickly as I could when they emerged and then I wouldn't see the student again until the rushed plastering job was found not to hold up and the student was in crisis again a few weeks later. [Respondent 10]

Mental health concerns no longer being adequately addressed in schools.

A major worry for respondents and interviewees was not being able to provide adequate affective care for students with mental health difficulties, in particular depression, self-harming, suicide ideation and even suicide attempts, see Table 6.12. The following comment from a guidance counsellor interviewed gives a sense of the types of mental health issues she was dealing with:

I have a huge amount of mental health [sic] here too and quite a few kids on medication for depression you know and I would have more psychotic than the last few years, with voices in their heads and, on medication, and maybe not fully diagnosed with bi-polar, but there's more of that coming into the school you know and taking panic attacks. I would have an increase in kids taking panic attacks.
[Violet]

Likewise, several analysts and a number of reports have highlighted the increase in mental health issues among young people in recent years (O'Brien, 2008; Hayes & Morgan, 2011; Thapar et al., 2012; Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012; Cannon et al., 2013) and the lack of interventions and resources directed at tackling mental health issues such as depression. O'Brien (2008) made a strong case for investing in emotional care resources: "interrupting poor mental health as soon as possible is necessary for positive living during adolescence" (p. 73). Likewise, Cannon et al. (2013) recommended early prevention and intervention initiatives, as they have "the potential to minimise the personal, relational, social and vocational impact of mental ill-health on young people, their families and wider society (p. 7), while the availability of at least one trusted adult in times of need was advocated in the 'My World Survey' (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012).

The guidance cutbacks have resulted in an erosion of exactly the kind of early prevention and intervention service advocated above, a service that had been in place in schools for over forty years. Since the inception of the holistic guidance

service in Ireland, the guidance counsellor had played a leading role in looking after the affective care needs, the well-being, and the emotional health of students, as usually s/he was one of the few staff members with any professional training in counselling. Coolahan (2000) credited guidance counsellors with having built up a vast amount of expertise and knowledge in dealing regularly with a range of counselling issues and it seems wasteful to prevent professionals who have this skill-base from using it. As will be referred to later in this chapter, not being able to deal with counselling issues in-school, results in extra demands on the counselling services of the HSE Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), which are already under pressure with increased demand from a post-Celtic Tiger adult population. As already discussed in the first part of this chapter, schools are widely considered as excellent locations for mental health services (Tinzmann & Hikson, 1992; Head, 1997; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998; Weist, 1998; Dornbusch et al., 1999; Fridenberg, 1999; Ghuman et al., 2002 – all cited in Hayes, 2006). It seems unwise, even from a purely economic perspective to prevent professionally trained counsellors from doing their work, while at the same time putting extra pressure on mental health professionals in non-school settings.

Senior cycle prioritised, junior cycle neglected.

Research prior to the guidance cutbacks had found that the main guidance focus in schools was on Senior Cycle students and on Sixth Years in particular. This was the case, not only in Ireland (Smyth et al., 2011; McCoy et al., 2010) but elsewhere (Keys et al., 1998; Maychell et al., 1998). Over the years, several government reports had also recommended more guidance at Junior Cycle (DES, 2009; National Guidance Forum, 2007a; Ryan, 2000).

One effect of the removal of the guidance allocation was that this situation was exacerbated. Senior Cycle students were prioritised for career guidance and this

had the knock-on effect that Junior Cycle students came off second best. Of all students, it was First Year students making the transition to Second Level who were mentioned more often than any other year group as losing out, see Tables 6.9 and 6.10.

I suppose First Years would have been the ones that most missed out because I would always hope to get to see all of them at least once for 40 minutes but that didn't happen. [Rose]

That First Years were missing out more than others gives cause for concern in light of O'Brien's (2005b) finding that students require an investment of emotional care resources during periods of educational transition such as entry to second-level education:

In order to care we have to engage our emotions and emotional resources are required by the carer. Educational work and the care work involved at transfer include emotional work and require access to emotional resources. (p. 226)

It is very clear that this emotional care work with incoming First Years did not happen in the majority of FES schools. It is likely, in my opinion, that First Years remained at the bottom of the priority ladder as they were largely invisible to the guidance counsellor, who probably had counselling cases from older students 'on their books' from the previous year, which used up whatever limited counselling availability there was.

Core elements of a professional counselling service not being implemented.

Guidance counsellors reported that several essential core aspects of counselling work were not being carried out, or were reduced; these included the writing up of counselling notes; attendance at counselling supervision; attendance at in-service days, CPD training and courses, and providing follow-up of students. In Chapter

Six, 'Rosemary' gave a good summary of what was not being done (p. 212). None of these failings could be described as adhering to best counselling practice.

With regard to the writing up of counselling case notes, Wehrman et al. (2010) underlined its importance and found that it was “ethically incumbent on the school counsellor to thoroughly document sessions of a serious nature, such as, but not limited to those involving self-mutilation, suicidal ideation, abuse or dating violence” (p. 5). Reynolds & Cheek (2002) found that when the school counsellor – student ratio exceeded 250:1, the documenting of case notes became overwhelming. Not being in a position to attend regular counselling supervision, in-service or CDD denies the guidance counsellor the support of peer networks and other allied professionals, which have been recognised as key support systems that guidance counsellors rely heavily on (Poi, 2009; Bunce & Willower, 2001; McMahon & Patton, 2001).

Care for the carer needed.

Guidance counsellor well-being and good mental health are essential in order to provide the care that students need. However it is evident from the many strong emotions of disillusionment, annoyance, dissatisfaction, frustration, resignation and even anger expressed by respondents and interviewees that many of them were feeling devalued, marginalised or under stress in 2012-13. This one comment (from Table 6.8 in Chapter Six), gives a sense of the mood expressed by many guidance counsellors:

The work of the guidance counsellor has been undermined, sidelined and diminished, with no one to pick up the slack. I have a full counselling qualification, but the reduced hours prevent me from bringing these much needed professional skills to the pupil population. [Respondent 50]

In a sense, these strong emotions only serve to underline just how different care labour is to other types of work, as one of its distinguishing features is that it involves having a sense of emotional attachment and connection to the persons being cared for. As Badgett and Folbre (1999) found: “In activities such as teaching, nursing and counselling, personal identity is important” (p. 312).

Increased guidance counsellor stress, due to role conflict.

An increase in stress levels in 2012-13, was reported by respondents and interviewees, which many ascribed to working in the dual role of guidance counsellor and teacher. According to one guidance counsellor:

This is the first year that I've found the job so stressful that I wonder how long before this stress affects me physically. [Respondent 93]

This finding mirrored the literature reviewed, where role conflict and role ambiguity in schools have been reported as workplace stressors for those who work in non-academic areas (Hendry, 1975); those who have pastoral care responsibilities (Dunham, 1984; Freeman, 1987), and for guidance counsellors (O’Leary & Adams, 1986; McCoy et al., 2006; Smyth et al., 2011), where balancing the disciplinary role of a teacher with the “caring, supportive, non-disciplinarian image” (McCoy et al., 2006, p. 192) of the guidance counsellor was difficult.

In addition, I would hold the opinion that any increased workplace stress experienced by guidance counsellors in 2012-13 could have a negative impact on the quality of the care labour these individuals can offer their students. As O’Brien (2011) noted:

It seems quite obvious from a care perspective that, if one does not care for oneself fully as a human being, one will not be capable of assessing the needs of others for their flourishing (p. 48).

Conclusions for Research Question Two

Research question two explored the impact that the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in second-level schools. I have discussed counselling in schools in terms of care labour, and I have demonstrated that the distribution of care and the amount of counselling provided in FES schools was negatively affected by the changed guidance allocation. I have established that this particularly affected vulnerable students, those who needed transition supports, those with mental health concerns and those attending schools in the FES, more so than those attending fee-charging schools. I have shown how the root problem was the lack of time to provide counselling care, for which there was a huge demand, particularly in FES schools.

I have suggested that the distribution of care provided through the guidance counselling service was compromised, as schools appear to have prioritised only those students most in need of counselling in order to cope with the demand. I have shown how a service which hitherto had been preventative and reactive became a mostly reactive one, which was now likened to a crisis intervention service by many participants.

While previous research had pointed to increases in mental health concerns among students, there was a lot of worry expressed by guidance counsellors in this study that mental health concerns had further increased in schools in 2012-13 from previous years. Many guidance counsellors singled out depression and self-harming as being two of the issues that had increased most in 2012-13, however there is no specific evidence provided in this thesis to link this increase with reduced guidance allocation.

I have illustrated how the lack of time resources made it very difficult and in some cases impossible for guidance counsellors to provide a professional quality guidance service. The quality of affective care was shown in the literature to be closely linked with resources of time, space and emotion. It is clear from quality indicators that much of the core elements of a professional quality counselling service were not being carried out to accepted standards of best practice. In the thesis I provided evidence of long waiting lists, little or no follow up, difficulties in referral to other agencies, difficulties with finding time to write up adequate counselling notes, and problems for guidance counsellors getting the time to attend to counselling supervision, CPD training and in-service courses.

My findings confirmed the deliberate prioritising of career guidance over counselling in some schools, and also showed how it 'just took over' in other schools, leaving no space for counselling. With resources being concentrated on Senior Cycle, particularly Sixth Year, this meant that Junior Cycle students were neglected, and First Year was the year group that lost out most.

Finally, as possibilities for providing adequate care were so limited, many guidance counsellors expressed feelings of guilt, frustration and anger at not being able to care for all students and many described working through lunchtimes and into the evening to try and meet the demand for appointments. Several guidance counsellors felt disillusioned, frustrated and annoyed at their changed working conditions, and some were showing signs of being under stress. I argue that ultimately this stress may impact on their ability to adequately support the students in their care.

Recommendations arising out of the conclusions for research question two.

In view of the widespread reduction in one-to-one appointments and counselling in FES schools, I would suggest that the holistic nature of guidance in Irish schools, and the benefits of such a model need to be re-emphasised to school principals by the DES, with equal emphases on career, educational and personal guidance.

In light of the conclusion that guidance resources were being focused on Senior Cycle, I feel that there needs to be a rethink and a discussion on what guidance is feasible and possible for guidance counsellors to deliver to Junior Cycle students under the current guidance allocation arrangements. This is particularly important given the plan to introduce a new modular-based Junior Cycle Student Award where guidance may feature as a modular subject.

Overall Conclusions

In this thesis I arrived at three main conclusions: these are related to the inequality of guidance resources across certain school types; the distribution of guidance counselling care in schools, and the difference in the quality of student care provided by guidance counsellors in different school settings.

Firstly, I demonstrated several inequalities of care resources between school types and concluded that the unequal levels of state funding to the three main second-level education sectors, where FES schools in the VSS sector received less funding than the other two sectors, may have been a contributory factor to the greater reduction of guidance in this sector, as these schools had less finance with which to support a guidance service.

Secondly, I have shown that from the perspective of guidance counsellors, the distribution of student care was very different in fee-charging and FES schools. The evidence for this was that a greater proportion of guidance counsellors in FES schools experienced a reduction in guidance hours compared with those in fee-charging schools. Affective care of students in FES schools was compromised, due to a lack of time for counselling appointments. With reduced guidance resources, there was a prioritising of career guidance over counselling and a focus on the final year of secondary school which led to a neglect of students in Junior Cycle, notably the incoming students in First Year. Due to guidance resources being severely stretched, if and when counselling did happen, it was more reactive than preventative, with guidance counsellors being forced to react to crisis situations rather than forestall them. This resulted in what was effectively a crisis intervention service, where the urgent cases were prioritized and the less serious ones were postponed or neglected.

Thirdly, I have provided evidence that the quality of student affective care was very different in fee-charging and FES schools by looking at differences in quality indicators between these school types, such as the proportion of guidance counsellors in each school type working in a dual teacher/counsellor role, delays in waiting times for appointments, the abandonment of writing up of counselling notes, difficulties involved in the follow-up and referral of students, and an increase in work-related guidance counsellor stress. In all of these areas, the student experience was shown to be more negative in FES schools than in fee-charging schools.

The significance of the thesis conclusions.

A major question to be addressed in relation to these findings is whether the outcomes would have been any different if there had been no budgetary cutbacks which affected guidance allocations in schools. In re-examining my own reactions to the findings, none of the changes demonstrated in the findings surprised me greatly, based on my 16 years of working as an *ex-quota* guidance counsellor, and my two years employed in an *in-quota* role. In particular, the findings related to differences between guidance in fee-charging and FES schools mirrored my own experiences of working as a guidance counsellor in private fee-paying school in an urban middle-class setting, then followed by a move to a DEIS school in an isolated rural area, which has Partnership²⁶ status.

Although the findings on differences between fee-charging and FES schools would probably still feature regardless of Budget 2012, (as the different systems of funding for these different school sectors would still remain), I would argue that these differences would be apparent to a much smaller degree, and would certainly not be of the magnitude reported here. The evidence provided for increased inequalities in access to emotional care between FES and fee-charging schools during the first year of guidance cutbacks is clear and unambiguous.

It is possible to explain different patterns of care distribution between fee-charging and FES schools, even without cutbacks to guidance. The literature reviewed and these findings both concur on a greater emphasis on career guidance in fee-charging schools and a bigger demand for counselling in FES schools. However, I contend that the distribution of care in FES schools would not be compromised to

²⁶

See footnote 4 on page 6 for an explanation.

the same extent, and that the quality of this care would not be decimated to the same degree if guidance counsellors in FES schools had not experienced cuts to their guidance hours.

Likewise, while prior research has shown that guidance services in Ireland and other countries have traditionally been skewed more in favour of Senior Cycle than Junior Cycle; it appears that the widespread abolition of guidance services from the early years of second level education, particularly First Years during 2012/13, can be attributed solely to the changed guidance allocation.

Crucially; since the late 1960s, guidance counsellors in Ireland have always emphasised the personal, affective and caring aspect of their work. They never referred to themselves as simply career advisers, rather they always equally stressed the counselling aspect of their role. With ample evidence provided in the thesis for the erosion of this affective segment of guidance counsellors' work during 2012-13, their disenchantment, their disillusionment, and even their anger can be clearly sensed from many of their comments made to me. It is this loss of their caring role that seems to have struck a deep chord with many of them.

In particular I was struck by the participants' rich engagement with the research, where they provided invariably long and detailed responses to the online survey and interview questions that often gave me the impression of an outpouring of pent-up emotions and concern. (One respondent, typical of several, spent 48 minutes on the online survey and wrote over 1,500 words.) The depth of rich data which emerged from the online survey in particular, surprised not only me but my supervisors as well. This suggests to me that the respondents seemed to be acutely

attuned to huge emotional suffering in their school environments that they were unable to attend to, as guidance became a sporadic, reactive, crisis intervention service instead of a counselling service.

Contribution of the Research

From the three main conclusions discussed above, it can be seen that this study adds to the discourse on educational equality and the dialogue on care and well-being in education.

Other than these three main conclusions, this thesis has contributed to an understanding of the different ways guidance operates in the different institutional habituses of middle-class and working class schools. It reaffirmed earlier studies (notably Smith and Banks, 2012) that guidance services in fee-charging schools emphasised career guidance over counselling, mainly due to parent-power, and a greater cultural, social and economic capital. FES schools, on the other hand experienced heavier demands for counselling, and I would argue that perhaps this was due to an absence of relevant forms of social and emotional capital in some of the homes, and the availability of this type of support in school in the form of guidance. In an ESRI research paper published after this thesis was completed, McCoy et al. (2014)²⁷ report findings which corroborate my conclusions in relation to guidance and decision-making in schools. They found social class differences in young people's sources of information about what to do after leaving school:

²⁷ In mid-August 2014, just before this thesis was submitted, the ESRI published similar findings in its *Leaving School in Ireland: A Longitudinal Study of Post-School Transitions*. This study also had a substantial qualitative input.

Middle-class young people were more reliant on their parents as a source of information while working-class students and immigrant groups were more reliant on school-based forms of guidance (p. xii).

As the issue of a changed guidance allocation is one that has only arisen in the past two years, so far only a handful of germane studies have been carried out. These include large-scale national studies by organisations such as the IGC and the NCGE. Until the publication of the McCoy et al. (2014) report, any research that had been carried out was mainly quantitative in nature. This thesis replicated the finding from the IGC audit that there was an unequal reduction in guidance hours across school types, and showed that a greater proportion of FES schools experienced a reduction in guidance allocation than fee-charging schools. Additionally however, this thesis adopted a largely qualitative dimension to the research, and in so doing, addressed a gap, providing a greater depth of information on the lived experiences of guidance counsellors over the course of a year of change and challenge, and explored the real life stories behind the statistics.

This thesis has added to the increasingly wide and interdisciplinary body of care scholarship, and informs new understandings of care relationships in schools that have significance for education and for the work of guidance counsellors in Ireland and further afield. In particular, it has contributed to the dialogue on the trivialisation and neglect of the affective in education.

The focus on affective care in education in this thesis is significant given that the emphasis internationally in research has traditionally been on student achievement (as discussed in Chapter Three). This thesis shows that in the majority of schools where the participants worked, student care was not prioritized in terms of allocated hours for guidance, with the result that one-to-one interventions with students were compromised.

Until now, very little of the scholarship on care has been applied to the area of guidance, and the relationship between guidance counsellors' roles, professional responsibilities and the well-being of their students has not been explored. This thesis has developed this conversation and may suggest some potential themes for future researchers.

For policy makers, the thesis has shown that the removal of a centrally-controlled, ring-fenced model of student care, in the form of an ex-quota guidance allocation, and its replacement by a devolved, discretionary responsibility to individual school principals for allocating adequate resources to student well-being, has contributed to a weakened care structure in second-level schools. What has happened to guidance in Ireland since 2012 is symptomatic of the neglect and trivialisation of the affective in education²⁸ over many years. As this thesis and previous international research has shown, the policy of devolving the responsibility for guidance provision to schools has been largely negative with increased inequality across schools in guidance provision. To quote McCarthy (2012): "the discretionary approach promotes inequality of access to services ... and inequality in obtaining comparable career learning experiences and quality assured experiences" (p. 8).

The results of the research will be of interest to parents, students, school principals, guidance counsellors, school boards of management, management bodies, teacher unions, the DES, and society in general. It will help inform future DES policy in relation to guidance in second-level schools.

²⁸

See Lynch & Lodge, 2002; Noddings, 2003; Baker et al., 2004; Lynch et al., 2009.

Exploration and Discussion of the Possibility of Researcher Bias in the Thesis

At the end of the research process and analysis, I felt that it was important for me to revisit the possibility that bias might have influenced the research process, the findings, or the conclusions of this research. As discussed in Chapter One, the research literature warns of the real dangers of bias in research, particularly when the researcher is considered an 'insider'. Based on the advice in the research literature (Robson, 2002; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009), I feel that I was very much aware of the risk of bias from the outset and I remained vigilant throughout the process. In Appendix R, I provide a detailed account of the conscious steps I took to reduce any possible bias.

Further Research

For reasons related to differing sample sizes that have been outlined in the methodology chapter, the findings of this thesis are applicable only to the participants and their schools, and they are not transferable. Further research on the impact of the changes to guidance allocation, which is generalizable to the population of guidance counsellors in second-level schools, is therefore recommended.

The perceptions and experiences of other education stakeholders, such as students, parents and school principals were not included in this research. These are other possible viewpoints that may prove informative in future research.

As counselling in schools has decreased more than either career guidance or educational guidance as a result of the changed guidance allocation, and as it appears to be regarded as expendable by many school principals, further research on the trivialisation and neglect of the affective in education would be enlightening.

Finally

This thesis, while complete, tells only part of the story of the impact of the change in the method of allocating guidance in schools in Ireland. It examined data from the first school year (2012-13) after the implementation of the Government decision. In the interim period, it is quite possible that the story has evolved somewhat. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that in some schools, there has been a partial reinstatement of some of the guidance resources that were lost. As we reach the end of the third school year under the new system, introduced in Budget 2012, I feel that it is now time for the DES to conduct a comprehensive and detailed national review of the impact of the decision. I hope that this research will contribute in a small way to such a discussion.

May 2015

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Chronology of Main Developments in Guidance Training in Ireland

Table A1 provides a detailed chronology of the main developments in Guidance Training in Ireland.

Table A1

Main Developments in Guidance Training in Ireland

1943	The first recorded discussion on the need for " <i>a specialised vocational guidance service</i> " occurred in a report from the Commission on Youth Employment (McQuaid, 1943, para. 95), however little was done to actualize the recommendation.
Late 1950s	There was an " <i>increasing public awareness of the need for professional psychologists within a number of areas, especially those of health, education, and industry</i> " (Chamberlain, 1983, p. 479). Within the education sector, it was becoming evident that " <i>career guidance and pastoral concern were becoming too specialized a discipline for any one teacher to handle adequately</i> " (Chamberlain, 1983, p. 479).
1958	University College Dublin (UCD) introduced the first professional training programme in applied psychology.
1960	The City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) appointed an educational psychologist who "had responsibility for the development of guidance in the Committee's schools" (National Guidance Forum, 2007b, p. 19).
1962	In what could be interpreted as a rebuke to the CDVEC, the Department of Education (DE) resisted all attempts to formalise a system of guidance: " <i>We consider that, in the circumstances of our country and our schools, the informal system of vocational guidance which already exists, and which takes the form of discussion between teachers, pupils, and parents, is preferable to any one which might be introduced and operated by the State or by public authority</i> " (DE, 1962, p. 82). Despite this, the CDVEC went ahead and introduced a guidance service for the pupils attending its schools in 1962."

... / ...

1964	The CDVEC was “instrumental in developing the first course to train guidance teachers” (Cassells, 1999, p. 5) in co-operation with the Department of Psychology in UCD and demand for it grew rapidly.
1965	<p>The DE established a limited school psychological service to the newly established comprehensive schools, with the aim of “providing support to the guidance, remedial and special education services within the schools, combining case work with individual pupils experiencing difficulties and work with parents and teachers” (Murphy, B, 2000, p. 19).</p> <p>The DE saw “the training of school counsellors as the single most effective way of providing a good school guidance service” (NGF, 2005, p. 5). However, with the recruitment and training of teachers as guidance counsellors, psychologists withdrew from the direct delivery of guidance and concentrated on developing a psychological service for all post-primary schools.</p>
1966	Publication of a very influential OECD report called <i>Investment in Education</i> which argued that a career guidance service was needed in all second-level schools in Ireland.
1967	In response to the OECD demand for training in the area, and to provide such a guidance service in schools, the first fulltime course in guidance and counselling in the country was set up in UCD – the Higher Diploma in Careers Guidance. This course was significant in two respects: firstly it “influenced the approach to guidance adopted in Irish post-primary schools and in many of the training courses that were set up later” (NGF 2007b, p. 19) and secondly it developed “a professional consciousness among practitioners” (McCarthy, 1999).
1968	More and more schools “wanted to formalise provision for guidance” (NGF 2007b, p.19) and in response to this demand, the DE initiated its own guidance teacher training programme in 1968. This was a summer programme of in-service teacher-training, with the emphasis on career guidance.
1971	<p>The DE’s short intensive summer training courses were repeated every summer from 1969-1971, by which time 120 people were trained in guidance.</p> <p>The DE had established an Advisory Committee on the future training of guidance personnel and its 1971 report to the Minister stated that students had a variety of needs: physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. The provision of full-time guidance counsellors in schools was a means of meeting these unmet needs. This could not be fully implemented immediately due to the lack of fully-trained teachers.</p>

... / ...

1972	<p>By 1972 “24% of Irish post primary schools employed a guidance counsellor” (Chamberlain, 1983, p. 480).</p> <p>A one-year course in guidance was introduced by the Catholic bishops in Mater Dei Institute of Education, specifically to train guidance counsellors in Catholic-run schools.</p> <p>The short intensive summer courses were phased out.</p>
1973	From 1973 onwards, an average of 70 teachers was trained in guidance each year on the two full-time diploma courses – UCD and Mater Dei.
1975	The number of trained guidance counsellors had reached 300.
1977	In response to increased demand, Trinity College Dublin introduced an option in guidance and counselling in its M.Ed. degree.
1981	University College Cork started a full-time higher diploma course in guidance and counselling.
1996	Marino Institute and NUI Maynooth jointly launched the Post-Graduate Diploma in School Guidance Counselling on the NUI Maynooth campus, with a follow-on M. Ed. in Guidance and Counselling. Intake was 24 per year on average.
1997	The Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling was introduced in the University of Limerick (UL). This differed from other courses in that the course was offered in several outreach centres including Carrick-on-Shannon and Tallaght. A follow-on M.A. in Guidance Counselling was also offered.
1998	From 1998 on, the Post-Graduate Diploma in School Guidance Counselling and the M.Ed. on the NUI Maynooth campus are awarded solely by NUI Maynooth.
2007	Dublin City University began offering a M.Sc. in Guidance and Counselling on a part-time basis over two years.
2013	The Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling in UL was replaced by an M.A. in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development. The M.A. in Guidance Counselling ceased.

Appendix B

Chronology of Main Developments in Guidance Policy in Ireland

The table below provides a detailed chronology of the main developments in guidance policy in Ireland over a 40-year period between 1972 and 2012.

Table B1

Guidance Policy Development in Ireland

1972	The DE changed fundamentally the way that guidance posts were allocated in schools and granted 'ex-quota' status to guidance <i>teachers</i> (sic) in schools with more than 250 pupils. This meant that at least 12 hours of guidance per week was provided by the DE outside of the subject teaching staff allocation.
1983	Budget cutbacks resulted in the issuing of Circular 31/83 (DE 1983) which doubled the number of students required for a school to receive an 'ex quota' guidance allocation from 250 to 500 students.
1984	The time spent by guidance counsellors on subject teaching increased between the 1982-'83 school year and the 1983-'84 school year. They were spending more time on classroom-based guidance and counselling activities and less time with individual pupils. (O'Leary & McCay-Morrissey, 1986).
1985	McCarthy (1985) reported that 20% of guidance counsellors had experienced increased subject teaching as a result of the 1983 cutbacks.
	The findings of a survey conducted by members of the DE's Psychological Service during the school year 1984-'85 showed that 69 of 316 second-level schools offered guidance and counselling service, but that the extent of the service had been substantially reduced since 1983 in 25 of the schools (DE, 1987).
	An untitled and unpublished internal report by the IGC stated that the implementation of the guidance counselling service in schools was the primary responsibility of guidance counsellors, and that its effectiveness depended on the guidance counsellor having no other responsibility within the school. The report did not see subject teaching as a function of the guidance counsellor.
1987	The main findings of the <i>First Report of the School Guidance Committee</i> ¹ (SGC) were that the time allocated to guidance and counselling was inadequate, that a large number of schools did not have a guidance and counselling service and that the increase in subject teaching by guidance counsellors indicated that the guidance and counselling service was being diminished. The report also found that vocational schools had been worst hit by the cutbacks and it expressed concern that students in junior cycle were suffering insofar as senior cycle students were taking up most of the guidance counsellors' time.

... / ...

¹ The School Guidance Committee consisted of representatives of the Schools Psychological Service, the IGC, National Parents Council Post-Primary, Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, Secretariat of Secondary Schools, Irish Vocational Educational Association, Teachers Union of Ireland and the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland.

1991	<p>The OECD called for the recruitment of more guidance counsellors, particularly for schools located in areas of disadvantage.</p> <p>In response to the OECD, guidance policy issues began to feature significantly in education policy-making in Ireland for the first time.</p> <p>Under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP)² a phased programme was introduced which provided an ex-quota half guidance post (11 hours) in secondary and community schools with an enrolment of less than 500 (350-499 students) and on a pro-rata basis in VEC schools (Ireland, 1991). This was the first time that any recognition was given to increased guidance needs of students in disadvantaged areas.</p>
1992	<p>The Green Paper <i>Education for a Changing World</i> (Ireland, 1992) viewed guidance as a school wide responsibility for the first time.</p> <p>Arising out of the Green Paper, and possibly driven by the need for hard data and research into guidance in Ireland, a second School Guidance Committee (SGC) was set up under the DE, with a brief to prepare guidelines for guidance provision in education.</p>
1994	<p>The SGC formulated, prioritized and refined the available options and recommended that a minimum of eight hours guidance be provided in all schools - regardless of how small the school was (DE, 1994). However, this remained a recommendation and it was not implemented during the lifetime of the committee.</p>
1995	<p>The White Paper <i>Charting our Education Future</i> was published; however any reference to guidance in it was very sparse.</p> <p>To strengthen policy development and generation in the area of guidance, the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) was established in June, with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform the policy of the Department in the field of guidance. One of its first tasks was the finalising of the SGC Guidelines and its recommendations.</p>
1996	<p>After extensive consultations with stakeholders, NCGE published "<i>Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counselling in Schools</i>". For the first time, this report set down the nature of guidance in the post-primary sector in Ireland and described the specific responsibilities of the key actors – the guidance counsellor, the school management and the DE.</p> <p>There followed an extended campaign by the IGC and NCGE to have the existing allocation for guidance used exclusively for guidance, and for the Department to <i>implement</i> [my italics] the recommendation that guidance counsellors should be used for guidance and counselling only – "the Department will ensure that school management use the ex-quota guidance allocation precisely for that purpose" (NCGE, 1996, p. 12).</p>

... / ...

² PESP was one of several national social partnership pay agreements between the Government, the main employer groups and the trade unions.

1997 NCGE convened an *Advisory Group*³ on *In-Career Development Training to Support the Implementation of the Guidelines*.

The Advisory Group drew up a development plan for guidance in schools and produced resource materials for reviewing schools' guidance needs.

1998 The Education Act (1998) stipulated that the provision of guidance was a statutory requirement in schools. It regarded guidance as a whole school activity and responsibility, with guidance counsellors playing a lead role in delivering counselling support to students, promoting educational and social inclusion, addressing educational disadvantage and preventing early school leaving and poor educational attainment.

The Act also specifically required that schools, as part of the overall School Development Plan, needed to develop a comprehensive guidance plan, taking into account the needs of students, available resources and contextual factors (Section 21). However most attention in guidance circles was drawn to the implications of Section 9(c) of the Act which relate to students' "access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices" (Ireland, 1998).

NCGE published *Principals' Perceptions of the Guidance Service in Post Primary Schools*. One of its recommendations was that "an ex quota guidance allocation ratio of at least 1:250 is required to provide a satisfactory educational/vocational guidance service in post primary schools" (NCGE, 1998, p. 53).

1999 There was evidence that many schools were not using the existing guidance allocation of 1:500 to the full. The Minister for Education, Micheál Martin made a plea for 'the better use of existing guidance resources within schools' (NCGE News, 1999a, p. 1).

The Chairperson of NCGE, Ed Riordan pointed out that "not one of the recommendations on guidance provision of the 'Guidelines' has been implemented" and he felt that "Departmental verbal support had not been translated into tangible action" (NCGE News, 1999a, p. 1).

To address the lack of a guidance service in smaller schools, the DE announced a policy initiative where an allocation of 8 hours guidance would be allocated to non-fee paying schools with less than 250 students. This allocation would be tied to the results of a "systematic programme audit of the guidance service" (NCGE News, 1999b, p. 2), consisting of a review of the number of guidance counsellors in schools; the hours allocated to guidance; other resources allocated to guidance, and outputs.

Significantly, the DE stipulated that in the future, any increase of allocation of hours for guidance to a school or a VEC should be contingent upon its producing a coherent plan for the use of the allocation. "Regular reviews of the use to which ex quota posts for guidance are being used in the context of the school plan will also be introduced (NCGE News, 1999b, p. 2).

... / ...

³ The Advisory Group was made up of representatives of management bodies, teachers' unions, the IGC and the DE.

2000	Findings from an <i>Audit on Guidance in Post-Primary Schools</i> , conducted by NCGE in 1999-2000, revealed that the guidance allocation was being under-utilised by school principals / VECs. It also showed that only 14% of schools had a whole school development plan and of these schools, 75% made reference to guidance. Thirdly it found that 25% of schools reported that none of the guidance allocation was used to provide guidance in junior cycle.
	Arising out of the above findings, the newly titled Department of Education and Science (DES) began to place a lot more emphasis on guidance planning and eventually would link any increase in guidance resources with a specific plan to use these resources.
	The new Minister for Education and Science, Michael Woods established an expert group to report on the allocation of guidance counsellors to second level schools.
2001	The expert group reported back in 2001 and recommended that additional guidance resources be allocated to schools in the free education scheme on the basis of a ratio of 22 hours for every 400 students, with pro rata allocations for enrolments above and below this level (DES, 2001). However, these recommendations were not implemented.
	The formal linking of guidance resources to guidance planning was copper-fastened with the announcement of the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI), which allocated the equivalent of 50 additional whole-time teaching allocations for guidance to 103 schools.
	The GEI allocated new hours contingent on schools making optimum use of their existing guidance allocation and introduced new criteria, linking the enhanced guidance provision with specific purposes, in that schools were invited to submit proposals that aimed to develop and strengthen links with business and the local community, target disadvantage and promote the choice of science subjects at senior cycle. Priority was given to the most innovative programmes that included all three criteria to enhance guidance for students.
2002	The issue of students' "access to appropriate guidance" arising out of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998) had not gone away and many guidance counsellors were expressing the need for clarification of "appropriate guidance". In response, the DES requested NCGE to convene another committee ⁴ to examine the implications of the Act.
2003	The committee made its recommendations to the DES in June and subsequently a draft document was sent by the Department to all post-primary schools for consultation.
2004	In a DES review, the GEI was deemed to be a success, in that GEI schools were more likely to view guidance programme planning as a whole school activity and the scheme was extended to an additional 78 schools.

... / ...

⁴ The committee consisted of representatives of the IGC, DES and NCGE

2005 The DES published a final document on “appropriate guidance” in July - *Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998)* after amendments to reflect the many views expressed in the submissions received (DES, 2005a).

The guidelines clarified that “the provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for schools under the Education Act 1998” (DES, 2005a, p. 4). They highlighted the need for schools to develop a guidance plan as part of the overall school plan, they stated that this plan should be balanced and should reflect the needs of both Junior and Senior Cycle students. They also stressed that there should also be a balance between the personal, social, educational and career guidance offered to students.

To redress the perceived imbalance between the guidance needs of students in Junior and Senior Cycle identified in the *Guidelines* document, the Department’s published its DEIS plan aimed to improve student attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment with “enhanced guidance counselling provision, targeted at supporting Junior Cycle students ... in second-level schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage” (DES, 2005b, p. 11).

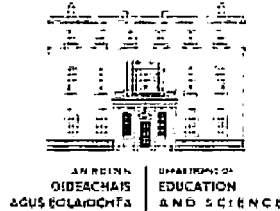
2011 In December, Budget 2012 announced that the ex-quota guidance allocation was being abolished with effect from the beginning of the school year 2012-13.

2012 School principals received notification from the DES that both the GEI and the DEIS guidance allocations were also being terminated with effect from September 2012.

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Dept. of Education & Science
Post Primary Teachers
Section
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath
Tel. 090-6483808/3832



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Eolaíochta
Rannóg Múinteoirí
Iarbhunioideachais
Baile Átha Luain
Co. na hIarmhí
Fax. 090-6484063

Circular Letter No. PPT 12/05

To: The Managerial Authorities of Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools.

GUIDANCE PROVISION IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

1. I am directed by the Minister for Education and Science to bring to your notice the provisions which will apply, from the beginning of the 2005/06 school year, in relation to:

- allocation of hours for the provision of guidance in schools
- conditions of appointment of guidance counsellors.

For the purposes of this circular, guidance in second-level schools refers to a range of learning experiences that assist students to develop self-management skills that will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. Guidance encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance. According to Section 9 of the Education Act (1998) a recognised school shall use its available resources to—

- (c) *ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.*

Guidance should be a whole school activity that is integrated into all school programmes. Each school is expected to develop a school guidance plan as part of its School Plan and this plan should include provision for supporting the needs of pupils at junior cycle. The Department asks that schools should, as far as possible, utilise the additional guidance allocation granted under this circular to focus on guidance provision at junior cycle. While the school's guidance planning should involve the guidance counsellor/s in the first instance, other members of school staff and management also have key roles to play. Parents and students must be seen as an essential part of this process. Representatives of the local community, especially local business, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Educational Welfare Board and other relevant agencies should be consulted and involved as appropriate.

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2. Allocation of hours for the provision of guidance in schools

- 2.1 All second-level schools in the Free Education Scheme/Block Grant Scheme qualify for an allocation of hours in respect of guidance, in accordance with Schedule A below. Schools not in these schemes qualify for an allocation in accordance with Schedule B.

Schedule A	
Enrolment	Allocation (hours per week)
1000+	47
900-999	38
800-899	36
700-799	30
600-699	28
500-599	24
400-499	17
300-399	13
200-299	11
<200	8

Schedule B	
Schools with 500 or more pupils	22 hours/week
Schools in the 350-499 enrolment category	11 hours/week

- 2.2 The allocation of these hours to an individual school in any particular school year will be determined by the recognised pupil enrolment (including recognised PLC pupils) at the end of September of the preceding year.
- 2.3 Some schools may have previously been allocated posts/hours in response to particular needs and/or as part of the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI). Such posts/hours will continue to be allocated to schools for the 2005/06 school year and will be taken into account in determining a school's allocation on foot of the revised schedule. Thus a school will get the difference between its present allocation and its entitlement under the revised allocation schedule.
- 2.4 An individual school management may allocate, at its own discretion, additional hours from within normal teacher allocation to guidance.
- 2.5 Continued allocation of hours for guidance under this circular will be conditional on:

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- a guidance plan being part of the School Plan which is reviewed annually by school management and staff
- the guidance plan taking account of the context of the school and, to the extent possible, providing for the guidance needs of all students to be met through the integration of guidance into all school programmes and student support measures in the school.

3. Conditions of appointment of Guidance Counsellors

- 3.1 Given the broad range of activities it encompasses, guidance in addition to being a specialist area, is also a whole school activity and so will engage a range of staff members, parents and community agencies as well as the young people themselves.
- 3.2 The guidance counsellor's time will be allocated to a range of guidance activities, including work with individual students, group or class contact and other support activities. The school guidance plan should ensure that all students can avail of a developmental guidance programme. The documents *Planning the School Guidance Programme*¹ and *Guidelines for Second - Level Schools on the implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act (1998), relating to students' access to appropriate guidance*² should be referred to in the preparation of the school guidance plan.
- 3.3 A guidance counsellor should be a qualified second-level teacher and in addition, should hold a qualification in guidance in accordance with section 4 below.

4. Recognised Courses

- 4.1 The following post-graduate courses are currently recognised by the Department of Education and Science as providing a qualification acceptable for school guidance work:
- Higher Diploma in Guidance and Counselling - University College Cork (UCC)
 - Higher Diploma in School Guidance and Counselling – National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUI M)
 - Masters in Education with specialisation in Guidance and Counselling- The University of Dublin, Trinity College (TCD)
 - M. Sc. In Educational Guidance and Counselling – Mode B (TCD)
 - Post graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling - University of Limerick (UL)
- 4.2 The courses leading to the following qualifications have been discontinued. However, the qualifications continue to be recognised for guidance counsellors:
- Masters Degree in Family Counselling -Guidance and Counselling Specialisation (Marino Institute of Education)

¹ Planning the School Guidance Programme –*National Centre for Guidance in Education, 2004*

² Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998), relating to students' access to appropriate guidance –*Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, 2005.*

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- Diploma in Career Guidance/ Higher Diploma in Careers Guidance - University College Dublin (UCD)
 - Diploma in Guidance and Counselling (Mater Dei Institute)
- 4.3 Other qualifications which are deemed equivalent to those listed at paragraph 4.1 above may also be recognised by the Department. Requests for recognition of qualifications should be made to Post-Primary Qualifications Section, Department of Education and Science, Cornamaddy, Athlone, at least three months in advance of the beginning of the school year in which it is intended to commence employment.
5. You are requested to ensure that copies of this circular are provided to the appropriate representatives of parents and teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers.
6. Queries concerning this circular letter should be e-mailed to allocations@education.gov.ie

A. Barrett
Principal Officer (Acting)

Date 26 May 2005.

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Circular 0009/2012

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Secondary, Community and
Comprehensive Schools and
The Chief Executive Officers of Vocational Education Committees**

Staffing arrangements in post-primary schools for the 2012/13 school year

1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to inform all post primary school management and staff of the staffing arrangements for post primary schools for the 2012/13 school year including, in particular, the requirement to manage guidance from within the standard allocation.

It includes an overview of the timeframe for the commencement and operation of the teacher allocation process and also the redeployment process.

The circular should be read in conjunction with the recently published reforms to the teacher allocation process that are available on the Department's website.

It is important to note that a key aspect of the EU/IMF Programme of Support and Ireland's overall budgetary strategy is a requirement to reduce the public sector payroll. It remains the case that redeployment of surplus permanent or CID holding teachers is the mechanism used to fill teaching posts. VECs and Boards of Management will not be permitted to commence a recruitment process to fill a teaching vacancy for 2012/13 school year until the Department is satisfied that vacant positions are not required for the redeployment of surplus permanent or CID holding teachers.

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2. Key dates

VECs/schools should note the following indicative key dates for the commencement and operation of the teacher allocation process and the redeployment process. While every effort will be made to operate as close as possible to these indicative dates schools should be aware that they may be subject to change.

January	<p>w/c 23 January - Schools that have surplus permanent teachers have been contacted directly by the Department. This enables them to commence the process of identifying and nominating surplus permanent teacher(s) for redeployment.</p> <p>w/c 30 January: Initial staffing allocations issued to all schools.</p>
March	<p>05 March – Closing date for receipt of the following from VECs/schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form CC 12/13 which includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List of vacancies ○ Applications for curricular concessions ○ Names of nominees for redeployment ○ Applications for posts for projected enrolments for September 2012 • Form RD 1 setting out detailed information on nominee(s) for redeployment from surplus schools • Form RD 10 to be completed in respect of a surplus teacher who considers that nomination process for redeployment was not done in accordance with redeployment procedures • Form CID 8 in respect of CIDs granted by the school authority
April	<p>w/c 23 April – Notification to VECs/schools of outcome of applications for curricular concessions.</p> <p>w/c 30 April – Commencement of redeployment process in respect of teachers from surplus schools who have volunteered to be redeployed to vacancies in other schools .</p>
May	<p>w/c 7 May – Closing date for appeals to Staffing Appeals Board in relation to outcome of applications for curricular concessions.</p> <p>w/c 14 May – Commencement of redeployment process in respect of teachers from surplus schools who will be compulsorily redeployed to vacancies in other schools.</p> <p>w/c 28 May – Notification to VECs/schools of decisions by independent Staffing Appeals Board.</p>

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3. Summary of staffing arrangements for 2012/13 school year

The table below gives a summary of the main elements of the staffing arrangements for post-primary schools for the 2012/13 school year.

These staffing arrangements are effective from 1 September, 2012. The initial staffing allocations for the 2012/13 school year that have recently issued to all VECs/schools set out these staffing arrangements in more detail.

Standard staffing allocation (from September 2012 schools must manage guidance provision from within their standard staffing allocation)	18.25:1 for all DEIS post-primary schools 19:1 for non-fee charging schools 21:1 for fee-charging schools
Merging Learning Support and Language Support into a single allocation process	Schools with enrolment of less than 600 pupils will receive an allocation of 0.9 of a post. Schools with enrolment of 600 pupils or more receive an allocation of 1.4 posts.
Additional support for schools with significant concentration of pupils that require language support	Schools that currently have 2 temporary language support posts in the 2011/12 school year will be automatically allocated 1 permanent language support post for the 2012/13 school year Schools that currently have 1 temporary language support post in the 2011/12 school year will be automatically allocated 0.5 of a permanent language support post for the 2012/13 school year Further additional temporary support may be provided to these or other schools that have significant concentration of pupils that require language support on the basis of appeal
NCSE resource hours	The initial allocation for all schools for the 2012/13 school year will include 70% of their NCSE approved resource hours allocation as at 31 December, 2011. The balance of each school's approved resource hours for the 2012/13 school year will be allocated later when the NCSE process is done.
Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA)	All schools that operate the LCA programme will be given an allocation of 0.5 of a post. This is a fixed allocation that does not vary with annual changes in the number of LCA pupils in the school.

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4. Guidance provision

As part of the budget measures guidance posts at post-primary level will no longer be allocated to any post-primary school on an ex-quota basis (i.e. the additional allocations for guidance provision will cease from September 2012). With effect from September 2012, guidance provision is to be managed by schools from within their standard staffing schedule allocation. This circular supersedes all previous circulars in relation to the provision of guidance counselling hours in second level schools.

4.1 Functions of a School - Guidance

The provision of guidance continues to remain a statutory requirement for schools under the Education Act 1998.

Section 9 of the Act sets out a wide range of functions for schools and requires schools to use its available resources to discharge those functions. Subsection (c) of Section 9 relates specifically to guidance:

“ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.”

4.2 Autonomy at school level

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to provide greater freedom and autonomy to school Principals and boards by devolving more responsibility locally, including greater freedom to allocate and manage staff.

Schools currently have autonomy in relation to how they use their standard staffing allocation for the provision of subjects to their students. This autonomy is extended as a result of the budget measure whereby the standard staffing allocation must, from September 2012, also be used for the provision of guidance to students.

4.3 Whole school approach to the provision of guidance

It is established policy that guidance is a whole school activity and under existing arrangements each school develops collaboratively a school guidance plan as a means of supporting the needs of its students. While the school's guidance planning should involve the guidance counsellor(s) in the first instance, other members of school staff and management also have key roles to play. A clear record of roles, responsibilities and practices is a core feature of good guidance planning. Parents and students must be seen as an essential part of the process. Through this process schools can, for example, consider the following options for maximising the use of their available resources for the provision of guidance:

- Optimise the delivery of personal, educational, career and vocational guidance in class group settings,

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- Enable students to use directly the extensive range of guidance tools available through the internet from relevant websites (e.g. Qualifax, Careers Portal)
- Enable some of the curriculum elements of the planned guidance programme to be delivered through other teachers such as SPHE staff,
- Maximise the role of the student support or pastoral care team in schools, and,
- Ensure that the guidance counsellor has 1:1 time towards meeting the counselling needs of students experiencing difficulties or crisis.

The support of the whole school community, parents and the relevant external agencies such as NEWB and NEPS are key to the provision of guidance in schools.

4.4 Existing Department published documentation on provision of guidance

The Department has previously published documentation on the provision of guidance in schools and these documents are available on the Department's website. It should be noted that these documents were published at a time when a separate additional allocation was given for guidance. Therefore they should be read in the context of the further autonomy being provided to schools relating to the allocation of resources and some elements may need to be adjusted depending on the approach adopted at individual school level. School authorities should nonetheless continue to find the documentation a useful reference guide and resource to be used, as appropriate, and in particular in the preparation of school guidance plans:

- *Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students' Access to Appropriate Guidance* (DES, 2005)
- Inspectorate publication in 2009 "*Looking at Guidance*"

4.5 Guidance Counsellors

Department **Circular 0031/2011** sets out the requirements in relation to teacher recruitment, registration and qualifications. Notwithstanding the budget measure, it remains the case that a person being assigned as guidance counsellor must be a qualified second-level teacher and, in addition, hold the relevant recognised qualification for school guidance work.

5. Withdrawal of historical disadvantaged posts

Some DEIS post-primary schools have teaching posts arising from a legacy disadvantaged programme prior to the introduction of the DEIS initiative in 2005. As part of the budget measures these posts are being withdrawn from September 2012. The relevant individual VECs/schools will be notified directly by the Department's Social Inclusion Unit.

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6. Limited phasing arrangements

Some limited phasing arrangements will be put in place for VECs/schools where the combination of budget and reform measures impact in a particularly adverse manner on the VECs/schools overall allocation. As part of the curricular concessions process such VECs/schools will have an opportunity to set out how they were particularly adversely impacted. This will then be taken into account, as appropriate, in the Department's consideration of such applications for curricular concessions.

The Department's assessment of all applications for curricular concessions will also take into account the efforts made by a VEC/school to maximise what can be achieved with its teaching resources through local cooperation arrangements with other neighbouring schools including, where possible, through the use of modern technology.

7. Queries:

Queries in relation to the teacher allocation process should be sent to the following email address:- Allocations@education.gov.ie

Hubert Loftus
Principal Officer
Teacher Allocations Section

February 2012

APPENDIX D:

Research Timeline

Table D1

Research Timeline

Time Period	Different Phases of the Research
February - March 2013	Online questionnaire designed (Feb) and revised (March)
April 2013	Pilot questionnaire prepared in two stages. A paper version was piloted with 6 guidance counsellors focusing mainly on language and content. An online version was piloted with 6 other guidance counsellors, focusing mainly on web issues of a technical nature, online access issues, navigation, timing, etc.
May 2013	Questionnaire was redesigned based on results of the two pilots. The questionnaire was uploaded to the Survey Monkey website on 7 May and remained online for three weeks.
June - August 2013	The questionnaire responses were coded using the constant comparative method and NVIVO 10 software. A first draft of the findings was written up. The questionnaire was analyzed for possible themes that would be explored in the focus groups.
September 2013	The findings were re-coded into broader themes using NVIVO 10 and the findings chapter was rewritten thematically for phase one.
October 2013	The findings were re-examined for any themes or new questions that might be answered in a follow-on phase of research.
	Based on an examination of the research methodology literature, a decision was made to conduct interviews rather than focus groups.
	A set of interview questions was arrived at based on the findings from the online survey (see Appendix F and Appendix M).

... / ...

November 2013	Two pilot interviews were conducted with guidance counsellors.
	The pilot interviews were transcribed and some minor changes were made to the structured interview transcript.
	A schedule of interviews was drawn up with volunteers from phase one. This involved targeting volunteers based on their demographic criteria. Two pilot interviews were held.
	The interview process began on 25 th November and finished on 19 th December 2013.
December 2013	The interviews were transcribed.
January 2014	The interview data were coded by theme and analyzed using NVIVO 10.
February 2014	The findings from phase two were collated and written up.
March 2014	The findings from the research were compared with the findings from the literature review.
April 2014	The conclusions were arrived at and written up.

Appendix E: Ethical Considerations

The following items are presented in this appendix:

- Informed Consent Email – Phase 1
- Informed Consent Email – Phase 2
- Informed Consent Form – Phase 1
- Informed Consent Form – Phase 2

Informed Consent Email – Phase 1

Dear Guidance Counsellor,

I am a guidance counsellor who is undertaking a part-time Doctorate in Education with DCU/St. Patrick's College and I am inviting guidance counsellors who work in second-level schools to participate in a short online survey of *guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of guidance in challenging economic times*.

As the survey focuses only on guidance counsellors in second-level schools, please do not participate if you work in other sectors. Similarly as some of the questions relate to guidance counsellors' work in previous years, please do not participate if this is your first year working in guidance.

So, for those who are based in second-level schools, I would greatly appreciate if you could please take the time to contribute to the study and share your experiences in school over the past year. I realise your time is precious, particularly this year, so the survey is relatively short and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. It will be available at the online link below until 31st May 2013.

Please read the attached **Informed Consent Form** before agreeing to take part in this online survey. It is a PDF document, so it will require Adobe Reader (or equivalent) to read it. Then, if you wish to complete the survey, click on the link below. If you experience any technical issues completing the survey or if you have questions or comments regarding any aspect of the study, please contact me at liam.harkin3@mail.dcu.ie

Copy this address or click here to access the ONLINE SURVEY:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/D9MQPB5> (Available until 31st May).

I thank you in advance for your participation.

Regards,

Liam Harkin, Guidance Counsellor, Donegal Branch.

Informed Consent Email – Phase 2

Dear _____,

Back in May of this year, you were one of the guidance counsellors who volunteered to participate in a follow-up phase in my research for an EdD in DCU / St. Pats on guidance counsellors' perceptions of the impact of the education cuts on guidance in schools. I am contacting you now to see if you are still interested in contributing to this research by taking part in a short telephone interview with me between 18th November and 20th December.

My plan is to conduct interviews with 10 guidance counsellors over the phone (or even better by Skype if you use it). I would anticipate that the interview will take no more than 20 minutes – but that depends on how much you want to say. I would need to record the interview in order to transcribe it, however neither you nor your school will be identified in the thesis in any way and any of your comments used will be anonymised.

I plan to conduct the interviews over the next four weeks on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, between 4pm and 5pm. Alternatively, I can also do them during some of my free classes during the day or in the evenings between 7-9 Monday-Thursday.

If you are still interested in participating, please read the Informed Consent Form which is attached with this email, afterwards please reply to this email and include the phrase below in your reply:

I consent to participate in a telephone interview with Liam Harkin for the purposes of EdD research. I understand that the conversation will be recorded and transcribed and that some of my comments may be used in the thesis. I understand that neither I nor my school will be identified in the research and that all recordings will be destroyed once the degree has been awarded.

Please indicate two or three times and dates that would suit you and include your preferred contact phone number and/or Skype name in your reply.

I greatly appreciate your time.

Yours sincerely,

Liam

Liam Harkin, Guidance Counsellor, Donegal Branch.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Forms



St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra



Dublin City University

Informed Consent Form – Phase 1

I Research Study Working Title.

Guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of guidance in challenging economic times.

II Purpose of the Research.

This is a research study that wishes to explore guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of guidance in second-level schools in challenging economic times.

III Requirements of Participation in Research Study.

Participation in Phase 1 of this research study will involve the completion of an online questionnaire. This will require you to answer a series of closed and open questions. Selected quotations from your answers may be used to illustrate certain points in the research.

IV Confirmation that Involvement in the Research Study is voluntary.

Please be aware that there is no compulsion to participate in this Research Study. In addition, you can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V Confidentiality.

Please be aware of the following:

- your participation in this section of the research will be completely confidential;
- your identity will remain anonymous and your name will not appear in any part of the research;

- no details are being collected electronically about your identity;
- any reference that you make to the name of your school or your locality or your VEC will be deleted in transcripts or quotations and substituted with fictitious names;
- the raw data from this part of the research will be destroyed in Autumn 2015;
- this guarantee of confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

VI Questions about the Research Study

If you have any questions about this Research Study and you wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,
SPD Research Ethics Committee.
c/o The Office of the Dean of Research
Room C112
St Patrick's College
Drumcondra
Dublin 9

Tel: +353-(0)1-884 2149

Email: research@spd.dcu.ie

Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/research

VII By agreeing to participate in this survey the following is assumed:

- *You have read this Plain Language Statement.*
- *You understand the information provided.*
- *You know where you can get answers to any questions you have about the study.*
- *You have received satisfactory answers to any questions you had.*
- *By proceeding, you consent to take part in this research project.*

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Forms



St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra



Dublin City University

Informed Consent Form – Phase 2

I Research Study Working Title.

Guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of guidance in challenging economic times.

II Purpose of the Research.

This is a research study that wishes to explore guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of guidance in second-level schools in challenging economic times.

III Requirements of Participation in Research Study.

Phase 2 of this research study will involve participating in a one-to-one interview, which will be conducted over the telephone. This will require you to answer a series of closed and open questions. Selected quotations from your answers may be used to illustrate certain points in the research.

IV Confirmation that Involvement in the Research Study is voluntary.

Please be aware that there is no compulsion to participate in this Research Study. In addition, you can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V Confidentiality.

Please be aware of the following:

- your participation in this section of the research will be completely confidential;

- your identity will remain anonymous and your name will not appear in any part of the research;

- no details are being collected electronically about your identity;

- any reference that you make to the name of your school or your locality or your VEC will be deleted in transcripts or quotations and substituted with fictitious names;

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VI Questions about the Research Study

If you have any questions about this Research Study and you wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,
SPD Research Ethics Committee.
c/o The Office of the Dean of Research
Room C112
St Patrick's College
Drumcondra, Dublin 9

Tel: +353-(0)1-884 2149

Email: research@spd.dcu.ie

Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/research

VII By agreeing to participate in this survey the following is assumed:

- *You have read this Plain Language Statement.*
- *You understand the information provided.*
- *You know where you can get answers to any questions you have about the study.*
- *You have received satisfactory answers to any questions you had.*
- *By proceeding, you consent to take part in this research project.*

APPENDIX F:

Sources for the Survey Questions in Phase One of Research

The following table locates the origin of the survey questions in the literature.

Table: F1

Sources for the Survey Questions

Questions in Online Survey	Sources in Literature Review
2. <i>What type of school do you work in?</i>	
4. <i>Does your school have DEIS status?</i>	IGC 2013a, 2013b
5. <i>Is your school fee-paying (i.e. fee-charging)?</i>	
6. <i>With regard to the educational guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year?</i>	Cookson & Persell (1985) Foskett et al. (2008) Ghosh, Michelson & Anyon (2007)
7. <i>With regard to the career guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year?</i>	McCoy, et al. (2010) McDonough (1997) Mullen (2009) Perna and Titus (2004) Rosenbaum, Miller & Krei (1996)
8. <i>With regard to the counselling service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year?</i>	Smith and Banks (2012) Smyth et al. (2006) Stanton-Salazar (1997)
10. <i>During the past year has your role as guidance counsellor changed in any way in your school?</i>	
11. <i>Please give some more details on how your role has changed.</i>	ASTI (2012) Halperin (1987) IGC (2013)
12. <i>How would you describe this change?</i>	
13. <i>Why do you describe the change in your role in this way?</i>	
14. <i>What is the difference (if any) between your allocated guidance hours in 2012-13 and previous years?</i>	
15. <i>Was there anything in your day-to-day work routine as a guidance counsellor that you did differently this school year (2012-13) compared to previous years?</i>	

APPENDIX G:

Pilot Survey and Pilot Interviews

This appendix is in four sections:

1. Description of the design of the pilot survey.
2. Sampling in the pilot survey
3. Feedback from pilot testing of the online survey.
4. Copy of pilot survey.

1. Design and piloting of survey.

As recommended (Robson, 2002; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Berends, 2006), I piloted the survey before distribution. The pilot phase was carried out by 12 guidance counsellors. The purpose of the pilot was to “highlight which particular questions were unclear, were difficult to answer, or presented confusing response formats” (Berends, 2006, p. 632). I conducted the pilot testing in two phases, a paper-based pilot study and a web-based prototype. These two phases are now described.

Pilot survey one.

The first phase of the pilot study was a paper-based version of the survey, where the main focus was the readability of the language used in the questions, as the wording of questionnaires is of “paramount importance” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 341).). I sent the paper version of the pilot survey to six guidance counsellors who were known to me. Three of these guidance counsellors were also qualified English teachers and I

targeted these specifically for the purpose of checking the readability and suitability of the language used. The pilot surveys were posted out to the participants and a stamped-addressed envelope was provided for their return. By the deadline of 30th April 2013, four of these had replied, while two returned the survey late.

Pilot survey two.

The next step involved the actual design of the online survey on the host website (www.surveymonkey.com). This stage was informed by the recommendations for improvement from the paper pilot study. I followed best practice in online survey design (Cook et al., 2000; Reips, 2002; Archer, 2007), and the process involved countless redesigns before I deemed the questionnaire ready for a web-based pilot.

The pilot survey was uploaded on 1st May, 2013. The survey remained online for a period of 7 days. The link to the pilot survey was sent by email to a further six guidance counsellors. I targeted three of these because of their knowledge and familiarity with the internet, web design, etc. I specifically chose three other guidance counsellors who were known to me, as I felt that they might not be overly familiar with online surveying and I wanted to check if there were any technical or design issues that might prove to be obstacles to completion for similar participants. In addition to completing the online pilot survey, I asked the participants four additional questions in order to obtain feedback on their online experience. six different guidance counsellors.

2. Sampling in the pilot phase of research.

For the paper-version of the pilot survey, the sample was a mixture of a convenience sample and a purposive sample. Robson (2002) describes convenience sampling as “choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as respondents” and he regards it as “sensible” (p. 265) for use in piloting surveys. All of the participating guidance counsellors were in my counselling supervision group, so I considered this to be a convenience sample. As indicated earlier however, one of the main aims of the paper version of the pilot survey was to examine the use of language in the questions and I targeted three of the participating guidance counsellors specifically as they were also qualified English teachers, so this component of the overall sample was a purposive sample, where “a sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her specific needs in a project” (Robson, 2002, p. 265).

For the online-version of the pilot survey, where the focus was on the technicalities of the online survey (web navigation, page progression, font size, colours, timing, etc.) I also chose a purposive sample. Here, I targeted a range of guidance counsellors in different parts of the country and working in the different school settings. Three of these were guidance counsellors who had a good knowledge of the Internet and in contrast, three others who I felt might not be that comfortable or experienced with online surveys.

3. Feedback from Pilot Testing of the Survey

The feedback is presented in two sections, firstly from the paper-based version of the survey and secondly from the online version of the survey.

Phase One of Pilot Study- Paper Version

The feedback was very positive, with respondents reporting that the questions were clear in the main and that the language used was easy to understand. Several suggestions for improvement were made, and these are detailed below.

Q. 1. With regard to the educational guidance service (study skills, subject choice, etc.) provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor in the past school year?

Q. 2. With regard to the career guidance service (CAO, UCAS, PLC, etc.) provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor in the past school year?

The feedback suggested more clarity was needed around these first two questions. One respondent suggested giving more examples to help clarify the questions and “to get people thinking”. Another suggested that “in the past school year” could be confusing, as some people might interpret it as the 2011-12 school year. With these comments and suggestions in mind, I rephrased the questions as follows:

Q.1. With regard to the educational guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year? (* e.g. study skills, subject choice for Junior Cert., exam preparation, etc.)*

Q.2. With regard to the career guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year? (* e.g. CAO applications, UCAS applications, PLC applications, LCVP career investigations etc.)*

Q.3. What do you consider to be the main concerns and issues of your students in the past year?

The feedback was that the question was too broad as there were so many issues. One respondent wondered if the question related only to issues raised with the guidance counsellor. Taking this feedback into consideration, I changed the wording to the following: *Based on the contact you have had with students during this school year, what do you consider to be the main concerns and issues of your students this year?*

Q.7. What is the difference between your guidance hours in 2012-13 and previous years (to the nearest hour)?

The feedback was that the words “to the nearest hour” were superfluous as the 7 possible answers are clear and refer to hours anyway. One respondent suggested including the word “allocated” as s/he felt that many guidance counsellors worked more hours than they were officially allocated. I incorporated both recommendations.

Phase Two of Pilot Study – Online Version

The feedback suggested that some questions required further clarity. Everyone responded that the survey was easy to navigate through on a technical and design level. The average completion time was 17 minutes, which was an objective finding, measured by the website. With this information, I decided to indicate in the introduction to the survey that it would take about 15 minutes to complete.

A constructive suggestion was offered regarding the placement of the demographic questions: that they should come at the beginning of the survey as they were easy and quick to answer and this would “give people the impression that they were speeding through the survey”. I reflected on this suggestion for a long time as most of the research textbooks suggested that demographic questions should come at the end. However Frick et al (1999) found that early dropout from online questionnaires was not increased by asking for personal information at the beginning; while Reips (2002) concluded that it was better to introduce some simple-to-complete items earlier on to build up an idea of how to respond to the later items. So based on the suggestion from the pilot and these two findings from the literature, I decided to place the demographic questions at the beginning for the main survey.

In addition to completing the online pilot survey, I asked the participants four additional questions in order to obtain feedback on their online experience.

Question one.

The first of these questions concerned the length of time it took them to complete the survey. Participants were asked to write down their exact starting times and finishing times. The online survey collection software also collects this data automatically and it was interesting to find out that there was a very large discrepancy between the time given by the participants and the actual time recorded automatically. The difference was in the order of 10 minutes, with respondents reporting that it was taking them 10 minutes longer than it was in reality. Faced with this discrepancy, it was decided to accept the official data from the website, which stated that the average time it took participants to complete the survey was 23 minutes, with the shortest being 5 minutes and the longest being 34 minutes. As the pilot survey contained 23 items, this gave an average of 1 minute per item. Given that the main survey contained 17 items, this suggested an average completion time of 17 minutes would be sufficient. It was decided therefore to indicate in the introduction to the main survey that the completion time would be about 15 minutes.

Question two.

The second request to the participants was *'Please give details on any difficulties or misunderstandings you experienced while answering the questions on this survey'*. One respondent suggested more clarity in the questions regarding career guidance and educational guidance. So for the main survey, these two questions were rephrased and more examples were given.

Question three.

The third question related to how easy or difficult the participants found the online survey to navigate through: *Please comment on the survey from a technical point of view, (website, navigation, layout, font size, colours, etc.). Was it easy or difficult to navigate through it?* Everyone responded that it was easy to navigate. One person suggested that the demographic questions should come at the beginning of the survey as they were so easy and quick to answer and this would “give people the impression that they were speeding through the survey”.

This suggestion was reflected on for a long time as most of the research textbooks suggested that demographic questions should come at the end. However Frick et al (1999) found that early dropout from online questionnaires was not increased by asking for personal information at the beginning, while Reips (2002) concluded that it was better to introduce some simple-to-complete items earlier on to build up an idea of how to respond to the later items. So based on the suggestion from the pilot and these two findings from the literature, it was decided to place the demographic questions at the beginning for the main survey.

Question four.

Finally, I asked the participants if they had any suggestions for improving this online survey. Two suggestions were offered but I felt that the respondents missed the point of the question, and I decided not to implement these ideas as they would not improve or add to the survey.

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SURVEY

- This is a **Pilot Survey** that is being conducted prior to undertaking a full web-based survey of guidance counsellors in May 2013, as part of a Doctorate in Education in SPD / DCU. I appreciate greatly your support in helping me pilot this survey.
- This survey focuses only on guidance counsellors working in second-level schools. If you are a guidance counsellor working in another setting, please do not participate as your answers will not be taken into consideration.
- If this is your first year working as a guidance counsellor, please do not answer this survey as some questions require you to reflect on your experience of working as a guidance counsellor in previous years.
- The survey has 23 items and should take about 15 minutes to complete.
- As this is a Pilot Survey, in addition to answering the survey questions, you are also requested to please provide some feedback to the researcher. This feedback will be gathered at the end of the survey.
- In providing this feedback, could I suggest that it may be useful for you to write down any difficulties or confusion you experience in completing the survey, on a sheet of paper as you proceed through the questions. This will enable you to quickly give feedback at the end without having to look back at the questions.
- Please click **Next** if you wish to participate in the Pilot Survey

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING SURVEY

- This is an anonymous survey, so please do not identify yourself or your school in your answers.
- If you work in more than one school, please answer for the school you work more guidance hours in.
- Please give as much detail as you wish in response to each question. There is no word limit.
- Please click **"Next"** below to start the survey.

START OF PILOT SURVEY

1. As you start this PILOT SURVEY, please type in the time you started the survey in the box below (i.e. the current time).

GUIDANCE IN YOUR SCHOOL

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

2. With regard to the educational* guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year? (***) e.g. study skills, subject choice for Junior Cert., exam preparation, etc.)**

3. With regard to the career* guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year? (***) e.g. CAO applications, UCAS applications, PLC applications, LCVP career investigations etc.)**

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

4. With regard to the counselling service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year?

YOUR STUDENTS

5. Based on the contact you have had with students during this school year, what do you consider to be the main concerns and issues of your students this year?

YOUR ROLE

6. During the past year has your role as guidance counsellor changed in your school?

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ A little
- ☐ It is much the same
- ☐ Not much
- ☐ Not at all

If you answered question 6 by saying that your role **has not changed**, please skip questions 7, 8 and 9.

If you answered question 6 by saying that your role **has changed**, then please answer questions 7, 8 and 9.

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

7. Please give some more details on how your role has changed.

8. How would you describe this change?

Tick one of the five possible answers below:

- ☐ The change is definitely for the better
- ☐ The change is slightly positive
- ☐ The change makes no difference
- ☐ The change is slightly negative
- ☐ The change is definitely for the worse

9. Why do you describe the change in your role in this way?

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

10. What is the difference between your allocated guidance hours in 2012-13 and previous years?

- ☐ My guidance hours were increased by 5 or more hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were increased by 3-4 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were increased by 1-2 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours remained the same
- ☐ My guidance hours were reduced by 1-2 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were reduced by 3-4 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were reduced by 5 or more hours

11. Was there anything in your day-to-day work routine as a guidance counsellor that you did differently this school year (2012-13) compared to previous years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. Please elaborate on your answer to question 11.

13. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of working as a guidance counsellor from September 2012 to June 2013?

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

14. What Local Authority Area is your school in? (e.g. Co. Sligo / Fingal / Limerick City.)

15. What type of school do you work in?

- ☐ Secondary
- ☐ Vocational
- ☐ Community/Comprehensive
- ☐ VEC Community College
- ☐ Other (please specify)

16. What is the gender composition of your school?

- ☐ All male
- ☐ All female
- ☐ Co-ed

17. Does your school have DEIS status?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. Is your school fee-paying (i.e. fee-charging)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

PILOT SURVEY - FEEDBACK SECTION

19. Please type in the time you finished the survey at?

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

20. Please give details on any difficulties or misunderstandings you experienced while answering the questions on this survey.

21. Please comment on the survey from a technical point of view, (website, navigation, layout, font size, colours, etc.)

Was it easy or difficult to navigate through it?

22. What suggestions do you have for improving this online survey?

FOLLOW-ON RESEARCH

Appendix G: Pilot Survey

23. Would you be willing to participate in follow-on research in September or October 2013?

This will either be in the form of focus groups comprising 6-8 guidance counsellors, or interviews with individual guidance counsellors. These would be held at a location near you. The researcher has not yet decided on the number of focus groups / interviews, or their location, as this will be determined by the responses to this questionnaire.

If you are not interested in participating, just ignore this question, and click the **Done** button at the bottom of this page to exit the survey and submit your answers.

If you are willing to participate, please click on this link liam.harkin3@mail.dcu.ie to send an email to the researcher with your contact details. Alternatively you can copy this email address to your email service. Please put "*Further Research*" in the title of the email. This external e-mail link is provided in order to preserve the anonymity of your responses to these questions on this site. Expressing an interest at this stage does not commit you to any participation in any focus group or interview that may arise.

Thank you for completing this pilot survey. Your feedback responses will be taken into consideration when planning the actual questionnaire.

Please click the **Done** button below to submit your answers.

APPENDIX H:

Impact of Email Reminders on Online Survey Responses

A table below provides full details of the impact of email reminders on the number of responses received each day while the survey was live. It is clear, for example, that the first reminder generated almost as many responses in one day (61) as were received over the whole of the first week (62).

For the second reminder, each of the 14 IGC branch secretaries was asked to forward an email reminder to all branch members. As each secretary sent out reminders at different times, the effect on the responses was not as dramatic, but had a steady and more gradual impact.

As the deadline for survey completion was approaching, it was felt that one final reminder was needed in order to achieve the desired response rate, so a third email was sent which had the effect of achieving the targeted number of responses.

Table H1 provided details on the daily response rates and the impact of email reminders.

Table: H1***Impact of Email Reminders on the Number of Responses***

Day	Date	Reminders	Total Responses
Tuesday	7 May	Online Launch	36
Wednesday	8 May		17
Thursday	9 May		6
Friday	10 May		2
Saturday	11 May		0
Sunday	12 May		0
Monday	13 May		1
Tuesday	14 May		0
Wednesday	15 May	First reminder issued	61
Thursday	16 May		9
Friday	17 May		6
Saturday	18 May		1
Sunday	19 May		2
Monday	20 May		1
Tuesday	21 May	Second reminder issued	17
Wednesday	22 May		14
Thursday	23 May		4
Friday	24 May		2
Saturday	25 May		0
Sunday	26 May		1
Monday	27 May		13
Tuesday	28 May		4
Wednesday	29 May	Final reminder issued	48
Thursday	30 May		23
Friday	31 May		12
Total			280

APPENDIX I:

Representativeness of Sample

Representativeness of Sample in Phase One of Research: Online Survey

The representativeness of the sample was examined in terms of school location, ‘historical’ school type, DEIS/non-DEIS school, and fee-charging school / school in the FES. Detailed tables providing data on the representativeness of the sample under all of these criteria are presented below. Table I1 shows the overall valid response rate for the online survey and

Table I1

Response Rate for all Schools

School Type	Population (National)	Valid Response Rate (Sample)
All second-level schools	778* (100%)	273 (35%)
*DES (2012), DES (2013a)		

Geographic Representativeness.

In order to determine if the sample was geographically representative, respondents were asked to indicate the local authority area (LAA) their school was located in. 244 respondents out of 273 answered the question. See Table D1. The data were compared with the response rate from the IGC National Audit (2013) as this audit targeted the same population. Both datasets were found to be very similar, with analogous percentages for most LAAs, and both samples included at least one respondent from each LAA in the country. Table I2 shows the geographic representativeness of the online survey compared with a similar sample.

Table I2***Geographic representativeness of survey sample compared with similar sample (n = 244)***

<i>Local Authority Area</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Survey %</i>	<i>IGC Audit</i>	<i>Audit %</i>
<i>Carlow</i>	3	1.2%	3	1.4%
<i>Cavan</i>	4	1.6%	3	1.4%
<i>Clare</i>	5	2%	6	2.7%
<i>Cork (City & County)</i>	31	12.7%	34	15.5%
<i>Donegal</i>	18	7.4%	7	3.2%
<i>Dublin (Four Local Authorities)</i>	48	19.6%	46	20.8%
<i>Galway (City & County)</i>	20	8.2%	12	5.5%
<i>Kerry</i>	8	3.3%	12	5.5%
<i>Kildare</i>	3	1.2%	5	2.3%
<i>Kilkenny</i>	4	1.6%	8	3.7%
<i>Laois</i>	4	1.6%	2	0.9%
<i>Leitrim</i>	1	<0.5%	1	<0.5%
<i>Limerick (City & County)</i>	11	4.5%	9	4.1%
<i>Longford</i>	2	0.8%	3	1.4%
<i>Louth</i>	7	2.9%	7	3.2%
<i>Mayo</i>	8	3.3%	8	3.7%
<i>Meath</i>	6	2.5%	6	3.7%
<i>Monaghan</i>	5	2%	5	2.3%
<i>Offaly</i>	6	2.5%	6	2.7%
<i>Roscommon</i>	1	<0.5%	1	<0.5%
<i>Sligo</i>	4	1.6%	5	2.3%
<i>Tipperary (North & South)</i>	16	6.6%	11	5.0%
<i>Waterford (City & County)</i>	6	2.5%	2	0.9%
<i>Westmeath</i>	2	0.8%	3	0.9%
<i>Wexford</i>	12	4.9%	7	3.2%
<i>Wicklow</i>	7	2.9%	7	3.2%
<i>Total</i>	244*	100%	219	100%

Representativeness by ‘Historical’ School Type in the FES.

Of the respondents to the question on school type, 146 (54%) indicated that they worked in a voluntary secondary school (VSS), 83 (31%) in an Education and Training Board (ETB) school (formerly VEC), and 42 (15%) in a Community/Comprehensive (C&C) school. These percentages¹ in the sample are very close to the national population, and can be considered very representative. Table I3 shows a breakdown of the response rate for the online survey for all second-level schools.

¹ All percentages in this and subsequent tables are rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Table I3***Breakdown of Response Rate for all Schools (n = 271)***

School Type	Population	Valid Sample
All second-level schools	778* (100%)	271 (100%)
Voluntary Secondary	431* (55%)	146 (54%)
Vocational / VEC Community College	254* (33%)	83 (31%)
Community/Comprehensive	93* (12%)	42 (15%)

*DES (2012), DES (2013a)

Table I4 shows the breakdown of the response rate for fee-charging schools compared with schools in the FES

Response Rate for Fee-charging Schools / Schools in the FES.

The response rate was then examined in terms of whether the respondents worked in a fee-charging school or in a school in the FES. Of the 271 respondents who provided this information, 93% worked in a school in the FES, while 7% worked in a fee-charging school. This matches the national profile exactly. Table I4 shows a breakdown of the response rate for fee-charging schools compared with schools in the FES.

Table I4***Response Rate for Fee-Charging Schools / Schools in the FES (n = 271)***

School Type	Population	Valid Sample
All second-level schools	778* (100%)	271 (100%)
Schools in Free Education Scheme	723* (93%)	252 (93%)
Fee-charging Schools	55* (7%)	19 (7%)

*DES (2012), DES (2013a)

Response Rate for DEIS schools / Non-DEIS Schools.

Of the 268 respondents, 27% of them indicated that they worked in schools with DEIS status. This is very representative of the national population. Table I5 shows a breakdown of the response rate for DEIS schools compared with non-DEIS schools.

Table I5

Response Rate for DEIS Schools / non-DEIS Schools (n = 268)

School Type	Population	Valid Sample
All schools	778* (100%)	268 (100%)
DEIS	200* (26%)	73 (27%)
Non-DEIS	578* (74%)	195 (73%)

*DES (2012), DES (2013a)

Representativeness of Sample in Phase Two of Research: Individual Interviews

Table I6 presents an overview of the twelve interviewees and demonstrates the representativeness of the sample over several criteria.

Table I6

Guidance Counsellors Interviewed: Representativeness of Sample

Pseudonym	School Type	DEIS	FES	Gender	Catchment Area	Socio-Economic Profile
<i>Poppy</i>	Comm/Comp	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Mixed	Mixed
<i>Holly</i>	Secondary	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Mixed	Mixed
<i>Jasmine</i>	ETB	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Urban	Mixed
<i>Basil</i>	Comm/Comp	No	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Mixed
<i>Hazel</i>	Secondary	No	Yes	Female	Urban	Mixed
<i>Heather</i>	Secondary	No	Yes	Female	Urban	Mixed
<i>Olive</i>	Comm/Comp	Yes	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Working Class
<i>Violet</i>	ETB	Yes	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Working Class
<i>Rose</i>	ETB	Yes	Yes	Co-Ed	Rural	Working Class
<i>Rowan</i>	Secondary	No	No	Male	Urban	Middle Class
<i>Lily</i>	Secondary	No	No	Male	Urban	Middle Class
<i>Rosemary</i>	Secondary	No	No	Female	Urban	Middle Class

Table I7 shows how representative the interview sample was in terms of school type.

Table I7

Interviews Sample: School Type

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools	778* (100%)	12 (100%)
Voluntary Secondary	431* (55%)	6 (50%)
Vocational / VEC Community College	254* (33%)	3 (33%)
Community/Comprehensive	93* (12%)	3 (33%)
*DES (2012), DES (2013a)		

Table I8 shows how representative the interview sample was in terms of fee-charging schools/schools in the FES.

Table I8

Interviews Sample: Fee-Charging School/ Schools in the FES

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools	778* (100%)	12 (100%)
Schools in Free Education Scheme	723* (93%)	9 (75%)
Fee-charging Schools	55* (7%)	3 (25%)
*DES (2012), DES (2013a)		

Table I9 shows how representative the interview sample was in terms of school type within the FES.

Table I9

Interviews Sample: School Type in FES

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools in the FES	723* (100%)	9 (100%)
Voluntary Secondary	376* (52%)	3 (33%)
Vocational / VEC Community College	254* (35%)	3 (33%)
Community/Comprehensive	93* (13%)	3 (33%)

* DES (2012), DES (2013a)

Table I10 shows how representative the interview sample was in terms of DEIS / non-DEIS schools.

Table I10

Interviews Sample: DEIS Schools / non-DEIS Schools

School Type	Population	Sample
All schools	778* (100%)	12 (100%)
DEIS	200* (26%)	3 (25%)
Non-DEIS	578* (74%)	9 (75%)

*DES (2012), DES (2013a)

Appendix J - Transcript of Online Survey

Guidance counsellors' perceptions and experiences of guidance in challenging times.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SURVEY

- This online survey is being conducted with guidance counsellors who work in second-level schools. It forms part of a Doctorate in Education in SPD / DCU that is being undertaken by Liam Harkin, a guidance counsellor working in a Community School in Co. Donegal.
- The survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete.
- If more than one guidance counsellor in a school wishes to complete the survey, each guidance counsellor must complete it on a different computer, as only one response will be accepted per computer.
- I would appreciate greatly your supjava script:WebForm_DoPostBackWithOptions(new WebForm_PostBackOptions("btnSubmit", "", true, "", "", false, true))port in participating in this survey. Please click **Next** if you wish to do so.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING SURVEY

- This is an anonymous survey, so please do not identify yourself or your school in your answers.
- If you work in more than one school, please answer for the school you work more guidance hours in.
- Some questions are multiple-choice and require you to tick a box, while others require a more detailed answer. Please give as much detail as you wish in response to each open-ended question, as there is no word limit.
- Please click **"Next"** below to start the survey.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

1. What Local Authority Area is your school in? (e.g. Co. Sligo / Fingal / Limerick City.)

2. What type of school do you work in?

☐ Secondary

☐ Vocational

☐ Community/Comprehensive

☐ VEC Community College

☐ Other (please specify)

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

3. What is the gender composition of your school?

☐ All male

☐ All female

☐ Co-ed

Appendix J - Transcript of Online Survey

4. Does your school have DEIS status?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

5. Is your school fee-paying (i.e. fee-charging)?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

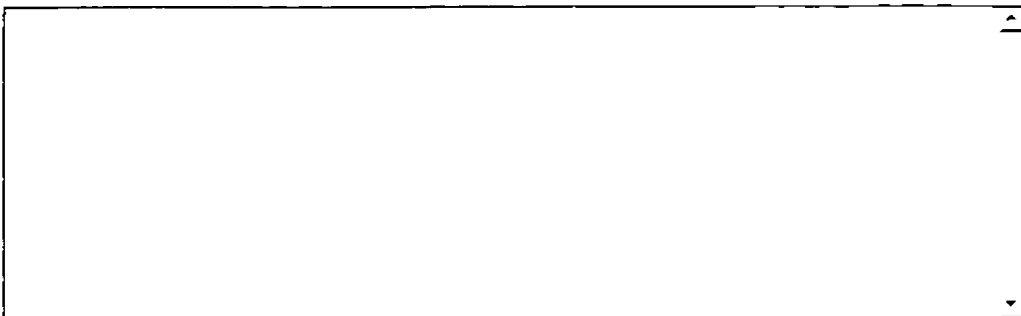
QUESTIONS ABOUT GUIDANCE IN YOUR SCHOOL

6. With regard to the educational guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year? (** e.g. study skills, subject choice for Junior Cert., exam preparation, etc.)**



QUESTIONS ABOUT GUIDANCE IN YOUR SCHOOL

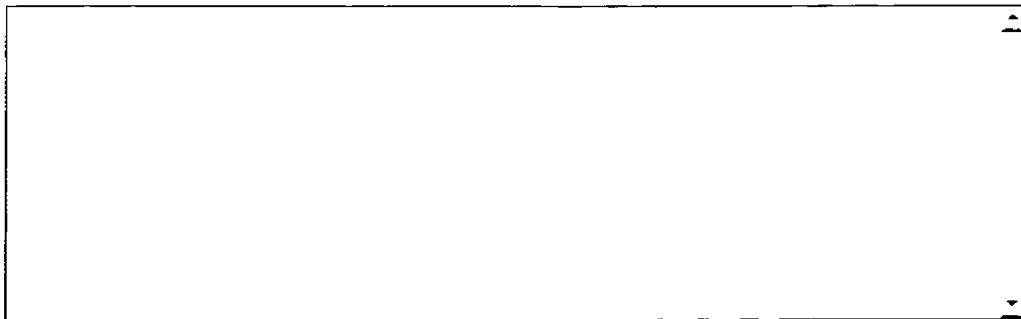
7. With regard to the career guidance service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year? (** e.g. CAO applications, UCAS applications, PLC applications, LCVP career investigations etc.)**



Appendix J - Transcript of Online Survey

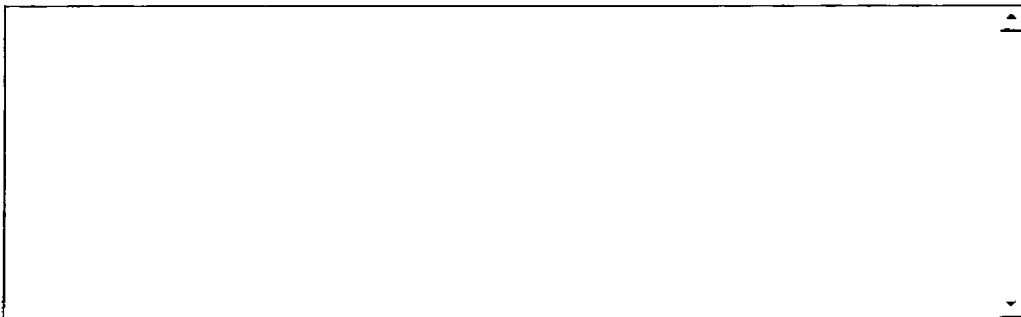
QUESTIONS ABOUT GUIDANCE IN YOUR SCHOOL

8. With regard to the counselling service provided in your school, what concerns or issues have been uppermost in your mind as a guidance counsellor during this school year?



YOUR STUDENTS

9. Based on the contact you have had with students during this school year, what do you consider to be the main concerns and issues of your students this year?



YOUR ROLE

10. During the past year has your role as guidance counsellor changed in any way in your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

YOUR ROLE



Appendix J - Transcript of Online Survey

11. Please give some more details on how your role has changed.

YOUR ROLE

12. How would you describe this change?
Tick one of the five possible answers below:

- ☐ The change is definitely for the better
- ☐ The change is slightly positive
- ☐ The change makes no difference
- ☐ The change is slightly negative
- ☐ The change is definitely for the worse

YOUR ROLE

13. Why do you describe the change in your role in this way?

Appendix J - Transcript of Online Survey

14. What is the difference (if any) between your allocated guidance hours in 2012-13 and previous years?

- ☐ My guidance hours were increased this year by 5 or more hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were increased this year by 3-4 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were increased this year by 1-2 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours remained the same this year
- ☐ My guidance hours were reduced this year by 1-2 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were reduced this year by 3-4 hours
- ☐ My guidance hours were reduced this year by 5 or more hours

15. Was there anything in your day-to-day work routine as a guidance counsellor that you did differently this school year (2012-13) compared to previous years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Please elaborate on your answer to the above question.

17. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of working as a guidance counsellor from September 2012 to May 2013?

FOLLOW-ON RESEARCH

APPENDIX K:

Online Survey Data

The data from the online survey are presented in accordance with the themes that emerged from the constant comparative coding method. There were two types of question in the survey; structured questions with quantitative data and open-ended questions with qualitative data. For the structured questions, valid percentages are given (percentages of those who responded to that question). In the case of open-ended questions, the responses were coded using the constant comparative method. Valid percentages were then used to quantify these data, based on the actual number responding to each individual question. The results are presented using both percentages and raw numbers.

Guidance Counsellors' Concerns Regarding the Guidance Service in their Schools

In the survey, the respondents were asked three questions about any concerns or issues that they had regarding the guidance service in their schools over the course of the previous year. The questions dealt separately with the educational guidance elements of the service, the career guidance elements and the counselling element.

These three questionnaire items were open-ended and there was no limit to the amount of text that the respondents could provide. The results for each of these is now reported separately.

Guidance counsellors' concerns regarding the educational guidance service.

There were 271 responses to this question. These open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method with a view to examining emerging themes. The coding of the entries indicated 32 distinct themes under this heading; the main themes are given in Table K1.

Table K1

Concerns regarding educational guidance (n = 271)

Concern / Issue	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Study skills / exam preparation	59%	160
Subject choice	57%	155
Choosing subject levels / min entry requirements	12%	33
Time to provide educational guidance	7%	18
Transitions (incoming, Junior to Senior Cycle)	6%	16
Psychometric testing	6%	15
Students with special educational needs (SEN)	5%	13
School dropping subjects	4%	11
Motivating students	4%	11
Reduced provision of guidance to Junior Cycle students	4%	10

Guidance counsellors' concerns regarding the career guidance service.

There were 264 responses to this question. These open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method with a view to examining emerging themes. The coding revealed 32 different themes under this heading and the main themes are given in Table K2.

Table K2

Concerns regarding career guidance (n = 264)

Concern / Issue	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
College applications (CAO, UCAS, PLC)	84%	223
Career research decisions	27%	70
Special school programmes (LCVP, LCA, TY)	16%	41
Time to provide career guidance	13%	33
Issues related to third level access programmes	11%	30
Financial issues / Third Level Grants	7%	19
Not having time to do all aspects of the job	6%	16
The lack of non-academic progression opportunities	5%	14
Concerns regarding disadvantaged students	5%	12
Stress for the guidance counsellor	4%	11

Guidance counsellors' concerns regarding the counselling service.

There were 265 responses to this question. These open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method in order to explore emerging themes. The coding of the entries indicated 26 discrete themes. One of these themes was students' issues and this is treated separately as it contains a further 39 separate issues. The main concerns for guidance counsellors are given in Table K3.

Table K3

Concerns regarding counselling (n = 265)

Concern / Issue	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Lack of time for counselling	31%	81
Increased demand for counselling appointments	14%	36
Affective care suffered	14%	36
Little or no counselling done	9%	25
Stress for guidance counsellor	8%	20
Referral issues-waiting lists	7%	18
Crisis counselling	5%	14
Follow-up issues	3%	9
Delays in appointment	3%	9
Prioritising	3%	9

Guidance Counsellors' Perceptions of Students' Concerns

Some guidance counsellors interpreted Question 8 in terms of their students' main concerns; however this theme was also dealt with separately in a follow-on question (Question 9). The results for both of these questions are now presented separately.

Guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' concerns: from Q 8.

The 265 open-ended responses were coded thematically and Table K4 shows a summary of the main themes that emerged.

Table K4

Students' main concerns [perceived by guidance counsellors] (n = 265)

Concern / Issue	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Self-harm	28%	74
Suicide ideation	25%	66
Depression	23%	60
Bullying / Cyberbullying	21%	56
Stress (of which exam-related)	16% (5%)	42 (14)
Home / Family issues	15%	40
Anxiety/Panic	10%	26
Family dynamics / Family break-up	9%	24
Bereavement	9%	23
Financial worries	8%	21

Guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' concerns: from Q 9.

Guidance counsellors' perceptions of students main concerns and issues was specifically explored in a separate question where respondents were asked to consider their students main issues and concerns of during the school year 2012-13, based on the contact they had with them. There were 266 responses to this question. The open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method with a view to examining emerging themes. The coding of the entries indicated 38 distinct themes under this heading. The main themes are listed in Table K5, K6 and K7.

Table K5***Students' counselling-related concerns as perceived by guidance counsellors (n = 266)***

Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Family issues	31	Living in stress filled homes. [Respondent 269]
Financial issues	28	Undoubtedly financial worries of the senior students hoping to go to college and the difficulties that families in those circumstances has increased the number of students that I am seeing in relation to anxiety and stress. [Respondent 164]
Bullying / cyberbullying	24	Bullying - cyber & relational was big this year. [Respondent 258]
Self-harm	19	Self harm in younger students is huge this year, particularly in 2nd Year. [Respondent 234]
Depression	18	Depression amongst brighter students. [Respondent 16]
Emotional difficulties / disorders	18	Very high levels of anxiety - not able to cope with minor issues. [Respondent 28]
Stress	12	Stress again more than ever before. [Respondent 156]
Suicide ideation	12	Suicide has been a real concern with some students or their friends. [Respondent 21]
Self-esteem	10	V. Low self esteem issues across the board especially at Senior Cycle. [Respondent 26]
Mental health issues	9	Mental health (we had 5 mental health hospitalisations this year). [Respondent 198]
Alcohol Drugs	9	Alcohol/drug use in the home is another issue that I dealt with quite a lot this year. [Respondent 110]
Friends - Lack of Friends	9	Feelings of loneliness. [Respondent 149]
Bereavement - Loss	8	There is a lot around bereavement this year. [Respondent 256]
Eating Disorders - Body Image	5	Eating disorders becoming increasingly evident. [Respondent 128]
Relationship Issues	5	Interpersonal relationships. [Respondent 132]
Belonging - Peer Pressure	5	Feeling different and isolated. [Respondent 141]
Getting Access to 121	5	Each student in leaving cert year has only one guidance appointment in the year. Indeed one class has no guidance allocation at all. [Respondent 122]
Sex - Sexuality	4	Premature sexualised behaviour. [Respondent 43]
Abuse - Neglect - Domestic Violence	4	The school has had to make a few child protection reports this year as we had concerns about neglect. [Respondent 110]
Difficulties with Social Media	3	Dealing with the fallout from social media sites, i.e. bullying Issues that are happening outside of school and then being brought into the school. [Respondent 220]
Social interaction - Social skills	3	Many have serious problems making friends. [Respondent 96]
Transition Issues	3	1st Years settling into new school. [Respondent 102]
Gender Identity	2	Disclosing sexual orientation. [Respondent 149]
Fear for safety	2	Community/ neighbourhood social behaviour. [Respondent 177]
Pregnancy	2	Pregnancy [Respondent 175]
Health Issues	1	Lots of stress related stomach disorders. [Respondent 260]
Immigration - Racial Issues	1	Racism high. [Respondent 232]
Issues resulting from poor parenting	1	More and more evidence of poor parenting skills. [Respondent 106]

Table K6***Students' career-related concerns [perceived by guidance counsellors] (n = 266)***

Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Future employment prospects	18	I've had more students this year in careers meetings talk about where the jobs will be as opposed to what they would actually enjoy. [Respondent 15]
Career / course choice	18	A stronger pressure this year than ever before to make the right decision in terms of a course. I think this is down to societal pressure in these times and possibly financial pressure at home. [Respondent 156]
Cost of college / issues re. grant	11	Many will not go to college because of the lack of finance. [Respondent 205]
Getting a place in college / CAO points	11	Worried that they won't get the points for the courses they want. [Respondent 243]
Non College Options	3	Dearth of opportunities for the more average student, as jobs and apprenticeships dry up. [Respondent 225]

Table K7***Students' educational-related concerns [perceived by guidance counsellors] (n = 266)***

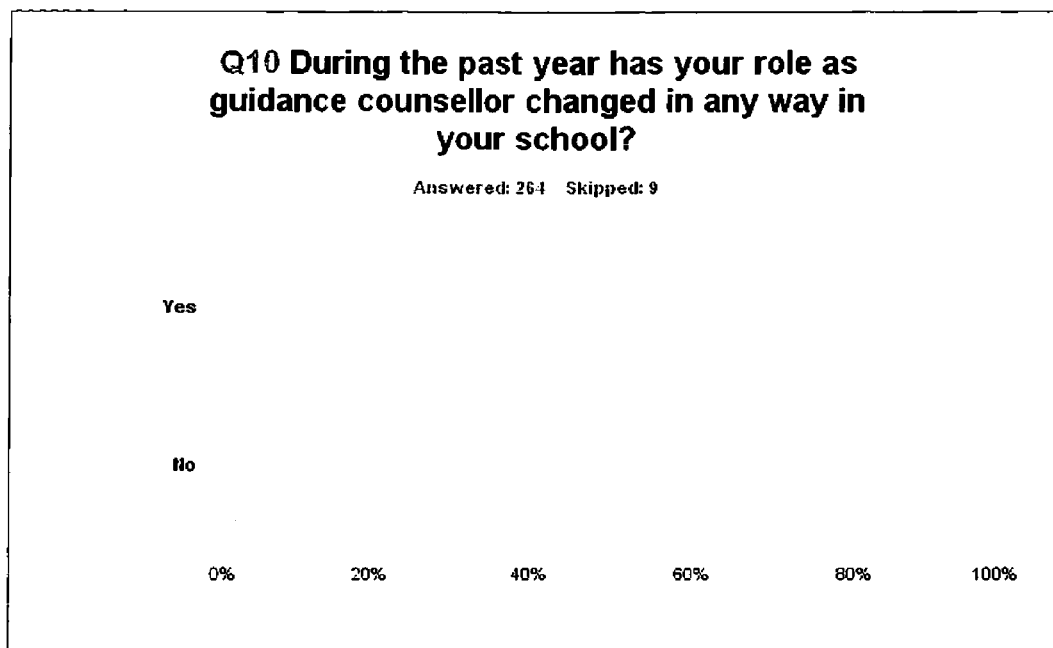
Concern / Issue	%	Illustrative Comment
Exam pressure	21	The anxiety associated with attaining the leaving certificate standards they want in order to pursue the college courses of their choice. [Respondent 219]
Studying Issues - Study skills	9	Coping with study issues and developing good study skills. [Respondent 153]
Motivation	7	Maintaining motivation for those students who would prefer to go directly into the world of work or apprenticeship training. Respondent 170]
Subject Choice	5	Problems with wrong subject choices in 5th yr. [Respondent 258]
Absences- Attendance	2	Some students are struggling to stay in school. [Respondent 257]

Change in Role

The guidance counsellors were asked if their role in school had changed in any way during the 2012-13 school year. There were two possible answers, yes or no. For those who answered yes, three further questions related to change were asked, while for those who answered no, these three questions were automatically skipped. A total of 264 responses were received to this question, these are presented in Figure 5.1.

Figure K1

Change in Role (n = 264)



The total number of guidance counsellors who said that their role had changed was 217. They were given the opportunity to provide more details of any changes in a follow-on question and all of these provided additional information (n = 217). These open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method to examine emerging themes. A summary of these themes is given in Table K8.

Table K8***How guidance counsellors' role changed in 2012-13 (n = 217)***

Concern / Issue	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Less time for guidance role	31%	68
Demand for counselling has increased	23%	49
Subject teaching has increased	22%	48
Others' expectations are the same or greater	12%	25
Less time for one-to-one appointments	12%	25
Reduced or little counselling being done	11%	24
Increased responsibilities	11%	24
Doing more class / group guidance	11%	23
Experiencing frustration and stress	8%	18
Busier than before	8%	17
Working in own time	7%	16
Quality and professionalism in question	6%	14
Dual teaching and guidance role difficult	6%	13
Feeling uninspired / demoralised	6%	13
Working in crisis management mode	5%	11

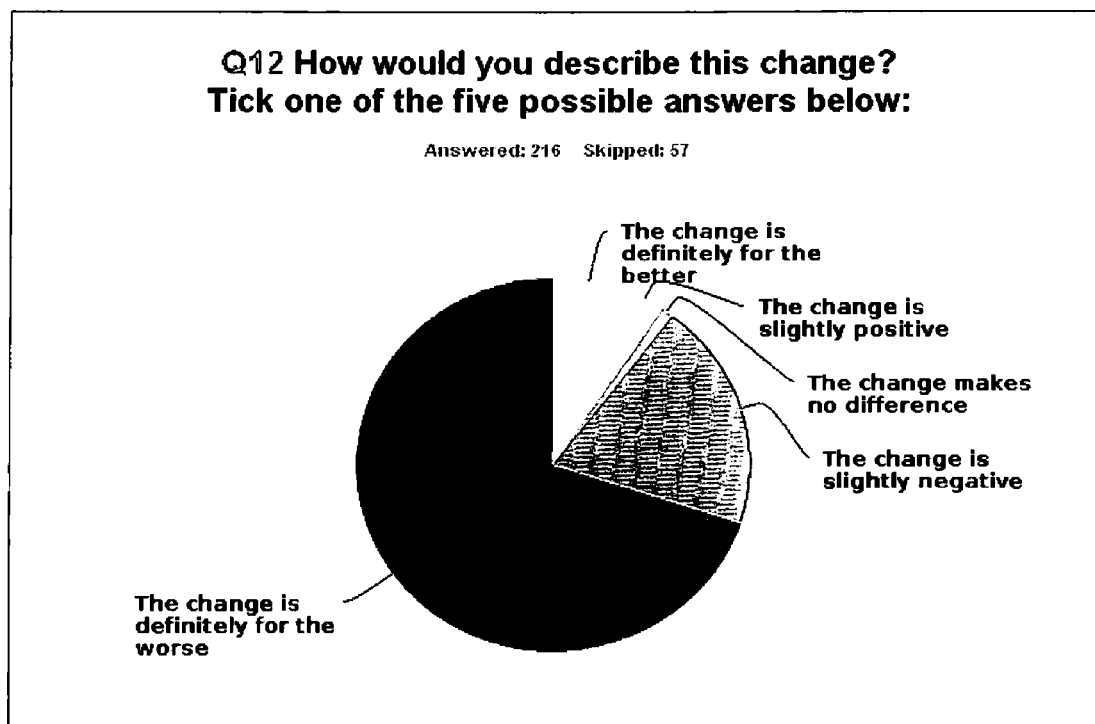
How the Guidance Role has Changed

The 217 guidance counsellors who stated that their role had changed were asked to describe the change in their role using a five point scale (definitely for the better; slightly positive; makes no difference; slightly negative; definitely for the worse).

A total of 216 responses were given. These are shown in Figure K2.

Figure K2

How guidance counsellors describe changes in role (n = 216)



Answer	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
The change is definitely for the better	6%	13
The change is slightly positive	3%	7
The change makes no difference	1%	2
The change is slightly negative	20%	43
The change is definitely for the worse	70%	151

In a follow-up question, they were asked to give a reason for their answer – “*Why do you describe the change in your role in this way?*” A total of 209 answers were given to this open-ended question. These responses were coded using the constant comparative method in order to examine the emerging themes. A total of 31 reasons that could be interpreted as negative emerged, while two positive reasons materialized. A summary of main negative reasons is given in Table K9, while the main positive reasons are given in Table K10.

Table K9*Why the changes in the role are viewed as negative (n = 209)*

Reasons given	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Affective care for students has diminished	32%	67
Extra stress and pressure for the guidance counsellor	26%	54
Less time available, yet more demands	18%	37
Dual role if difficult	11%	24
Feeling disillusioned, undermined or demoralised	11%	22
Quality and professionalism in question	9%	18
Some aspects of the job have been left out	8%	9
Same or greater expectations on the guidance counsellor	4%	8
Having to prioritise students	4%	7
Loss of one-to-one time	4%	7

Table K10*Why the changes in the role are viewed as positive (n = 209)*

Reasons given	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Things have improved	8%	18

Difference in Guidance Hours

Guidance counsellors were asked to specify if their guidance hours were any different during the 2012-13 school year, compared with previous years. They were offered a 7-point Likert-type scale to choose from (Table K11).

A total of 262 respondents answered this question, 67% of guidance counsellors had their guidance hours reduced; 6% had their hours increased, while the guidance hours remained the same for 27%. Of those whose hours were decreased, the biggest percentage (31%) had their hours reduced by 5 hours or more.

Table K11

Changes in guidance hours (n = 262)

Change in guidance hours (if any)	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Guidance hours increased by 5 or more	2.5%	6
Guidance hours increased by 3-4 hours	2.5%	6
Guidance hours increased by 1-2 hours	1%	3
Guidance hours remained the same	27%	71
Guidance hours reduced by 1-2 hours	14%	37
Guidance hours reduced by 3-4 hours	22%	58
Guidance hours reduced by 5 or more hours	31%	81

Changes in Day-to-Day Work Routine

Guidance counsellors were asked if there was there anything in their day-to-day work routine that they did differently in 2012-13 compared to previous years. They were offered two choices, Yes or No. A total of 262 respondents answered this question, 77% (201) said their day-to-day routine was different, while 23% (61) said that it was the same.

All respondents were then asked to elaborate on the answer they gave to this question, regardless of whether they answered Yes or No. A total of 217 of the 262 guidance counsellors chose to do so. Their open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method with a view to examining emerging themes. The coding of the entries indicated 36 distinct changes, 30 negative and 6 positive. The top ten negative changes are given in Table K12, while the 6 positive changes are all listed in Table K13.

Negative changes.

Table K12

Negative changes to day-to-day work routine (n= 217)

Changes to day-to-day work routine	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
More class contact and group work	17%	39
Working in own time	17%	39
Less one-to-one appointments	16%	38
Stopped doing / doing less of certain things	16%	37
Less affective care of students	15%	34
Less time	9%	21
Reduced or no Junior Cycle guidance	7%	17
Increased stress for guidance counsellor	7%	16
Prioritising more	6%	14
Busier	5%	11

Positive changes.

Table K13

Positive changes to day-to-day work routine (n = 217)

Changes to day-to-day work routine	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
New, improved or additional changes	15%	34
More efficient	9%	20
Reorganising	5%	11
More delegating, sharing workload	3%	6
More outside referrals	2%	5

Final Comments from Guidance Counsellors

This last question was asked in an effort to capture any thoughts, experiences or perceptions that were not captured with the earlier questions. It was a completely open-ended question which simply asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their experience of working as a guidance counsellor from September 2012 to May 2013. A total of 234 (86%) guidance counsellors chose to leave comments. These open-ended responses were coded using the constant comparative method with a view to examining emerging themes. The coding of the entries indicated 26 distinct themes and the main themes are given in Table K14.

Table K14***Final comments from guidance counsellors (n = 234)***

Final comments	Valid Percentage	Actual Number
Increased stress for guidance counsellor	55%	129
Affective care for students diminished	16%	37
Guidance counsellors experiencing disillusionment	15%	36
I still love my job but ...	14%	32
Greater demands, increased student needs	12%	29
No change or positive change	10%	23
Reduced time	9%	22
Issues of quality and professionalism	7%	16
Same or greater expectations of me	6%	14
Feelings of anger	6%	14
Dual role as teacher and guidance counsellor is difficult	6%	13
Other staff	5%	12
Good support from counselling supervision	5%	11
Working in my own time	4%	10
Feelings of fear	3%	8

APPENDIX L: School Types

There are several distinctions that can be made about second-level school types in Ireland:

- schools in the Free Education Scheme (FES) v. fee-charging schools
- DEIS schools v. non-DEIS schools;
- historical school types, such as:
 - Voluntary Secondary Schools
 - Community and Comprehensive schools
 - VEC schools owned and managed by Vocational Educational Committees (now Education and Training Boards):
 - Vocational Schools
 - Community Colleges

Schools in the Free Education Scheme

The term “Free Education” refers back to when the then Minister for Education, Donogh O’Malley brought about the removal of charges to students for tuition in the majority of schools in 1967. This became known as the “Free Education Scheme” (FES). Until that point, all students paid fees, except in the limited cases where scholarships were available.

The FES involved additional exchequer funding for schools in return for the school ceasing to charge fees. This brought about a situation where charges by schools did not act as a barrier to entry. Schools entering the FES could not impose payments on students as a condition of enrolment or continued attendance.

From the outset a number of voluntary secondary schools chose to remain outside the FES and therefore retained the entitlement to charge fees. The Department effectively granted each of those schools a licence to continue to charge fees, to determine the level of fee and to make admission to the school contingent on payment. At the time the online survey was completed, there were 668 schools in the FES (DES, 2013b).

Fee-Charging Schools

These are schools which charge fees, these are called fee-paying or more accurately fee-charging schools, these are in the minority and there were only 55 such schools in the country at the time the online survey was completed (now 54). Teacher salaries are paid in these schools but they do not receive grants for capital expenditure from the Government, instead they have the capacity to raise and control their own capital spending through mandatory fees. “The fees charged are mandatory in that initial admission to the fee charging school or ongoing participation is contingent on payment of the fees” (DES, 2013b, p. 6) . The number of schools “permitted to charge fees represents 7.6% of the 723 post primary level

schools and they cater for 7.1% of the total enrolment” (DES, 2013b, p.

5). Fee charging schools are often referred to as “private” schools.

However, under the Education Act 1998, they are recognised schools and are more correctly titled “private state aided schools”.

DEIS Schools

These are schools in the FES which have been designated with disadvantaged status and are part of the DEIS programme (DES, 2005b), where they receive supplementary resources. There are 200 schools at second level with ‘DEIS status’. The remainder of schools are termed ‘non-DEIS’ in this study.

Another distinction in school types in Ireland is as a result of historical developments in the administrative and ownership structures of second-level schools.

Voluntary Secondary Schools

Voluntary Secondary Schools are mostly owned and managed by religious bodies, the term ‘voluntary’ refers to the fact that these schools were set up by “the voluntary efforts of the bodies concerned” (p.6). Many of these are single sex schools and use selective entry, they have a strong focus on academic subjects, a higher transfer to third level education than other school types and their intake has a higher socio-economic status than other schools.

Vocational Schools

Vocational Schools were established under the Vocational Education Act, 1930 to provide vocational and technical education. They have a more practical than academic focus than voluntary secondary schools.

Ownership and management is vested in the Education and Training Boards (formerly the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs).

Traditionally, the transfer rate to third level was lower for Vocational Schools than for Secondary Schools (Clancy, 1988). Vocational Schools have tended to have a higher proportion of pupils from lower socio-economic groups than all other types of second-level school (Breen, 1986).

Comprehensive Schools

Comprehensive Schools were set up in the 1960s, they offer a practical and academic curriculum. They are only 16 of these schools in the country, they are all denominational, run either by Catholic (11) or Protestant (5) management.

Community Schools

Community Schools were first set up in the early 1970s, and they have a similar comprehensive philosophy to Comprehensive Schools. They offer a wide range of both practical and academic subjects. They are partly denominational, with some members of the Boards of Management appointed by religious bodies. In educational research, they are usually categorized in the same grouping as Comprehensive Schools.

Community Colleges

Community Colleges are under the control and management of the Education and Training Boards (formerly Vocational Educational Committees). They were set up as a VEC response to the development of Community Schools. They have a wider curriculum than either secondary or vocational schools and offer a range of academic and practical subjects. They have a non-selective intake. In educational research, they are usually categorized in the same grouping as Vocational Schools.

APPENDIX M

ONLINE SURVEY DATA

The raw data were contained in a CD which was presented with the thesis to the external and internal examiner. They were saved in a .pdf file which required Adobe Reader or similar to open the file and read it. The file comprised 102 pages in total.

Under the terms of the confidentiality and anonymity agreement entered into with the survey participants, the above file is not provided here due to a request from several survey participants that they would not be identified in any way. As some of the details provided could lead to identification, the raw data is not presented in copies of the thesis available for public consultation.

Appendix N

Reasons for choosing individual interviews over focus groups.

Table N.1

Reasons for choosing individual interviews over focus groups.

Reason	Details
Richer, deeper, data than focus groups.	Interviews are more likely to produce in-depth, detailed, rich data.
	They allow the researcher to enter participants' experiences and perspectives, to form an understanding of them and generate their own interpretations.
	Open-ended interviews add depth, detail and meaning at a very personal level of experience.
	They are appropriate when trying to identify detailed perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes.
Participants feel more comfortable giving sensitive, personal data in interviews than in focus groups.	Interviews allow more data to be collected per participant than a focus group would allow.
	Participants will almost always feel far more comfortable talking openly, honestly and in-depth about issues in a one-to-one setting than in a focus group. This typically leads to richer and deeper data being collected.
Useful for achieving representativeness	It is difficult for participants to share their real feelings towards some sensitive topics publicly in a focus group.
	One-to-one interviews offer the possibility of achieving representativeness efficiently, whereas with focus groups one can never be fully sure who is going to turn up on the day.
Pragmatic reasons.	Interviews are less costly and can be less time intensive than focus group research.
	Recruiting and scheduling are typically easier.
	The individual interview is easier for the researcher to control than a focus group in which participants may take the initiative.

APPENDIX O:

Phase Two of Research: Transcript of Interview Questions

Transcript of structured interview questions.

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview which follows-on from your participation in the online survey last May. The purpose of this follow-on interview is to provide some greater detail to some of the findings from Phase One of the research which was the online survey you participated in last May.

I would like to start with some questions about your consent; I will then check demographic details for your school, and then proceed with the interview.

Questions about your consent.

1. Do you give your permission for this interview to be recorded and transcribed?
2. Do you consent for me to possibly use some of your comments in my thesis?
3. Do you understand that neither you nor your school will be identified in the research and that all recordings will be destroyed once the degree has been awarded?
4. Are you happy to continue with the interview, or would you like to withdraw from the process?

I will now turn on the recorder.

Questions about school demographics.

Before we begin, I would like to check some demographic information about your school and its catchment area:

1. Regarding your school's catchment area, is it **urban, rural or mixed?**
2. Regarding the socio-economic profile of the students in your school, is it **mostly middle class, mostly working class or mixed?**
3. Is your school type: **Voluntary Secondary, ETB Voc School or Community College, Community School / Comprehensive School?**
4. Is your school **fee-charging** or in the **Free Education Scheme?**
5. Is your school a **DEIS** school or a **non-DEIS** school?

The interview questions related to the Research Question One come first and these are followed by interview questions related to Research Question Two.

Interview Questions linked with Research Question One:

'What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?

1. Questions about possible changes in the guidance service.

1(a) Did the guidance service in your school change in any way during 2012-13, as a result of the guidance allocation changing?

1(b) What were the main changes that happened?

1(c) Using the following rating scale, *Very Positive*, *Positive*, *Negative*, *Very Negative*, how do you feel now in November /December 2013 about these changes?

2. Questions about differences between school types.

The survey results showed that there were differences between school types with regard to how the guidance hours were reduced/increased/stayed the same. I am now going to ask your reaction to some of these findings:

2(a) One of the findings was that guidance hours were reduced more in non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools than in other school types?

(Source: Table 5.4) Why do you think this was?

2(b) One of the findings was that 78% of schools in the Free Education System reduced their guidance hours, compared with 50% of fee-paying schools? (Source Table 5.15) Why do you think this was?

2(c) Another finding showed that there were no differences between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools. (Source Table 5.8 / 5.9 / 5.10) Why do you think this was?

2(d) Are you surprised by any of these findings?

2(e) What surprises you?

Interview Questions linked with Research Question Two:

‘What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in schools?’

3. Questions related to counselling and affective care of students.

3(a) The survey found that counselling and student care was the area of guidance counsellors’ work that was most affected by the cutbacks during 2012-13. What is your reaction to this finding?

3(b) How were student care needs met in your school last year?

3(c) One finding was that some schools and principals prioritised maintaining the career guidance service, to the detriment of the counselling element. Was this the case in your school? Please explain.

3(d) How would you describe your counselling work in 2012-13, as being mostly preventative or as being mostly reactive? Please explain.

3(e) An issue for some guidance counsellors was not having enough time in 2012-13, how did you manage your time?

3(f) What aspects of your work always made it to the top of your priority list?

3(g) What aspects of your work were usually left at the bottom of your to do list?

3(h) One guidance counsellor commented that certain students were losing out. Is this statement true for your school? If yes, were there any particular types of student who were losing out?

3(i) Were there any particular year groups losing out?

4. Questions related to quality and professionalism.

4(a) The survey found that the guidance cutbacks impacted on the quality and professionalism of the counselling service provided in some schools last year. Is this finding true in the case of your school? If yes, was there anything in particular that gave you cause for concern?

4(b) Did you teach any non-guidance classes in 2012-13?

4(c) If yes, how did you find working in both a teaching and a counsellor role?

4(d) Looking back on the year 2012-13, did the changes in guidance affect you personally in any way? If yes, how were you affected?

5. Questions related to guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' concerns.

5(a) Some guidance counsellors commented on an increase in demand from students for counselling in 2012-13. Was this the case in your school?

5(b) If yes, was this increased demand due solely to reduced guidance hours or could there be any other explanation?

5(c) With regard to the type of worry or concern your students brought to your attention during the year, most guidance counsellors reported that these concerns were mostly of a counselling nature. What is your reaction to this finding?

5(d) Some guidance counsellors said that the types of counselling concerns and issues being presented by students were different last year from previous years, what was your experience?

6. Any other comments?

6(a) Have you anything else you would like to say about your experience of guidance in school last year?

6(b) How does this year so far compare with last year?

End of questions.

Thank you for participating. In the interests of anonymity, I am going to save this recording under one of the following fictitious names, all derived from nature, and any of your comments that are used in the thesis will refer to this name. I am going to let you choose your pseudonym from this list, so that if reading this research in the future, you will be able to recognise your own contribution.

Male Names: Basil, *Glen*, Rowan.

Female Names: Hazel, Heather, Holly, *Iris*, Jasmine, Lily, Olive, Poppy, Rose, Rosemary, Violet.

The names in italics were not chosen.

APPENDIX P:

Record of Interviews

Table P1 Provides details on the dates and times of each individual interview, followed by the length of each interview in minutes and seconds. The information is listed in order of interview date.

The first eight interviewees were volunteers from phase one. The final four interviewees (in italics) were a purposive sub-sample.

Table P1

Interview Participants and Interview Details

Pseudonym	Date	Time	Interview Length
Poppy	25.11.2013	4.15pm	24' 10"
Holly	26.11.2013	7.30pm	20' 22"
Jasmine	27.11.2013	2.45pm	19' 12"
Basil	27.11.2013	4.00pm	24' 34"
Hazel	02.12.2013	8.30pm	20' 18"
Heather	05.12.2013	4.00pm	21' 41"
Lily	05.12.2013	4.20pm	21' 17"
Rose	05.12.2013	7.30pm	14' 00"
<i>Olive</i>	<i>10.12.2013</i>	<i>7.00pm</i>	<i>18' 41"</i>
<i>Rowan</i>	<i>10.12.2013</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>17' 23"</i>
<i>Rosemary</i>	<i>18.12.2013</i>	<i>8.45am</i>	<i>27' 46"</i>
<i>Violet</i>	<i>19.12.2013</i>	<i>9.10am</i>	<i>25' 56"</i>
Average Interview Length			20' 26"

APPENDIX Q:

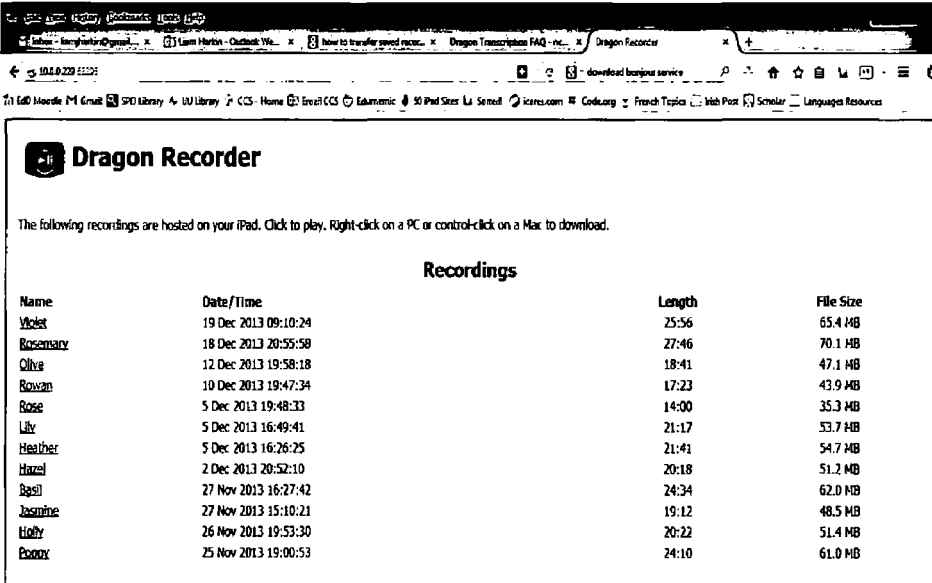
Phase Two: Interview Raw Data

A transcript of the raw interview data in MS Word is provided here in this Appendix, minus the demographic information about each participant and his/her school.

Originally, the raw data were also provided for the examiners in two other formats:

1. An MS Excel spreadsheet (on CD 1).
2. Recordings of the twelve interviews in .wav format (CD 2).

However, under the terms of the Ethical Agreement entered into with the interview participants, any information which would identify interview participants had to be destroyed by Autumn 2015. Therefore neither CD accompanies this copy of the thesis.



The screenshot shows the Dragon Recorder application interface. At the top, there's a header with the Dragon Recorder logo and a message: "The following recordings are hosted on your iPad. Click to play. Right-click on a PC or control-click on a Mac to download." Below this is a table titled "Recordings" with four columns: Name, Date/Time, Length, and File Size. The table lists 12 recordings with names like Violet, Rosemary, Olive, Royan, Rose, Lily, Heather, Hazel, Basil, Jasmine, Holly, and Poony, along with their respective dates, times, lengths, and file sizes.

Name	Date/Time	Length	File Size
Violet	19 Dec 2013 09:10:24	25:56	65.4 MB
Rosemary	18 Dec 2013 20:55:58	27:46	70.1 MB
Olive	12 Dec 2013 19:58:18	18:41	47.1 MB
Royan	10 Dec 2013 19:47:34	17:23	43.9 MB
Rose	5 Dec 2013 19:48:33	14:00	35.3 MB
Lily	5 Dec 2013 16:49:41	21:17	53.7 MB
Heather	5 Dec 2013 16:26:25	21:41	54.7 MB
Hazel	2 Dec 2013 20:52:10	20:18	51.2 MB
Basil	27 Nov 2013 16:27:42	24:34	62.0 MB
Jasmine	27 Nov 2013 15:10:21	19:12	48.5 MB
Holly	26 Nov 2013 19:53:30	20:22	51.4 MB
Poony	25 Nov 2013 19:00:53	24:10	61.0 MB

APPENDIX Q:

Interview Data

The demographic details obtained at the beginning of each interview are not provided here so in order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees.

1. Interview Questions linked with Research Question One:

'What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had across different school types?

1(a) Did the guidance service in your school change in any way during 2012-13, as a result of the guidance allocation changing?

Poppy	Yes
Holly	Yes
Jasmine	Yes
Hazel	Not so much last year, but they have changed since September this year
Basil	Yeah, it did, yeah. I ended up getting more classes, more subject teaching classes.
Heather	Yes
Lily	No
Rose	Yes
Rowan	No
Olive	Yes
Violet	It didn't really in a sense, but I have to bear in mind that I never really got what was due under DEIS, and our numbers went up. So when we went into DEIS first, there were 440 students in the school, now there are over 540 right and I am still one guidance counsellor and I am really getting a non-DEIS quota you know what I mean.
Rosemary	Yes

1(b) What were the main changes that happened?

Poppy	More in the classroom. More demands. Partly the allocation is the problem and we have had a huge amount of changes, you know new principal, new deputy principal. I did have extra classes, yes.
Holly	There was a very slight loss of time in our school, now I personally didn't lose time but there is another guidance counsellor who would have lost a little bit of time, and I suppose there would have been SPHE classes that would have been put into our timetable. A little bit of increased teaching time yeah, a small bit.
Jasmine	In the school we were entitled to 47 hours guidance, so that's two full-time guidance counsellors plus another who had 3 hours that was given I think when Mary Hanafin was Minister for Education and it was targeted at Junior Cycle students. This was what we had and what happened then was last year those three hours were gone straight away and then myself and the other guidance counsellor were put on approximately 7 hours of teaching our original subjects. So we moved from having 47 hours of guidance to having about 30 hours of guidance.
Hazel	If the hours are cut, then the service is less and we have less time for one-to-one counselling and we have less time to talk even with the senior students, we do very little; we do hardly anything at all with the Junior Students.

Heather	It changed in that there was full-time guidance and an extra six hours, and the six hours then was cut, that person was gone. I suppose I still had the same number of class contact hours and I had to deal with more students, em do you know before the other person would have maybe done 2 of the sixth year classes and I would have done three, em, so yeah it had to be streamlined more to make it as efficient as possible
Lily	In fact actually it increased, in the number of hours given to guidance and counselling related items actually increased.
Rose	Well I used to always have a timetabled class where I would sit down with the principal and we would have weekly meetings, so that's gone. And there is another one to one appointment class that I would have lost out on. It's a very small school anyway.
Rowan	No.
Olive	The main change as far as I was concerned was that SPHE was put on my timetable, roughly five to five and a half hours of SPHE. The only other change was that Transition Year guidance used to be done on a rotation basis, where as this time each transition year group got a weekly timetabled guidance class, so there were extra classes for guidance.
Violet	
Rosemary	Prior to the cutbacks there was one full-time guidance counsellor, one person coming in two mornings a week and another person coming in at least two mornings a week. That third person disappeared, in the sense that they were then coming in, gosh I can't remember it was something like 10 hours per term, or was it even 6 hours per term, it was very small anyway - sorry it was I think 6 days per term, whereas they would have been coming in you know, two mornings and in the previous year it would have been at least one day if not two days per week.

1(c) Using the following rating scale, *Very Positive, Positive, Negative, Very Negative*, how do you feel now in November /December 2013 about these changes?

Poppy	Oh, well I'd be negative about them. Not totally negative, not awfully negative.
Holly	I suppose they are negative really.
Jasmine	Negative.
Hazel	Negative
Basil	Very negative
Heather	It would be between positive, do you know and negative. It was stressful, it was a very stressful year, it was a good year but it was stressful.
Lily	Very positive.
Rose	Negative
Rowan	n/a
Olive	Very negative
Violet	Somewhere between negative and positive, because it is just very hard-pressed with an awful lot of things falling on my plate.
Rosemary	Well they certainly weren't positive. Negative. I would say that there was a marked impact.

2. Questions about differences between school types.

The survey results showed that there were differences between school types with regard to how the guidance hours were reduced/increased/stayed the same. I am now going to ask your reaction to some of these findings:

2(a) One of the findings was that guidance hours were reduced more in non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools than in other school types? (Source: Table 5.4) Why do you think this was?

Poppy	Goodness, I'm surprised at that. I am amazed at that in fact. I'm amazed, I actually would have thought that it would have been the other way round. Is that in ways because school managements at secondary thought that parents would bring them to private appointments. I don't know. It's very interesting ... I wouldn't even have a start of an explanation for it.
Holly	Em, God, I'm not really sure. I kinda nearly look at it more as a management thing, you know, from school to school. I don't really that any reason for it being more in one school than another, you know the different types of school.
Jasmine	Well I gave my thoughts and was nearly shot at a Branch Meeting and my thoughts remain the same and that is I feel having worked in Voluntary Secondary Schools prior to coming here that they have access to funding from religious congregations and organisations and they are paying guidance counsellors privately out of that funding. And I know it to be the case in the school where I was a guidance counsellor prior to coming to work as a guidance counsellor here. That's why I think it to be the case and I know it to be the case for sure.
Hazel	Ahm, I never even gave much thought to what was happening in the private schools, but I am assuming they can pay staff themselves, but I don't know for certain. Unless there is DEIS money, I mean if they are anything to do with the VECs, they certainly will have, I'm quite sure they have different methods of arranging their staffing, they may have funds from other sources and they may ... I am only guessing, I have no idea. That's just my perception.
Basil	Mmm, yeah, I presume with the fee-paying schools, I would imagine because of the parental concern and the parental push for those that the school would be quite slow to affect it's guidance service for them, that would be my suspicion and also I think they would have a bit of a financial buffer, possibly to absorb some of the effect of the cuts more so than the voluntary. Probably the ones hardest hit are the voluntary secondary schools, the non-fee-paying ones.
Heather	Ah, lots of things running through my head, the first one would be depending on how much the principal was into guidance or supported it I suppose; how academic the school was maybe?
Lily	I think the number of students in the classroom is one factor, the student-teacher ratio. I think the priority, the number of hours that those schools might have had would probably have been greater than perhaps schools in some of the other sectors, I suppose that would be my impression, without having any solid data to support that, but that's my impression and therefore principals felt that they had a little bit more room to trim than perhaps in the other sectors.
Rose	Well I think the VECs are more autonomous, so they can kind of, I think they can kind of decide what to do with the allocation that they have, I think, you know, so they're not as restricted, so there seems to be that little bit more leeway, you know if principals seek more hours they seem to be able to find them somewhere.

Rowan	Of the top of my head with my limited knowledge of those sectors, I presume they have funding, is the capitation grant bigger in the communities than in the voluntaries? So I presume there are less resources available.
Olive	Well, again from my perception of things is that the private schools tried to maintain the service they had been providing prior to that, their allocation was so low anyway that it didn't make any huge demand on their resources and they were always providing their guidance out of their own provision as they provided for other things. Em yeah I would agree ok that the provision did suffer hugely as it was now under the general allocation, and sometimes it suffered even when schools genuinely wanted to make guidance provision, but they had other demands, conflicting demands and in other cases it was a case of principals and I have heard this from principals' conferences, particularly on behalf of the JMB, of that particular year where principals left that the guidance counsellor was some kind of a loose cannon that they couldn't control or that they couldn't rule or rope in and that they wanted the guidance allocation taken into the general allocation so that they could dictate as to what guidance was and who delivered it and how it was delivered.
Violet	Well it certainly wouldn't be that they wouldn't need it as much as you know the latter. Would it be to do with less learning support kids in the school, or maybe is it people getting back up privately or, I really don't know? Or are they trying not to lose some subjects like physics or German or some of these subjects that less people take? I think that might be the reason, you know, I don't know, it might be one of the reasons.
Rosemary	I could be incorrect, but I think the funding from the Department is better in the community sector than it is in the voluntary sector, I think there was less cash, that would be one. Secondly the cutback meant that principals had a choice of either cutting a subject - remember they lost posts of responsibility, they also lost teachers, so they were pulling the guidance counsellor into the classroom to teach an academic subject and so you were getting a bigger chop then of the guidance and counselling function in schools.

2(b) One of the findings was that 78% of schools in the Free Education System reduced their guidance hours, compared with 50% of fee-paying schools? (Source Table 5.15) Why do you think this was?

Poppy	Why? Well I would say that fee-paying schools would see having a guidance counsellor available was, as you know a plus, something that they could sell to their parents if you know what I mean. Yeah I mean ... or that they had the means to employ and they made a decision to keep supports in place.
Holly	I suppose in the fee-paying schools there would be a very high value, you know, it would be seen obviously as very important, I mean you know in our own school it is valued. I suppose that's just the way I feel, it's a management thing and the value that management puts on it really. I suppose I am thinking that if you are paying fees, its one of the things that people would see, people who are very well educated would see it as being a very important thing, and it would be in high demand and you know it probably is a service that needs to be offered if people are paying fees. So I suppose it would be a draw for students, you know a good guidance service ... it would be for the fee-paying colleges.
Jasmine	Probably the same thing, they have alternative sources of funding and they can prop it up with their fees, the fees that they charge students so that the guidance that students get wouldn't have been as severely affected.
Hazel	Well the parents perceptions probably in the fee-paying schools but they might not want that to happen. Just the schools themselves must have some money I am assuming they built up some funds during the good years as well, when the numbers attending the schools would have been higher and their intake would be higher, fees-intake I suppose, or maybe they have reserves.

	That would be like sort of, how would you put it, my gut feelings and instincts like you know, the hardest caught ones are the voluntary ones, the other ones under the vocational schools can possibly juggle hours around someway or other and then for the fee-paying ones, you know they have the financial buffer, but they also have the drive from the parents, from the clientele if you like that they have. They just can't neglect the guidance service.
Basil	
	I suppose well there was more money in the fee-paying ones to pay somebody, em, would be one, em, I suppose also the parental involvement in fee-paying schools would influence, that they're paying for all, so everything needed to be included, now why I am saying that is that in my case I kind of felt that parents didn't realise what was going on.
Heather	
	Because parents and students indeed who go to ... who send their sons and daughters to fee-paying schools have ... they expect a level of service, and that service is based around progression into third level, and career guidance, teacher-counsellor - whatever the word is used in individual schools is seen as an integral part of getting their sons or daughters into the right course and into the right college.
Lily	
	Well I suppose there's more demand in the fee-paying schools for the service, so do you know, it's money for the school so they're not going to hit where it hurts I suppose for parents.
Rose	
	Access to fees basically. Effectively we were hit, but we just juggled the money and paid someone to do something, so I didn't have to do it.
Rowan	
	I'm not surprised, you know, you can get more services if you are willing to pay for them and obviously, ironically enough, the fee-paying sector see the need and the necessity for guidance, even amongst some of the most well-resourced and privileged children where as the public sector did not. Or again, interests competing with timetabled subjects and exam subjects that they didn't want to let go of, then they reduced the guidance allocation.
Olive	
	Yeah because I would think that fee-paying schools, really, it's a huge huge seller for them, it's due to parent power, right. They would feel, they would really really demand that their kids get the best. Ah you know, because I know, just, having spoken to a few guidance counsellors in those schools, they know that the school down the road is supplying ... its ... they're competing with that, they know that they want the best for their children, and an awful lot of money from Ruairi Quinn has gone into learning support, right, but guidance counsellors deal with all, you know with the average and with the high achievers as well, and parents really really want that guidance for their children. So they know, these good schools know that they will lose children if they can't have an excellent guidance and counselling service. So really it's disadvantaging the weak children. And just to even say a bit more on that Liam, our Minister tends to ... I would question his vision at the moment cos he's given another 400 towards ... so much towards learning support ... but what people tend to forget is that the learning support lands with the guidance counsellor as well, because we are giving those children a future, so if he had any vision, he would see the importance of what we're doing, you know and I mean at the end of the day it'll come back to us, not only from a counselling point of view, but helping those children getting into courses and liaising with services, etc., etc.
Violet	
	Fee-paying schools have far more discretion about allocating their resources, they would have more money basically and some of them, if they wished, they would have built perhaps up a fund over the years you know, that they could pull down capital if they wanted to.
Rosemary	

2(c) Another finding showed that there were no differences between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools. (Source Table 5.8 / 5.9 / 5.10) Why do you think this was?

Poppy	There wasn't? I don't know.
Holly	I suppose, although we are non-DEIS, I suppose, maybe ... again my personal opinion that it is down to a management thing that it just depends on their opinion and their value on guidance you know. I can't think of any other reason why, you know there's no difference. I suppose DEIS schools you would think there would be a greater need for counselling, that might be the view, but then I would see in our own school which isn't DEIS that the need is growing, growing all the time. So, other than management I can't really come up with any other reason for it you know.
Jasmine	I think that's , I think that doesn't surprise me.
Hazel	OK, right! Well schools don't have teachers surplus to requirements any more, there was a time when you could retain extra teachers in your school, but I don't think you can do that anymore now. The redeployment would have meant that there are no over-quota teachers in any school. So they're all pared back anyway.
Basil	Yeah, that is surprising all right, I would have thought you know the DEIS schools would have been less affected by it but I think there were other cutbacks, there were cutbacks to various other support hours along with the guidance counsellors which probably had a how would you put it a bigger effect on the DEIS school than it did on the non-DEIS schools. That would be my impression now with that.
Heather	I am not that familiar with the DEIS schools.
Lily	I suppose I am a little bit surprised by that because I would have expected DEIS schools would have reduced further, because if you look at statistics, and I have worked in DEIS schools myself, and if you look at statistics in terms of progression, in terms of how DEIS schools can promote the service, progression is often used and DEIS schools often don't have that record of progression.
Rose	
Rowan	The funding is more in DEIS isn't it? It may not be founded, but at the top of my head, the guidance service in the DEIS schools was needed more than in the other schools and the principals spent further or juggled his hours further to keep the guidance, because it was more necessary, let's put it that way , if that makes sense to you.
Olive	Well, originally the Minister maintained that DEIS schools preserved their allocation, whereas in actual fact, it was explained to me one day, and it was quite complicated, in actual fact, the DEIS schools did not maintain anything, over and above the non-DEIS sector. So that's why the cuts were the same. So it was just a fallacy, whatever way the Minister gave the impression that DEIS schools maintained a better pupil-teacher ratio. In actual fact they didn't, plus it was the pupil-teacher ratio that they maintained, not a guidance allocation.
Violet	There was no difference between DEIS and non-DEIS! And you mean all non-DEIS schools? ... I can't understand that. It actually doesn't make sense to what was said earlier on as well. No, it just doesn't make sense ... I mean. I just can't ... I mean there's lies, damned lies and statistics, so I dunno ... I'm wondering if there's selective omission. I would really question a lot of things as to how they are extracting data.
Rosemary	It would seem to suggest, and it's only a hazard, that the function of guidance counselling wasn't particularly highly regarded, and therefore that if they had to make a choice, it wasn't protected.

2(d) Are you surprised by any of these findings?

Poppy	
Holly	
Jasmine	That would be my experience also.
Hazel	
Basil	
Heather	
Lily	I am surprised that that was the finding, I would have expected it to be a little bit the other way around.
Rose	I would be because the Minister is constantly saying that they've retained what they've given to DEIS schools so I am surprised.
Rowan	
Olive	
Violet	Yeah.
Rosemary	That surprises me yes.

2(e) What surprises you?

Poppy	
Holly	
Jasmine	We have a very good pastoral system in the school and we have a system of year heads and pastoral care meetings, we also have a student support team and our chaplain would have taken over some of the responsibility that the guidance counsellors would have previously had and so, we have two deputy principals because the school is so large, and one of them, her responsibility is kind of pastoral care/ discipline and she ended up taking on a lot of extra work as well.
Hazel	
Basil	
Heather	
Lily	And the only other possibility is that DEIS schools often have a significant number of, not always, but I suppose this is a generalisation, they may have students who have behavioural or emotional or social issues and sometimes the guidance counsellor acts as a gatekeeper in the classroom, particularly in schools that might have NBSS supported services, sometimes the guidance counsellor is a integral part of that and they were typically only in DEIS schools
Rose	
Rowan	
Olive	
Violet	
Rosemary	

Interview Questions linked with Research Question Two:

‘What impact has the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation had on affective care in schools?’

3. Questions related to counselling and affective care of students.

3(a). The survey found that counselling and student care was the area of guidance counsellors’ work that was most affected by the cutbacks during 2012-13. What is your reaction to this finding?

Poppy	Yes, I mean you know, I feel ... and it's not just me being busier, other people have been really busy as well, you know, year leaders, everybody just seems to be so much busier. And really we're dealing with immediate problems, we're less, we're finding less time to do preventative stuff you know, and you seem to be limping from one situation to , you know .. and rushing out the door to go to class , and leaving a student with a cuppa because there's no one to actually deal with them, because there's already someone in your office and the chaplain is in with somebody else, you know.
Holly	Personally, I would just, it just depends, I mean, I think counselling at times takes priority, and I think you just as a guidance counsellor, you just work the extra hours then if there's a great need at a certain time for the counselling, you take that as priority, that's the way I kinda would do it myself and then you just work your free classes to fit in the careers cos that also there's times when there's a necessity for that but then there's times you know the appointment isn't urgent and it can be put off to another time and then there's times you just work the whole time, you work through your free classes to make sure that it is done but I ...
Jasmine	Yes. Well we have timetabled periods of guidance with Fourth Years and Fifth Years, and they've always had them and they weren't reduced even though our actual guidance time was reduced, it was one of the things that wasn't affected, so we still take all Fifth Years for one period a week and all TYs for one period a week as well.
Hazel	Well, I would certainly agree with it because if we don't have the time we can't fit them in either. The other thing with counselling is if we have a class off and then you're back in the class again, it's very difficult to ask someone into the room because ... or kids who are found on the corridor and they're in distress, you can't just decide not to go to class. So it's they way timetables are scheduled too I suppose, plus the complete lack of time to do it.
Basil	Yeah, that would ... I reckon that would be the way I would envisage the cutbacks would take effect. I suppose the primary role, the careers role, the guidance role, that is more or less what you are hired for in the school and then the counselling role comes in almost as a secondary role after that, so I would reckon that if it's a question of cutting back on time or resources ...
Heather	I suppose in some ways it doesn't surprise me, em, yeah I have had a few occasions myself when I was in class, when do you know, I've had First Years' buns upstairs in the oven and somebody in the office who had self harmed and threatening suicide and where do you go? Obviously, the counselling part, the time just isn't there for a lot of people, so they're in class more so virtually in the counselling area there's just not going to be as much available.

	<p>I think that's probably true, and I think that in my mind, and again it's a personal view, I think there are a number of reasons for that: I think guidance counsellors are very reluctant to compile statistics and data which demonstrate the work that they do. I think that they believe that it's not important. I don't think that that is the case. I think any valuable service, you need to be able to market it and you need to be able to show what it is you do. A French teacher can say that they taught 28 students for 5 periods a week for the whole school year, a guidance counsellor ... why can't, why is it not possible for us to say 'I saw X number of students over the year, and the category of problems that I dealt with are, this does not identify students, the category of problems are: 25% of them were related to bereavement and grief; 20% of them were related to suicide or whatever the statistics might be, you know 5% related to anxiety, 20% of those students were in Senior Cycle, 3% of them, 1% of them was First Years. It doesn't matter; I believe that we are doing ourselves a dis-service by not being more open. I completely support the confidentiality requirements of the job, but we should be able to openly talk about the nature, not the specifics, the nature of the work that we do.</p>
Lily	
Rose	Well that is the truth, that is the truth, that is what's most affected. That would be the case in my school.
Rowan	Now that's my opinion of the whole system, because it is open-ended, more time-consuming and we can't for that
	I would be in agreement with it. The ability to be available to students because of increased timetabling, whether it was guidance or other subjects kept us ... meant that guidance counsellors weren't available. As well as that in some schools the idea that anybody can do pastoral care meant that other people were maybe made available if the guidance counsellor wasn't the person who was made available to students. So yeah, it would be the personal work mainly that probably took the hit.
Olive	
	I would be angry with that you know because I think there needs to be some regulation of who works with children in schools, because there's a lot of money being thrown out willy-nilly through DEIS to people maybe who are ... who have no qualification at all, and they're being called oh 'counsellors' right, and then at the end of the day they do some ... they try them and then they'll try us and then they'll try them and then it comes back to us again, it's thrown back to us again and you know it actually ... we are very professional people and we have a school guidance plan etc, etc. and a lot of this maybe doesn't fit into our ... or how do we coordinate it with our guidance plan, you know? It's very questionable as to some of these sticky plaster jobs, you know.
Violet	
	Well first of all, it's the bit that would worry me the most, because from a guidance counselling point of view, to me that's the most important part of the work. The vocational guidance can be done ... you know somebody who is fairly intelligent can do searching themselves, up to a point. It is important to reflect with a guidance counsellor, but in terms of somebody's emotional well-being, for that to be cut leaves people vulnerable. It also suggests that some people are thinking that you outsource that, and that might be, I mean one could hazard a guess that somebody that you're outsourcing would have more expertise perhaps than a guidance counsellor in a school. However, the fact remains that when you try to outsource, you're waiting, and if the guidance counsellor cannot perform the counselling function, then the young person doesn't have somebody they can go to and say well look, at least I can go and get a sympathetic ear and relax and be listened to and a guidance counsellor who is well trained and professional that can provide support is not there, that leaves people vulnerable.
Rosemary	

3(b). How were student care needs met in your school last year?

Poppy	Em, well I mean you did your best and year leaders did their best. I think more teachers and definitely our principal, and whether its because it is a new principal and the personality and whether they just have no choice are ending up having to deal with more stuff. And less of ... I find and I bet you other people are as well, all your classes are taken up with something, and the admin and all the other stuff that you used to be doing ends up being done after school or at other times you know. If you sort of get your desk cleared once a week you should be pleased, and you should see mine at the moment.
Holly	Certainly, to me, counselling, well certainly last year in our school, in the area that we are in became a priority and it had to be dealt with and there were weeks where there just couldn't be career appointments there just wasn't time but then you had to make up that time elsewhere, you know, so that would be my take on that.
Jasmine	Ho, hum [laughs], mostly reactive. When a crisis blew up we were called in as opposed to just being able to meet with a student and following up the following week and then maybe follow-up again the following week. We didn't, we couldn't meet students like that last year. We still can't really this year, but we could do it even less last year. I mean we never had enough time for that I suppose and we had even less last year, you know.
Hazel	We have class tutors and I would certainly say that the vice principal, and principal and heads are doing more.
Basil	Basically they were met between myself and the chaplain, or the chaplains as it happens, because we had ... our chaplain went out on maternity leave and we had another chaplain in and I think they shared, basically it was between the chaplain and myself and whatever other teachers would take an interest in the students.
Heather	I suppose we relied on the care team more maybe within the school, I have to say my school is very supportive of my area, from that point of view I have a principal who is very supportive, and I would also have a vice-principal who in terms of asking me to do things, she would have been very good around it and left me, given me little bits of extra time wherever she could.
Lily	We have a strong pastoral care team which includes guidance, we have a chaplain, we have a strong Year Head-Class Teacher support system and I suppose considering the students that we deal with, we would have a very proactive approach to issues. Any issue that is identified is very quickly addressed. You know parents would be called in, on the day of an issue; the day following an issue if that was required. Having said that, students can avail of additional supports outside of the school through their parents if it's required. So students are cared for by the team in school, but we also include the parents quite quickly if there is an issue that we need to have them involved in.
Rose	Well the Principal, he would always have tried to see pupils as well, even though he's not qualified to counsel the students, but ... I suppose between myself and the principal. Bur it hasn't really, I still have the same responsibility or feel that I have anyway. I am still running and racing trying to ...
Rowan	As before. Pastoral care team, all the year heads, me, the chaplain , the principal and the deputy.
Olive	Well now this was very interesting [laughs] basically the role of the home school liaison was hijacked, the home-school individual did very little home-school liaison but was supposed to be organising and running pastoral care, yeah, but as long as the individual kept records, the management was very happy because keeping records of everything seems to be their main priority these days. So we have a pastoral care team, and this individual felt it was their duty to roll out and dole out the people who were to be seen and make decisions as to whether they were to be continued to be seen or whether the case was to be closed.

Violet	Well you know it's a bottomless pit, it's really a case of prioritising, you're fire-fighting, you do what you can, you know, so it's manage to do the best you could. I know myself, I was in at a quarter past eight yesterday morning with appointments, we don't start school until twenty past nine, because you know you're helping kids with either a personal issue, or UCAS or CAO or something, or their parents are ringing up asking for this one-to-one. Because you see with this DEIS we've about seven people qualified for learning support, but there's only one guidance counsellor but at the end of the day one-to-one work is very very time-consuming, so I really am going to ... I really would say ... would I be better changing. I'm beginning to think, I know I am very very good at what I do, but at the end of the day you can't be all things to all people and I'm wondering if something else comes up now I think I'd look for it, you know.
Rosemary	Well, first of all the guidance counsellor, then you would have year heads, the school had already introduced a mentor not throughout the whole school, they had piloted it with Sixth Years and then brought it down to Fifth Years.

3(c). One finding was that some schools and principals prioritised maintaining the career guidance service, to the detriment of the counselling element. Was this the case in your school? Please explain.

Poppy	In my school I am the one who decides where ... I mean I look at my lists of Leaving Certs and I decide, oh my God I need to talk to them ... you know, I mean nobody tells me that I need to go and ... you know what I mean. I find I am more rushed with the Leaving Certs, and last year would have been the same. And the amount of time would have gone into them to class, and we do it through LCVP, and I don't have a guidance class per se, you know. I am more rushed with them and that's you know ... Nobody tells me to do ...
Holly	No, no, the time is our own to use as we see fit in terms of the needs of the school so I wouldn't say that either one was given priority.
Jasmine	Well we began to say no to much more stuff we were asked to do. For example, we would always have a big cohort of students who would do UCAS applications and last year we just said we can't do this. So we emailed, I emailed our file of school references to the Deputy Principal and she did that. One of the Deputy Principals did the school references and the other Deputy Principal did the 'predicted grades' which always takes up loads of time. So we didn't do that. We also used to do a parents' night on sort of parenting and drugs and sort of managing your child, I think was that actually Brian Comerford the person who, who came out with it initially and we didn't do that last year, we said no and sometimes we would be asked to meet with students and we would just say no we can't do it.
Hazel	I would say yes, I would say so yeah, because they can timetable that you see. I have always had timetabled career classes, I'd have two Fifth Years, two Sixth Years, but our school you see timetables them against LCVP, I'm not sure why they do that you know. No, I wouldn't have any more timetabled classes, but they would expect us, the guidance office themselves would decide to spend more time with the careers themselves, because we are not told what to do, they don't tell us how many hours to spend with the Leaving Certs, we just choose to do it. There are two of us there now, but she doesn't have full hours.
Basil	Ahm, not specifically no, essentially I was given some guidance classes with the sixth years and fourth years but basically it was left to me to structure it however I wanted, you know.
Heather	Em, yes, but not to a huge extent more, but a little bit yeah. We would yeah, whether it was me that had to do it, in terms of getting through all the sixth years. But I would say like, in honesty there wasn't a change in the attitude towards the counselling area.

Lily	I would say that this school here doesn't promote the counselling service as much as the career service, that's probably for two reasons: one is parents of middle-class students attending fee-paying schools often approach support services independently, rather than going through the school. They also have the resources, both the social resources and the financial resources to do that and therefore they are not as dependent on the counselling skills within the school. I had another reason but I have forgotten now [laughs].
Rose	No it wouldn't, I would pretty much have the same class time.
Rowan	No
Olive	I wouldn't say it was the case in my school because basically the principal's attitude was you should be doing everything, and if you were supposed to be there to support students, then you were there to support students, if it was the career guidance stuff, you were supposed to have the career guidance done, if it was something to do with DEIS or HEAR, then you were supposed to be available but never actually looked at the number of hours you had for any of these things.
Violet	Well our [XXX she mentions principal's first name], he's a good man, do you know what I mean, you know if he could give more resources, I'd say he would you know, he's under pressure too, you know, he's a good ... he's good ... you know
Rosemary	No, well in the sense that the full-time guidance counsellor was kept, and one of the people who ... the person whose function it was to look after the first, second and third years, other people can do it but that was her function and then the other person who was there as a full-time guidance counsellor with all aspects, that job was reduced, so it wasn't that the school was hitting either the career guidance or the counselling, it just hit the whole thing.

3(d). How would you describe your counselling work in 2012-13, as being mostly preventative or as being mostly reactive? Please explain.

Poppy	Oh reactive, reactive yeah.
Holly	Well, because of the situation last year, I would say most of it was reactive work. I mean last year in our school, you know ...
Jasmine	In conjunction with the principal we prioritised Sixth Years having a one-to-one appointment with their guidance counsellor say between September and Christmas, and we had 189 Sixth Years, ok, but many of them just got one appointment, in previous years the might have got one and we would've got one and we would have finished around the middle of November and done follow-up appointments with lots of them, lots of them didn't get those follow-on appointments or they got two minutes in the corridor or at lunchtime or something. So those were the ways that we prioritised career guidance.
Hazel	Oh, reactive. It is just that some students just get distressed and they just need to speak to someone at that time and often like, I won't say it's a major issue, it is obviously for the student at the time, but it's not necessarily a major ongoing issue because usually if people talk to the student, they find out what the student needs and it might be a phone call home or it might be a chat to the teacher that the student is distressed with or it might be a little bit of advice about how to deal with the matter, and often it just resolves itself.
Basil	Ahm, mostly reactive. It was generally, it was once a problem had reared its head, as it were, like you know, that someone was coming for support or counselling, or whatever with it, so there wasn't necessarily a preventative thing you know in sort of heading off problems as such.

Lily	Preventative. It was generally, I suppose in my capacity, it was parental issues, issues at home, dealing with stress, anxiety, dealing with fitting in, those kind of issues as opposed to students in severe significant crisis.
Rose	I suppose it would be a bit of both.
Rowan	Mostly, reactive, reacting to presenting issues.
Olive	It was mostly reactive, we were, I was constantly reacting to things that were happening, things that were brought to your attention, there was very little time to pick up on students who you felt could have done with the extra attention, the stuff ... the things that go on in school, even referrals, the staff didn't feel that they would burden you with stuff, such as would you talk to so and so about such and such ...
Violet	It's very hard to say one or the other, you know I had some of that fallout from the dreadful, two desperate suicides a few miles down the road last year so it was just unreal, I couldn't begin to describe what came to my plate last year. So it was just unreal, so it was a mix of preventative and reactive. ... And I'm also going to say something, you know we're at the coalface, right, and you're trying to get kids to CAHMS etc., etc., you're trying to get them to a school psychologist, you have maybe eight pages to write out as a referral before they'll even speak to somebody and we can't do that, and we are, we have to deal with everything that comes to us. We can't say [puts on a sing-songey voice] 'look sorry, sorry, sorry, but you have to fill out eight pages, when you've that done next week, we'll look at ... it could be two months before we're back to you', we can't work like that. Like really, do you know what? I'm very disillusioned by you know our, what would I say Liam, do you know, everything is kinda thrown at us, I think our professionalism as an organisation, we need to put a price on ourselves more like educational psychologists. Sorry we can't ... that has to be filled in first ... then by the time we have that referral, you know, but then you're not helping your clients, you know what we do is not appreciated, Ruairi Quinn thinks, 'oh look, go in there, there's a programme online on how to deal with that, a programme online' you know that's very damaging in terms of mental health, you know but that's what he thinks anyway.
Rosemary	That's an interesting question. I was the person whose hours were cut the most, so I was left with very very little. However one of my functions was to meet all the Sixth Years once a week with the full-time guidance counsellor and we would have put into that a certain amount of preventative, by looking at you know personal wellness, protecting yourself. So that's really a hard one to answer, but I suppose so in terms of meeting people it was more reactive.

3(e). An issue for some guidance counsellors was not having enough time in 2012-13, how did you manage your time?

Poppy	With difficulty. Em, I mean to be perfectly honest, I mean three, four days a week I am here till four, half four, five, you know and even then I am never quite finished, you know. I know it's stupid but what can you do, do you know, you can, you can walk out, but I am not good at that.
Holly	With great difficulty, em, it's just, sometimes it's very difficult to manage time, you can go in on a day and have no appointments booked and you are flat out from morning to night, but last year there was just really, there was just things, because of the situation, there was just things coming at you all the time. And it was with great difficulty, you know, and working through free classes really, and just that was how it was managed.
Hazel	Oh, [sighs] I don't think there was any huge amount of planning there because if my class hours increased, I just had to ... and our student numbers are increasing as well, so our Leaving Cert numbers have gone up, so it kind of took care of itself in a way, so much time per student, and then if I was in class for the rest of the time there was no time left anyway.

	Yeah, not having enough time was a problem alright, yeah. I did find it a struggle last year, em, and I suppose even to an extent this year with the time, especially with the extra classes coming in, you know with the extra class time, and also I found that the students somehow expected that guidance was going to be gone somehow, yeah there was that impression alright but But, generally I got around it but it took longer to do the sort of meetings that I'd have with students. That took longer.
Basil	I suppose what I did differently at the beginning of the year was to go into sixth years and say that time was going to be very precious for that area and that I would put up an appointment slip every week for them with so many slots on it and that it was their responsibility to come and fill it in, you know and just more efficient things like putting the appointment slips in a box where they'd come and collect them as opposed to, you know, to them coming in and I would write it as they were there kind of thing ... small things I suppose but I was making the best use, making the most efficient use of time and still keeping slots for counselling then as well.
Heather	I think that's always true, and it is my own personal criticism of the current guidance pain to reduce the cuts is that we don't use our time effectively. We haven't, and this is where I get up on my soapbox, so please tell me to shut up when you've had enough of it. It is my view that we are still sitting back where we were, rather than looking forward. We need to look forward to the future and that means that we need to be proactive about the service that we provide. If that means that we need more classroom guidance, then we need to be really good at classroom guidance. Trotting in and doing learning styles one day and you know an overview of a college the next day, that's not good classroom guidance, those elements might be required, but they should be part of a very well structured, efficient classroom delivery system.
Lily	
Rose	Ah, it was ok, it would be possible cos as I said it's a small school.
	Again, it is unique, what I tend to do, I live 5 minutes from the school, I'll just give you an overview first ok? And we have a thing called after-school study, so a lot of kids are in the building till 6 o'clock, and I literally lift them out of study. I stay until 6 o'clock, knowing they're available to me until 6 o'clock and that has lengthened my day, and that's how things have transpired in the last two years.
Rowan	As best I could, I think you were moving from one thing to another constantly, practically all record-keeping, all paperwork had to be done outside of these hours, there was no time whatsoever to do that in class, there was no time to reflect and there was less time maybe to consult with colleagues which is often helpful to fill in the picture.
Olive	Ah, look at Liam, I prioritised, and firefighting some of the time, some things lose out, and there's no point - I could wake up during the night worrying about what I'm not doing or I'm not getting enough of that done or I'm not getting to my Juniors - I'm really not getting to my Juniors as much as I could, I know that, that's where I'm falling down, I'll be honest with you, but I'm not getting the DEIS allocation really in a sense am I? You know. So why am I going to wreck myself and wreck my family life, and have no time to myself, you know do you know what I mean, all I can do is what I can do and if an inspector calls, he'll very nicely get an earful, do you know? I'll fight my case. Sorry Liam, I know I could be doing more, but it would mean not leaving the school, and do you know what I mean, that's all I'll say.
Violet	I suppose I just went in and for the entire day and sort of worked all the hours that went with it which meant that sometimes you worked through break and sometimes, though not always you worked through lunch, it wouldn't have always been the same all through the day; one kind of just put oneself into it and pitched in and kept going and that meant you know that I worked late in the evening, yes I did, there were quite a lot of days when I would not have got out before five.
Rosemary	

3(f). What aspects of your work always made it to the top of your priority list?

Poppy	Students. One -to-one, students in need.
Holly	Em, I suppose ... the counselling really, the one-to-one counselling was at the top of the priority list always in terms of ... and you know we're talking in terms of the need, and last year there was a lot of needs and there was dealing with outside agencies and stuff like that, and there was checking in with students who were attending you know services and stuff like that was just the main priority.
Jasmine	Anything connected to CAO made it to the top, and then after that subject choice with Third Years going into Fifth Year and all TYs.
Hazel	Well it depended on the time of year I suppose, and certainly from November to February it was individual Leaving Cert students and students when we get exam results and we find they are not performing and we get back to them to see if they are changing their choices or asking if they are aware of the implications of that, that would be the main focus between November and February in particular. And then after that it would be the incoming Third Years going into Fifth Year and their subject choices and so on. So they'd be the two main things.
Basil	I suppose the Leaving Cert and CAO applications, those in particular made it to the top. I suppose generally work with Sixth Year got priority and then Third Year after that, and you know ... that was in terms of guidance work, plus then whatever counselling cases I could manage after that you know, literally manage, like you know, yeah.
Heather	I suppose student care really, there were others there but I suppose student care would have to ... like if ... do you know, if was a question of one or the other, it would be student care.
Lily	I suppose issues where parental engagement was required; whether that was conflict with teachers, conflict about subjects or course choices. Anything that required an immediate I suppose response, to our parent body, because as you might imagine in a fee-paying school there is a high level of service provided to parents as well as to the student.
Rose	Well, it would be one-to-one if I could at all, one-to-one counselling.
Rowan	Emergency counselling.
Olive	I suppose I had to meet deadlines, in terms of career guidance deadlines, I tried to maintain contact with students that I know were in particular distress.
Violet	It's very diffic ... well I suppose serious mental health issues would be one, and I suppose you you'd have to have the college applications ... have to be up there as well, you know.
Rosemary	Somebody coming and saying that they had an issue that they wanted to discuss. That would be my priority. And then seeing the Sixth Years in a group, that had to be planned well, as there would have been 100 people in the group.

3(g). What aspects of your work were usually left at the bottom of your to do list?

Poppy	[Laughs] Admin, [laughs again] guidance planning, [laughs again], I do you know, but its not perfect ... yeah and chasing me tail, and scribbling notes instead of writing things properly and that kind of thing, you know.
Holly	Administration probably was nearly bottom of the list, yeah. I think that is probably the main thing yeah.
Jasmine	Catching up on students that I might have intervened once with if there had been a crisis or any incident, but meeting them again and meeting them again, that was where it fell down badly.
Hazel	Seeking students out I suppose. If anyone comes to our attention, we will always see them if were were asked to see anyone, we would certainly fit them in, even if it is only for 15 minutes. Ahm, I can't recall anything deliberate, as such we used to go into First Year classes during SPHE time and just talk in general, and that's definitely gone.
Basil	Work with the Junior part of the school, the First Years and the Second Years, they got pretty much neglected unfortunately like, you know. But something I suppose had to go as it were, like, you know and they were the ones that lost out on it.
Heather	I suppose it would have been some of my classroom stuff maybe, whether it was corrections or whether it was ... em ... administration maybe, keeping up with files and stuff.
Lily	[Laughs] This isn't a picture phone is it, you can't see my desk? Yes, I am afraid ... my note-taking, and my ... I suppose the paperwork aspects certainly got pushed to the side.
Rose	Well I suppose anything that wasn't urgent, anything relating to a careers appointment that wasn't urgent, or anything that there was a deadline for would be priority.
Rowan	Study skills, both class and one to one.
Olive	Mainly the paperwork and probably again various as you know things that could come in through the post, various events that were taking place that you wouldn't get to, the other things were even keeping yourself up to date with in regard to what would go on, particularly in regard to mental health, these kinds of things, em reading, reading would have gone to the bottom of the list.
Violet	I have to say, trying to get round to the Juniors more, you know, I just feel guilty about that, I really wouldn't see them very much but that's it.
Rosemary	[Laughs heartily] The administration. [Laughs again] But it piles up and then it has to be tackled [laughs again]. But sorry, just to extend on that, good practice would say that you should take time when you have finished with somebody just to reflect and also to write up, and if you have if for example, because you have so many people to see, you might have timetabled them one every half hour, this person has revealed something 17 minutes in, so you've overrun with her and then you are very conscious that someone has been sitting outside and has been missing class time. Now I haven't got time at that stage to sit down and reflect and write up a good piece about the one who has gone out the door, I've got the next one in. That could go on for a day and then I am trying to write up from memory in the evening, and that's not best practice.

3(h). One guidance counsellor commented that certain students were losing out. Is this statement true for your school? If yes, were there any particular types of student who were losing out?

Poppy	Well I think that statement has always been a bit true hasn't it ... students who are quiet and don't cause any difficulties. The under the radar students you know. In the past you would have had more time to talk to your leaders and say who you were worried about ... now its ... you very rarely get that far.
Holly	I suppose students, and it goes possibly for every year, you have your career appointments and you want to see every single student at least once. You know you'll always have students who are coming looking, those who never come looking until you go looking for them, and yeah I suppose with everything else that happens they do, I suppose they are neglected in a way if they are not pushy enough to come looking, you know can I have my appointment now kind of thing
Hazel	Certainly any student that has a little ongoing problem and needs ongoing care and attention is losing out big time. It may not be a major problem, cos if it is, everybody knows about and the parents know about it, and the HSE knows about it, and everyone knows about it. But some kids that would need a little bit of reassurance and under normal circumstances, you'd go out of your way to say hello to them here and there and invite them for a chat and that doesn't happen anymore. So they'd be the kids with not major problems, but the ones who could do with a little bit of attention from time to time or just checking up on them, that's all, that's definitely gone.
Basil	I don't think so, no, I'm not aware of any student / students that have lost out, basically I tried to meet with whatever came to me from students I suppose there might have been ones that didn't approach me or didn't make themselves known, r whatever, you know, where I might have been able to do something if they were there, you know if I knew about them. No, I don't think any student as such lost out, maybe some of the class groups and things like that might have lost out.
Heather	Em, I wouldn't say any different to this year or to other years do you know?
Lily	I suppose that is always true, the student that stays under the radar and plods along, but perhaps could do with some more attention, probably doesn't receive it unless they themselves or if their families aren't proactive, but in terms of all of our students here would have in Fourth Year they would all have two appointments per year; in Fifth Year they would have two and in Sixth they would almost have as many as required to get to the point that they needed to be at.
Rose	Well I'd say a lot of students would be losing out. I suppose students that mightn't be picked up, students that would be very quiet and mightn't be picked up. Some students would be very proactive in getting information and other students wouldn't be, so I suppose the quieter ones would be the ones most in need or the special needs ones.
Rowan	No
Olive	Yes, I would imagine that the quieter student in some respects would have lost out.
Violet	I wouldn't know, but I wouldn't see ... I would like to think that I would see one child as important as the next, you know the weaker ... you know that might have been a criticism of guidance in ... somewhere that I read in the Irish Times a while back, that guidance counsellors were for the better ability child, right, you know. But no, I would say definitely not, I think that the way that we work, and we can link in with the other areas of the school, I think we're actually, it takes a bit more time to do a UCAS application than ... you know, I do agree, I do agree with that but I think there's so much we can do for LCA and the weaker children you know, do you know in terms of helping to boost their confidence and, you know, gear them towards an area that they're suited to and have a chance of succeeding in, you know ... I'd like to hear more about that you know.

Rosemary	I think the ... [long pause] ... yes, ... there would be for example ... we would have given talks about Colleges of Further Education or we would have shown you know the ladder of progression, and some of the people whose needs would be met by that mightn't be the most proactive about their own, you know future development, and unless you first of all had identified them and then personally went after them, they weren't going to get the attention that somebody who is you know more self-centred and has a sense of 'look I need your help with UCAS and here's my fifth draft' whereas the other person you know is out there and they are not getting their needs and they may not even know what their needs are or what services could be provided.
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3(i). Were there any particular year groups losing out?

Poppy	Em ... Well I think the second and ... last year I always felt guilty about the First Years, but they had a brilliant Year Leader and Assistant Year Leader, so I stopped worrying because they were doing such a great job. Second Years, yeah Second Years.
Holly	Yeah, well we wouldn't have worked as much with first years as we normally would last year.
Jasmine	Certainly all our Junior Cycle students lost because the guidance counsellor responsible for them, their hours were just gone, and so where they suffered badly were Third Years who went straight into Fifth Year, they got very little time from us ... and we used to ... that guidance counsellor used to run study skills programmes with the students throughout the school, cos he was very good at it. So that was gone as well, we just had to axe that.
Hazel	We didn't ever do a huge amount with first years, second years and third years, but if they were to lose out, that's completely gone yeah.
Basil	The class groups in particular were Second Years. Second Year is probably the most crucial year in secondary school and I did want to sort of hit them as it were with some of the programme but I just couldn't reach on it, and then First Years as well. What I did do was delegate some of the work to say the pastoral care teachers, you know some things like study skills and organising yourself for work and school and things like that, where I couldn't deliver it myself I did handouts and notes and presentations and things for them to actually deliver for me.
Heather	Em, maybe, I suppose Second Years maybe, do you know? The ones that wouldn't have much ...
Lily	No, well I suppose the fact that we have added hours means that we have implemented not a one-to-one service for First to Third Years, but we do have a classroom-based guidance periodically throughout the year for First to Third Years and then we would have study support if the student requests it or if their parent requested it.
Rose	No, there wouldn't really I suppose. It's just that I wouldn't have as much time as I used to. I'd have the same time to see ... in class and one-to-one but the school has grown in the last year. While on the timetable it looks like I have the same, I have more students to see. I suppose First Years would have been the ones that most missed out because I would always hope to get to see all of them at least once for 40 minutes but that didn't happen.
Rowan	No.
Olive	I suppose it would be Second Years and to an extent maybe Fifth Years, because I am finding now in Sixth Year that I'm playing catch up because I couldn't get to see Fifth Years when I wanted to last year.

Violet	Well I mean First, Second and Third, you know, First and Second years I had very little time for, unless there was problems with transfer and certainly around areas like that I wouldn't have lost out with them, you know, there was issues about settling in and any of those things, bullying or anything ... I would have had no bother with any of that, but from a career point of view I just wouldn't have much time for first second or third years. I do a bit on subject choice with first years and that's it, I just don't have the time Liam you know. And I'd probably like to spend time with my third years too, I don't have the time.
Rosemary	Not really in the school in the sense that Sixth Years have a class once a week so do all the Fifth Years have a class once a week, and also the Transition Years had class in their individual groups once a week and they were using the Careers Portal, so in that sort of sense they were well focused on, their personal development needs were being looked at to a point.

4. Questions related to quality and professionalism.

4(a). The survey found that the guidance cutbacks impacted on the quality and professionalism of the counselling service provided in some schools last year. Is this finding true in the case of your school? If yes, was there anything in particular that gave you cause for concern?

Poppy	Well, it's hardly surprising, I think if people are always rushed and don't have enough time then the standard of you know, you are trying to rush to see as many people as you can as opposed to really doing what you'd prefer to be able to do. So I would say time constraints are probably the reason. Well I suppose if you are rushed and frazzled you are going to be less than your best, but you still try and do your best.
Holly	I would say it was, because you know you were just always conscious of the time, just you've got somebody in and you're kind of half sneaking a look down at your watch to see how much longer can I stay here, you know, I've got a class, or do you know what I mean, and you know more teaching time impacts, you know breaks up your day. So it definitely, yeah affects the counselling, you can't just sit and say well you know, I suppose I am just thinking of a Thursday when I have no teaching classes and you are just totally free and you are not restricted by time as such but every other day of the week you are always conscious of the next class coming up ... so ... it definitely affects things.
Jasmine	Well, certainly we would have recommended parents to go the GP route and get their children referred on for counselling through CAHMS or privately. We would have always done that but we were doing it more last year.
Hazel	Well, whatever is delivered, I would hope is delivered with some quality and professionalism, I am not sure exactly what they mean by that.
Basil	Yeah, I'd say so, yeah. I felt I couldn't give as much as I could in previous years, you know. I was getting things done, but you'd love to do it better as it were, you know. You'd certainly feel it could be better, there could have been some more follow-up meetings with people or things like that, you know. Yes, I did feel that the professionalism of the service was cut back, it became more of a cut-back, a more essential service, cut back to the essence like, you know.
Heather	Em, I'd say it couldn't but impact on it, do you know? Em, yeah I suppose it is just the time element, em, having enough time for all students, yeah, yeah.
Lily	I don't think so, but I would also reference back to the fact that the number of pure counselling, complex counselling issues is probably relatively small.

Rose	No, I wouldn't think so, no.
Rowan	No.
Olive	Yes.
Violet	I don't know really Liam.
Rosemary	Em, in terms of how you dealt with somebody and the time you gave them once they presented, no. Like I didn't watch the clock, if they needed a little bit more time I gave it and if they needed to come back again that was fine, but the bit that I said to you about writing up things that was definitely ...

4(b). Did you teach any non-guidance classes in 2012-13?

Poppy	I had a little learning support maths and this year I have a full class of maths.
Holly	I did have two SPHE classes last year, however they were taken off me when the second tragedy happened in our area, you know, and we were given additional time then.
Jasmine	Yes I had three sets, First Year Religion, Second Year Religion and Sixth Year Religion.
Hazel	I have always taught non-guidance classes, I have English, History and SPHE.
Basil	I did yeah, well I suppose that LCVP is slightly guidance-related. I had French; I had two classes of French last year. Two year groups of French.
Heather	Yeah, I had SPHE, and I had Home Economics with First Years as well.
Lily	No.
Rose	Yes, I did. SPHE and LCVP.
Rowan	Yes. The way I have it in my head is as follows, 4 of them are careers classes and 7 of them are career classes.
Olive	Yes, I had eight classes of SPHE.
Violet	No.
Rosemary	No.

4(c). If yes, how did you find working in both a teaching and a counsellor role?

Poppy	Very difficult. First of all you would always be rushed and you'd be in different classrooms and you'd have that physical thing of dragging your stuff from place, you know round the place. And you'd be in the middle of doing something and you'd be 'oh I have a class' and up and go, ... or not being able to go and trying to ...knowing that your class were somewhere else. And the discipline, if you were giving out to someone who hadn't their homework done and midway through it you got a feeling that ah this poor child doesn't need this you know ... or you know you'd be giving out to them and afterwards you know they'd tell you something, so it's the clash, between the discipline and the ... needed for a subject.
Holly	It was almost impossible, it was extremely difficult I found it, you know just transferring from one to the other, you know and dropping what you were doing in the office and going into a different ... you know not as a teacher I didn't find it different, but just the transferring of roles, it's not that I had any difficulty in that I had to treat the kids in that that aspect of it, it's just that you're saying now just drop everything and go into teacher mode. It's just more of an issue for myself, personally, and just again you go completely different.

Jasmine	I hated it. I hadn't taught Religion as an exam subject before, ever before. I had stopped teaching Religion in the nineties and then last year I was asked to teach it all the way through, I mean as an exam subject in First Year and Second Year and I really hated it. I felt I wasn't competent and you know, it was just fierce pressure trying to prepare classes and go in and prepare kids for exams and all that. For Sixth Years I didn't mind it as much as it wasn't an exam subject and I used those class periods to do a lot of guidance work, with the permission and approval of Senior Management who knew that's what I was doing.
Hazel	It can have its issues. I don't mind doing some teaching, because otherwise you are totally, you can have views of the students and what they could be doing and how they should be behaving, and if issues arise with teachers you may not fully understand them because you are fully removed from the classroom situation yourself. I don't mind teaching some subjects, but it can certainly lead to some problems then when you are a disciplinarian and then you want to talk to us afterwards about an issue, that can be a problem yes. Because I have always taught, I have no big issues with it really,
Basil	Yeah, it was difficult at times. I suppose there was the difficulty of doing, I suppose you know the classroom discipline was one thing. The other was the necessity to race of if you were in the middle, well maybe not if you were in the middle but at a crucial point where you normally could take a few minutes more if you were free, you know into the next class with somebody, but you couldn't do that if you had a class of students waiting to see you. So there was a certain loss of momentum at times.
Heather	I, do you know I have mixed feelings on it, I originally felt there was too much, do you know, as I said I had buns in the oven, and somebody else downstairs, but at the end of the day I felt that the students got to know me and I got to know them, having them in class as well.
Lily	No
Rose	I always did it, but it's always a conflict of interest because you are trying to be a disciplinarian in the classroom and then you are trying to be a counsellor five minutes later, maybe after disciplining a student in the classroom, so it's a total conflict.
Rowan	Complimentary.
Olive	Much more difficult than it would have been in previous years, even though SPHE is something that I would have an interest in. The more time you spend in the classroom, the more you are perceived as a teacher, not as somebody in addition to the teaching staff.
Violet	No
Rosemary	No

4(d). Looking back on the year 2012-13, did the changes in guidance affect you personally in any way? If yes, how were you affected?

Poppy	No
Holly	I suppose more stressful, you know, I suppose in conjunction with the cuts, there might have only been a slight cut in hours, but our numbers, you know the volume of senior students that we have, its massive now, you know we had our smallest group doing Leaving Cert last year and now it's all big, big groups, we're talking 180 currently in Leaving Cert. The last small group which was 120 are just gone, so Leaving Cert, we're talking 180, that also is going to have an impact, yeah, yeah.
Jasmine	Well I just felt extremely under pressure the whole time. I felt I was letting kids down and I was under pressure then in terms of teaching this subject I hadn't taught before and you know I was frustrated as well, I was in the classroom and I didn't want to be there. I would have been much happier, and I said to the teacher I am a much better guidance counsellor than I am Religion teacher, but he still put me back into Religion. And my colleague then was put teaching geography which was his teaching subject for three sets of it as well.
Hazel	Because I always taught, it was no big issue for me really; I just did some more classes. You know I was up to date with all my subject work and everything, so there was no major problem there. It is just time, preparation time that is a problem, and correction time and setting examination paper time that would be more, so that is what would be cutting across me seeing kids casually who might come in to chat, and you can't allow it to develop cos you have other stuff to do, yeah that has definitely happened.
Basil	Not really no. Well, just a sense of frustration really at not being able to do the job I wanted to do. I suppose, how would you put it, I had a certain resignation, as it were, towards it, like you know.
Heather	Em, it affected my stress levels definitely. I really ... I know by, I suppose after Christmas I began to settle down more are said look I can't really let this affect me. No, I did feel very stressed up till Christmas that this was going to happen, etc.
Lily	No.
Rose	Well in the sense that I would feel a lot less [indistinct] for the work that I do.
Rowan	No.
Olive	I was pretty stretched for most of the year, I was tired a lot of the time, with the result I felt diminished in the role, you know.
Violet	Definitely. I found it very insulting, I think it's a disgrace that there's a lack of vision on the part of the government to see the benefit of the work we do. We're helping to give children a future. It's you know, even if you look at euro guidance and everything, it's those four months when they leave school, you know if you get them fixed up in something appropriate then, it can help so much down the road in terms of the big picture and I just, I feel that there's kind of the attitude outside the school as well of 'oh is that still there, career guidance?' or is that what ... you know I think that the American model, you know the model we work, is really such a good model, and there's so many good, you know good people working in area, and like that there's obviously some that are not suited, you have that in every prof ... but I just feel it's gonna be hard I think, you know. As a really good guidance couns ... I think I'm good [laughs heartily] but if I got something else now I would think about it. And I know it would be a huge loss to the school, but you know I have to think about myself as well.
Rosemary	Less hours [long pause] that would be it on sort of a work and professional level. On a personal level I think it was brought home to me that we would have to examine exactly what we are offering, because there seems to be ... the way they were cut, a sense that particularly the counselling role is not being valued by people who have the capacity to make choices and decide where priorities go. So I think that raises professional questions for us that we need to address.

5. Questions related to guidance counsellors' perceptions of students' concerns.

5(a). Some guidance counsellors commented on an increase in demand from students for counselling in 2012-13. Was this the case in your school? If yes, was this increased demand due solely to reduced guidance hours or could there be any another explanation?

Poppy	I noticed an increase in neediness, as in sometimes all they needed was a bit of TLC and time, not and not, we have always had the same difficult issues, and in a way anyone will do they just need someone to listen to.
Holly	Absolutely, we had a massive increase in numbers, now obviously that can be attributed in some part to the tragedies that were in the area but, you know there was just so much linked with that and so much came out that wasn't directly linked but certainly there was ongoing, there is ongoing needs now as well so definitely a massive increase.
Jasmine	I wouldn't say so, no. It was the same as ever. It had peaks and troughs but overall I would say it was the same as ever.
Hazel	Oh, no definitely not, it wouldn't be any different, no.
Basil	No, not for me anyway. There was a fair bit for the chaplain alright.
Heather	I would say a slight increase, yeah.
Lily	No.
Rose	Em, not necessarily.
Rowan	Yes.
Olive	No I couldn't say there was an increased demand, it would have been something similar to previous years.
Violet	Well yeah I would have seen a huge increase in demand, even from the career point of view as well, right.
Rosemary	Marginally I would say.

5(b). If yes, was this increased demand due solely to reduced guidance hours or could there be any another explanation?

Poppy	No.
Holly	No.
Jasmine	No.
Hazel	No.
Basil	No.
Heather	I think certainly, the times we live in, the recession, etc., more you know family problems, unemployment etc., yeah.
Lily	No.
Rose	It would depend really, there was a lot more of an increase in students with regard to cyber bullying and that type of thing. That just seemed to have grown and grown overnight.
Rowan	No and I have had many conversations with many people, and do you know what I'm thinking - I've no proof of this, the media and everybody has been saying 'you need to talk more, you need to talk more' (sorry it's an all-boys school, I should say) boys in particular need to talk more and they are doing it.
Olive	No.
Violet	You see it's a very different time now because of this recession, they really want, people want to get it right, kids are worrying are doing the right thing. There's a lot of worry being transmitted to children from their parents, and parents worry and they know that we're a service here in the school and we're ... I'm more inundated than I ever was.

Rosemary	Definitely we were conscious that the recession was having an impact on people in terms of reduced income and definitely people I saw did mention that home was stressful because people had lost work and all the fallout from that.
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5(c). With regard to the type of worry or concern your students' brought to your attention during the year, most guidance counsellors reported that these concerns were mostly of a counselling nature. What is your reaction to this finding?

Poppy	Em , I wouldn't say mostly ... I mean there would be a mixture of both. I would be very conscious of seeing them for both, because there would be some students you would never see for counselling, and they are entitled to a bit of your time as well.
Holly	Well when they came seeking help it was more counselling, well careers as well but counselling was definitely a bigger part of the job for me last year, definitely.
Jasmine	Yeah that doesn't surprise me. The previous year, right so we are talking 2011-12, I had eight Leaving Cert students whom I knew were on medication for depression and I would have given two of them huge support to keep them in school to get them to the Leaving Cert, and the other six, between myself and the other guidance counsellor, a lot of support, right. Last year I felt like I didn't even want to know, you know that sort of way because I couldn't take it on, and I also felt the Year Heads felt the brunt of that then, in terms of they carried more of that kind of thing - kids who had long-term sort of on-going issues in school or at home that impacted on them in school, so the Year Heads ended up carrying a lot of that last year because I couldn't. And even then to give the Year Heads advice, you know to listen to them and to be able to say to them to do this and to contact home or whatever, we weren't even available for that kind of thing.
Hazel	Ahm, not really. Our school has increased dramatically, we went ... we're about 177 students now and 3 years ago we had less than 100, so in that sense our numbers have increased, but like if you wanted to do it percentage-wise I don't think there is a difference really.
Basil	Yeah, that would be true yeah. One thing that struck me last year and again this year was the financial constraints students are encountering at home, and the effect that is having on their choices of courses and colleges.
Heather	Yeah, I would say so, what is coming into my mind as well is the effect of the society that we live in and the amount of information available to them, the internet etc., that they're more the counselling sort of things, in my head I am thinking of students who self-harm and who would have been looking it up on the computer, etc. that kind of thing.
Lily	I would say in my experience and in this environment, most of the issues brought to my attention would be related to careers or to progression.
Rose	
Rowan	Statistically that doesn't stack up for me, I will just explain that, I would see every fourth year, every fifth year and every sixth year in terms of careers, and that's 200 kids, and I'd see sixth years three times a year and I'm counselling about 20 kids, so statistically it is more about vocational stuff than counselling stuff.
Olive	I would have found that personal matters were now I think impacting more on educational matters because they are maybe factors due to recession, their choices were far more limited, families were in more difficulties and therefore students were under much more stress, that in some ways they were nearly making the case for the holistic model of guidance, because the personal, the educational and the vocational were all coming together.

	<p>You know Liam it can be a whole mixture of things, you know, and often in a career one they really ... emotional stuff comes out as well and I've even had ... I had a case last year when a mother came in to me in bits and their home had been repossessed and the mother broke down, I'm dealing an awful lot with parents as well, and she wanted the best for her child, but as well as that I had a mother with huge mental health issues coming into me, you know and really in a desperate state and she's been back to me again this year, trying to get the wee one settled into college, and you know, I'm pointing her towards MABS and all kinds of stuff, but you know I suppose at the coalface, that's what we're dealing with. I would find that I've more past pupils coming back to me, and I'm expected to do that, like do you know what I mean. People in leaning support are not expected to do that. I know there's the adult guidance service but you know, they all come back and say oh look they got no help in college with their personal statement, will you help them with it. You can't say no, well I suppose I should be able to say no, but like the principal is 'like you know will you give them a hand or whatever', you know and I dunno, it just ... we need ... what I feel is hugely missing and what is making me question what I do is ... there's very little recognition from the wider, you know from the Department, whatever, it's nearly all those ones whatever, you know it's ... I find it insulting.</p>
Violet	
	<p>I think they were more inclined to be personal matters, I don't recall huge numbers of them being worried about their own future and most people seemed to assume that 'look I will go on and I will do some further kind of studies and what it will be will be down to my interests and whether I can reach what I am aiming for', that kind of thing, but doubts and so on were very much about personal issues, ok yeah.</p>
Rosemary	

5(d). Some guidance counsellors said that the types of counselling concerns and issues being presented by students were different last year from previous years, what was your experience?

	<p>No but I ... not entirely but financial issues, this would be in terms of college as well. The numbers of them that have worries about , you know some of them would be choosing to go to Athlone instead of Dublin, they would be wondering about part-time stuff. So you know finances have come into play a little bit more than in the past. Round here there was always part-time jobs and youngsters were very good at helping to finance themselves, but this has all gone.</p>
Poppy	
	<p>Yeah, I mean, there would have been do you know, do you want me to say what they were kind of, self-harm was a big big thing last year, massive, anxiety would have been a big issue and just em, I suppose there seems to have been an increase in depression even, and worries about home and stuff like that, but as I say the big ones would have been self-harm and depression really and feelings of anxiety, would have been the three big ones.</p>
Holly	
	<p>No, but I would certainly have seen an increase last year in the kids who were self-harming, that was the big one. That's the biggest difference, the issues were mostly about family breakup, separation, attachment, that kind of stuff, but the manifestation has changed and has become self-harming.</p>
Jasmine	
Hazel	<p>I didn't think so, no.</p>
	<p>There were ones of self-injury, that seemed to be ... I don't know if was a school-based thing, but there were several incidents of that with various students there was a certain copycat element in it or not, like you know. It did seem to be a thing that was prevalent; it's still there this year but less so.</p>
Basil	
Heather	
Lily	<p>Probably not.</p>
Rowan	<p>No. They weren't, they've been the same for the past 6 years.</p>

Olive	No I wouldn't say so.
	I think there's an element of that with the recession. You know the really ... oh it's definitely, you know the good ones, they really really worry are they doing the right thing and they come back and back so even though it might be going away to Maynooth or college or whatever, behind all of that there's an awful awful kind of an uncertainty and a worry and worrying about money and finance and you know maybe arguments going on in the home about lack of money and you know they're really recessionary-related some of them you know and parents may have lost their jobs and mental health issues. I have a huge amount of mental health here too and quite a few kids on medication for depression you know and I would just find it an increasing number on medication for serious serious psychotic, I would have more psychotic than the last few years, with voices in their heads and, on medication, and maybe not fully diagnosed with bi-polar, but there's more of that coming into the school you know and taking panic attacks. I would have an increase in kids taking panic attacks.
Violet	
Rosemary	I would have to say that my ... the amount of time I had was so limited, I couldn't verify that.

6. Any other questions?

Have you anything else you would like to say about your experience of guidance in school last year?

	Last year, I found the whole idea, it wasn't from school that this was, but from the media and from our employers that they could shove us into the classroom but that other people, including caretakers, you know that whole sense of you know that anybody can do it. I found that very disrespectful. I felt that really hard to marry with the way I know that myself and other guidance counsellors, you know we work so hard to do our best. On the other hand I would have got a lot of support from management and other people saying I don't care what they're saying we value the work you are doing, so it was kind of the contradictions there you know.
Poppy	
	It was just a ... personally it was a very tough year for us, school it was extremely busy you know, and I suppose then I was ok I wasn't teaching a subject but for people Generally though, I have to say that in our school management were very, very supportive, you know put a high value on guidance and are giving us all they can give us. But overall it was a very tough year with the tragedies, it was just stressful now.
Holly	
	I am in a school where we have huge diversity within our school population. So, we have foreign nationals who have been in Ireland for various lengths of time from a few months to a couple of years and need additional support around guidance but also sometimes, because they don't have a family network, or a neighbourhood or a community network around them, for some of them they need a lot more support. We are commended, in some senses for embracing because we have to, it's in our education criteria ... We take everybody who lives in our area, right, so we take them all in but we are not provided with the time or the resources to look after them the way we should. And that also extends over into special educational needs. Those kids need more time in terms of guidance and they need, quite often need more time in terms of emotional support and they don't get it from us the way they should because we don't have the time to give.
Jasmine	

Hazel	<p>The only thing is, there really isn't time for us to sit down, as I've said now we wouldn't have done a huge amount of planning as it rolls on from year to year, but we certainly couldn't introduce anything new. Before the cuts came in, the new guidance counsellor who came in, she had lots of wonderful ideas about what we would do, and she introduced a few new things, that took up ages of time, you know loads and loads and loads of time - this what would you call it, mock interviews that she introduced, and then we ran with it again this year but that took up nearly the two months of September and October. Wonderful event, the kids benefited greatly but that was those two months gone. So like if we had the time that we had before it wouldn't have been an issue. So in other words, you can't introduce anything new to be honest with you.</p>
Basil	<p>No not really, there was, how would you put it, a sense of frustration that I couldn't do everything that I wanted to do, but there was also a sense of 'but I am going to do the most that I can', you know. Not exactly an increased efficiency, but a focus on efficiency, you know when I was doing something, I was trying to make sure I was getting places. I certainly emphasized with the students that you know there couldn't be any vague, rambling guidance appointments, where possible like you know. They should come with some formal agenda or some form of thinking done, the guidance session shouldn't be the occasion for you to be do the thinking, as it were, you know you should be discussing what you had thought about it like you know.</p>
Heather	<p>No, I suppose my only thing ...I dunno if this is relevant in terms of like comparing this year with last year, it strikes me that, because of the ... well I am ASTI, and because of the industrial action, things are an awful lot less stressful this year, because we are not doing the after school stuff and there isn't that kind of extra, yeah, that it's ... and it does contrast for me, the amount of stress, the amount of extra stuff that... how much 'all go' it was.</p>
Lily	<p>Yes, I think we might need to move on. I am up on the box again. We need to develop a professional service in tune with where our students are. There are so many very good resources available out there. We need to not just be protective of the work that we used to do but we progress because of the work we want to do. Our students are, many of our students, not all of our students, and I have taught in DEIS schools as well, not all students can find and resource themselves as well as others, but every student has an ability to do some of that work and I think that we need to ... we sit back and we provide information, I think our role should be about enabling students to find information for themselves. And if that is what your guidance classes are about, then that's what they should be about, perhaps setting a series of tasks or challenges which are appropriate to the students' level you are dealing with but that explores the opportunities and the possibilities for the student but also requires them to get, find, search, make evaluate and discern on information themselves, rather than having to use, rather than coming to the guidance counsellor to ask them to do all of that for them, because ultimately that's not our role in any case, we are there to help them through that information, so I'm not sure why we have this hobby horse of we have to do it in a one-to-one. I would much prefer to keep the one-to-one time for situations where we do need it and use good effective classroom guidance. I also think that the quality of some of the guidance resources on the market is very poor and I think that we as guidance counsellors need to be more proactive about perhaps creating our own resources whether that's books, booklets, whether that's dropboxes, whether it's websites, whatever it is that suits you and your students.. And looking back at the old days is lovely, but you know, as the old mafia, what's that expression? It is time to move on. There's a great book actually called <i>'Who ate my cheese?'</i> It's a fable about three mice who are looking for the cheese where it always used to, it's no longer there, so it's the typical thing, if you don't adapt you die, so adapt.</p>

Rose	I just think it's so short-sighted really of the Minister, because there's going to be knock-on effects down the road without a doubt. There are going to be students who are going to choose courses in third level that are not suited to them at all. I mean that has always happened anyway, there have always been the few that when the school closes at the end of May they have up until the first of July to change their mind and very often they do crazy things at that kinda time. But generally speaking I mean that's huge, that danger that they are going to choose unwisely.
Rowan	If I was Minister in the morning, I would make the guidance quota, put it back to the way it was and make it one to [indistinct] I think of what I don't do and for second and third year, we are a 450 pupil school, it needs two for every 500 to do the job that needs to be done.
Olive	I would have felt that supervision was very important last year. It helped to support myself anyway and I think everyone else through it. I also felt that there were a number of initiatives last year and like that, guidance now is a whole school - it is everybody's business and nobody's business, and the students are looking at an unprofessional service basically. And guidelines from the Department, in relation to anything, whether it's bullying or whether it's mental health or suicide prevention don't ... can't take the place of the one-to-one relationship with having someone who is professionally trained.
Violet	Well you know, I mean I have to say for me a plus is when you see that you're giving a child a future, you know, and you see an appr ... there can be an appreciation and there's a lot of great kids out there and they really appreciate what you do and the advice and the guidance you give them you know. I have to say that it gives me hope, you know what I mean, and it makes me feel that I'm doing something that's really worthwhile here, you know, and if I had a kid who had mental health issues and I manage to get them to take part in the school concert and see that look they're not missing as many days at school and that they're settling in here, whereas they didn't in the National School and I helped them with that, you know, I think, you know that I am doing something really here for these young people you know.
Rosemary	I would think that definitely last year, definitely compared to the previous year, like in a previous year we were in a recession and so on, there was definitely a sense of it impacting, and I think a sense of more depression and less hope. I would think this year there was a swing back, that people were more hopeful, there was more hope, but definitely I would have been conscious of a sense of where is the future kind of thing.

6(b). How does this year compare with last?

Poppy	Well it was terrible to begin with [laughs], but it has settled to some sort of mad normality. You just get to the stage where you say to yourself, 'I will just do my best'. So that is my mantra now. I don't know whether it's very professional but all I can do is my best. And I am getting better at telling people 'sorry I won't be able to do that till next week' or maybe you should ask so and so it may be quicker.
Holly	So far it is better, in the sense - the difference is we haven't had the tragedies and we have moved on a bit from that but certainly extremely busy you know, there's been ... you know you still have a lot of counselling coming and obviously with the numbers we have in careers it's just so so busy and kids yes, definitely are more demanding now, and they're you know, they're not frightened to come back and say can I have another appointment, another appointment, there's people even at this stage that you would have seen three times already, and I personally would have 120 kids under my care and that's only careers and then your counselling stuff is an ongoing thing you know.

It's a good question, ah, we are back more in guidance, senior management found the hours and now I just have one set of religion, and my colleague has just one set of geography as opposed to three which we had last year, and we are being given more time to do our work. Now, we are also being given loads of referrals, but I think Senior Management felt the pressure too much last year and so that's why we are back doing UCAS. And the chaplain as well said she was getting too much dumped at her door, so it has come back to us and I think it is because Senior Management, by that I mean the two Deputy Principals and not the Principal, and the Year Heads were saying 'come on we have to have more access to guidance than we had last year' so they found the hours. So at the beginning of the year we said to the principal 'that's great, we'll do everything we can and thank you very much' and he said 'you know that's for this year but I dunno what it's going to be like next year because there are more cutbacks coming down the road. And I hate that lack of security, you know. So next year we could be back to six sets of Religion, we just don't know how it's going to play itself out every year, and that, as I say, I hate that vulnerability. We can't say 'you know we're ex-quota, you can't do that to us' like we were before. So that's the most difficult thing.

Jasmine	
Basil	This year I was, I suppose I was slightly dreading it, but it's actually an improvement in terms that I have one less of the French class, so i have slightly more periods and it's going, I think it's going better this year, now maybe I have just adjusted to things a bit more like you know, but I am not feeling as put out this year, even though I am put out if you know what I mean, in terms of doing the work. But I'm feeling I'm getting to it more this year.
Heather	
Lily	
Rose	This year because the school is growing but I have the same kind of time to get, so I'm a lot busier.
Rowan	It's the same.
Olive	This year so far is a little bit better as in half the SPHE classes are gone, but like that you are still expected to be all things to everyone, but I find now there is an increased number of people applying for HEAR and DARE and you have to take each student individually almost by the hand through the schemes in spite of the fact that we have quite a developed SEN department, it's left up to guidance to do all that work.
Violet	
Rosemary	

Ends.

APPENDIX R: Reducing Researcher Bias

In this Appendix, I outline the conscious steps taken by me to reduce the risk of researcher bias in the research process.

- At the outset, I identified my “personal values, assumptions and biases” (Creswell, 2009, p. 196) and I outlined these in Chapter One (p. 5) foregrounding any prejudices.
- I argued that my wide and varied experience of guidance work was a positive rather than a negative, and that it afforded me a deep awareness of guidance in very different social contexts.
- I used participant validation (Rajendran, 2001) and sought written feedback from participants in both phases of the pilot research; this feedback is detailed in Chapter Three.
- I read extensively about the pitfalls of “insider” research, but also of its benefits, notably that of familiarity. Familiarization with a society or group of people under study can be “hugely beneficial” to a study (McCracken, 1988, p. 22). This was discussed in Chapter Four.
- I tried to ensure that representativeness bias was kept to a minimum (Oppenheim, 1992 – as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). Even though tests of statistical significance were not planned as part of the research methodology, I was meticulous in ensuring that the sample in both phases of the research was as representative as possible of the population (discussed in Chapter Four and in Appendix I).
- In choosing telephone interviews over face-to-face interviews, I was minded of evidence for smaller interview bias (Bradburn & Sudman, 1979 – as cited in Robson 2002) which usually results in a “a lower tendency towards socially desirable responses” (Robson, 2002, p. 282).

- In both research phases, the questions were mainly open-ended, and no limits (character limit in online questionnaire / time limit in interviews) were placed on the answers.
- To ensure that the interview responses were captured word for word, the interviews were recorded. For transparency, both the audio recordings and a written transcript are provided with this thesis.
- In the interviewing of guidance counsellors in phase two of the research, I adopted a structured interview design where the interview questions were “thoroughly planned and prepared, with very careful framing of questions” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 129) in an attempt to remain as objective as possible.
- Having transcribed the interviews, I sent each interviewee a transcript and asked them to check it for accuracy. I also gave them the opportunity to change any answer. No one made any changes.
- To reduce any bias in coding, I used the software package QSR NVivo10 which also aided transparency. It enabled all data movements and coding patterns to be logged and conceptual categories and thought progression to be mapped. This ensured that all stages of the analytical process were traceable and transparent. It assisted in the production of an audit trail, where all data could be traced back to an individual survey respondent or interview participant, which is a key criterion with which the trustworthiness and plausibility of a qualitative study can be established. All respondent comments used in the results chapters include a respondent identifier and all comments used from interview participants include the pseudonym chosen by the participant.
- Even though I work as a guidance counsellor, I tried to remain very conscious at all times that this thesis was an academic pursuit and that I was not advocating for, or on behalf of guidance counsellors or their representative body, the IGC.

- In analysing the data, I adopted a neutral position and avoided any distortion of the data to serve other interests, prejudices or agendas.
- Throughout the research process, my thesis supervisors played a key role in helping me become more aware of my biases, in assisting me in correcting my false interpretations, in encouraging me to consider alternatives, and in locating blind spots and omissions.
- In the discussion chapter, final proof-reading by several people in addition to my supervisors made me aware of any personal biases that remained in the text and in the use of language.