An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Professional Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: Brendan Kavanagh

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My accomplishments are not mine alone. I have been encouraged, sustained, and motivated by so many people throughout the years.

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Dedication

In loving memory of my mother, Carmel, who passed away a week before I began my doctoral journey. Her support, love, and strength have guided me throughout this experience. While she is not physically here, her spirit is a constant source of inspiration. I am profoundly grateful for all she did for me while she was here, which allowed me to achieve my dreams.

List of Publications and Presentations

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List of Abbreviations

AnCO	An Chomhairle Oiliuna
CAD	Computer-Aided Design
CDETB	City of Dublin Education and Training Board
CID	Contract of Indefinite Duration
CT	Career Transition
DATI	Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction Ireland
DCU	Dublin City University
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DOE	Department of Education
DPU	Data Protection Unit
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EEC	European Economic Community
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ETB	Education and Training Boards
EU	European Union
FÁS	An Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FETCI	Further Education and Training Colleges Ireland
H. Dip.	Higher Diploma
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HELS	The Higher Education Links Scheme
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
HR	Human Resources
IP	Imposter Phenomenon
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IT	Information Technology
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
M	Mean
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards

NCI	National College of Ireland
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
p.	page
pp.	pages
para.	paragraph
PDE	Professional Diploma in Education
PLC	Post-Leaving Certificate
pp.	pages
QQI	Quality & Qualifications Ireland
Qual	Qualitative
Quant	Quantitative
REC	Research Ethics Committee
RTC	Regional Technical College,
SCT	Second-career Teacher
SCTs	Second-career Teachers
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
TEL	Technology-Enhanced Learning
TEQ	Teacher Education Qualification
TIC	Technical Instruction Committees
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
UK	United Kingdom
VEC	Vocational Educational Committee
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPT	Vocational Preparation and Training
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

Abstract

An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Professional Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.

Brendan Kavanagh

The motivations for choosing to teach in the Irish Further Education and Training (FET) sector as a second career are diverse, multifaceted, and under researched. This thesis explores the underlying motivations that drive individuals to pursue a career change to teach. It reveals the supports and challenges experienced by novice second-career teachers and examines the process of professional identity (trans-)formation. Second-career teachers bring a wealth of professional skills and experience into the classroom. This research uses a mixed methods design to identify the motivations behind career change. The quantitative data provides an overview of motivations as revealed through on online, anonymous survey. Qualitative data is provided by a focus group and interviews and offers deeper insights into the mix of altruistic-intrinsic and extrinsic motivations which have influenced the decision-making process. The identified motivations include altruistic-intrinsic motivation such as the positive impact of teachers and previous learning experiences within the FET sector, as well as a strong desire to work with adult learners. Extrinsic motivations for career change are evident. These motivations include the pursuit of career change driven by the need for secure employment, particularly during times of recession, as experienced by seasoned teachers. In contrast, novice teachers face insecurity in their career change. The influence of direct outreach from professional networks within the FET sector on career choice is apparent. Furthermore, the importance of personal and professional supports in facilitating a successful career change and overcoming imposter syndrome is clear. The process of professional identity (trans-)formation sees past professional experiences interact with a new role and is viewed through the lens of Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory. Once again, job security and a supportive environment are acknowledged as important factors in the process of professional identity (trans-)formati

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction to this Research

A century ago, Gray and Hinton (1922) considered educational careers as a lifelong pursuit. Presently the notion of enduring employability, 'a job for life', is for many a thing of the past. Careers paths are now considerably more flexible, career decisions are not set in stone, and mid-career transitions are a "natural phenomenon" (Ellis, 1993, p.6). Teachers who enter the teaching profession later in life are referred to as second-career teachers (SCTs) and are viewed as being significantly different when compared to their first career colleagues (Chambers, 2002). These differences include the motivation to teach, in addition to the richness they bring into the classroom and the wider teaching profession, because of their wealth of experience, expertise, and career specific skills (Ong, 2022).

Motivation can be understood as the reasons behind voluntary behaviour (Deci, 1976). Available literature reveals various motivations for career change among SCTs, which are detailed in chapter three. Similar motivational factors are evident in the findings of this research and are discussed in chapters six and seven. A search for professional fulfilment often drives individuals to change careers and become an SCT. The Irish Further Education and Training (FET) sector, much like its counterparts globally, benefits from teachers who have changed career. These individuals choose to leave their previous career and enter the teaching profession, bringing valuable professional expertise and experience into the classroom (Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt, 2010; Robb, 2024). SCTs carry their existing professional identity into teaching, which may have either a positive or negative impact upon the formation of their new 'teacher' identity. Previous professional identities may result in deeply ingrained habits, practices, or values, which resist change, making it difficult to adopt new professional values. There may also be a conflict of identities, causing internal tension and hindering the integration of new professional values (Wood, Farmer, and Goodall, 2016). Transitioning into teaching may require SCTs not only to acquire new skills but also to 'unlearn' aspects of their previous professional identities that may not align with the educational context. Finally, as noted by Ares (2018), transitioning to a new profession may trigger fears of inadequacy or failure (See Sections 6.6.1 to 6.6.3). Conversely, the positive impacts include transferable skills and knowledge, which may facilitate a smoother transition into a new career. SCTs may also be more confident, given

their maturity and previous professional successes. In addition, their diverse professional experiences lead to broader perspectives, which can enrich their new identity, fostering a more holistic approach to their new profession (Bar-Tal and Gilat, 2019).

This research explores the motivating factors which drive individuals to transition from non-teaching careers to teaching roles within the FET sector of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (ETB). A key aspect of career change involves the development of a new professional identity that incorporates aspects of their former identities (Caza and Creary, 2016). This complex identity (trans-)formation is not just about acquiring new skills but also involves a profound shift in self-perception and worldview. The distinction between professional identity transformation and professional identity (trans-)formation lies in the scope and nature of the career change process, and while the distinction may appear subtle, it is important in the context of this research. Identity transformation is perceived as a significant change in identity, while identity (trans-)formation is a broader concept, implying a dynamic, dual process of simultaneous identity formation, development, and integration, encompassing both change and continuity. In the context of SCTs, this distinction emphasises the complexity of the identity shift which accompanies career change. Space for ongoing reflection during the process of transition is important as it provides SCTs with an opportunity to reassess their identity in light of new experiences, which allows for a more dynamic (trans-)formative process. Recognition of previous experience is also important as it allows individuals to draw on their past knowledge and skill while adapting to a new context. The continuous interplay between past experiences and new learning opportunities fosters a stronger professional identity.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978a) is employed as a framework for mapping profound life changes, professional development, and the supports which are necessary during transitionary periods, such as career change (Mezirow, 1978b). Mezirow (1991, 1997) describes transformative learning as a process which changes an individual's frame of reference, shaping how they perceive, react to, and anticipate outcomes from their experiences. Ultimately this process allows an individual to adopt a more flexible perspective, meaning they are better equipped to adapt to their new situation and challenges they may face. Key components of this ten-step process include experiencing a disorienting dilemma, engaging in critical reflection, and discourse to gain insight and validate new perspectives (Gardner, 2014). Mezirow's theory emphasises the process by which individuals' question and reassess their belief systems, assumptions, and lifestyle, which are facilitated through critical reflection on experiences and are influenced

by accumulated experiences, values, and associations. Mezirow's theory and motivation are intrinsically linked through the concept of a disorienting dilemma, which acts as a catalyst for career re-evaluation and change (Damianakis *et al.,* 2020). The disorienting dilemma initiates a motivational impetus, creating a drive for resolution, which is achieved through critical reflection. The motivation for change encourages the individual to reflect critically, to engage with their experiences, and to persist through challenges (Gardner, 2014). By mapping the experiences of SCTs to these transformative phases (See p.175), this research aims to highlight the challenges and growth that accompany the transition into teaching, thereby deepening our understanding of how transformative learning facilitates professional growth and adaptation during such critical transitions. Reflective thinking however may defy linear progression, which challenges the straightforward application of transformative models, such as Mezirow's transformative theory. The journeys made by SCTs may be influenced by diverse personal, professional and institutional factors, making their reflection more fragmented and iterative than sequential (Nielsen, 2016). SCTs may have to revisit and renegotiate their understanding of events and multiple times, shaped by evolving challenges and contexts. Mezirow's model, with its structured stages, may not fully capture the emotional, relational and nuances of SCTs' transitions.

1.2. Context and Scope of this Research

This research seeks to understand the motivations for career change into teaching by SCTs working within the FET sector. For feasibility, it was decided to limit the research to the 971 teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. There are no figures available to show how many FET teachers working in the City of Dublin ETB are SCTs. My desire to understand the motivations behind career change and the process of professional identity (trans-)formation amongst novice teachers requires depth in the data collected (Creswell, 2009). Achieving this depth necessitates focusing the scope of this study to SCTs working in just one ETB area, namely the City of Dublin ETB. This ETB was chosen because I work therein as an FET teacher. Being an 'insider researcher' provides both access to other teaching staff, in addition to first-hand understanding of the sector (Shah, 2004).

The Irish FET sector offers educational programmes that are designed to provide students with practical skills and pathways into the workforce or onto Higher Education. FET in Ireland represents a conglomeration of adult, technical, and vocational educational elements which deliver education in a space that exists outside secondary school and third

level education. Outside Ireland, this level of education is frequently referred to as Vocational Education and Training (VET). Students may progress into the FET sector directly from second level education or may be returning to education later in life.
Within the Irish context, FET finds itself in a paradoxical situation. Despite playing an important role in education and filling skills shortages in the economy, it is frequently misunderstood, under-researched, and undervalued (O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020; Maloney, 2021; Rami and O'Kelly, 2021). Many people view the traditional university education path as more prestigious and desirable, when compared to the FET route, which is often seen as offering a lesser quality, second class, education. These perceptions can diminish the appreciation and recognition of the valuable contributions made by the FET sector.

As will be discussed in chapter two, the Irish FET sector has evolved in what many consider to be a haphazard manner and faces challenges in terms of recognition and public understanding. The lack of awareness regarding the scope, contribution, and potential of the sector adds not only to its continued undervaluation but to its marginalisation (O'Leary and Rami, 2017). Although significant events occurred prior to 1896, the exploration of the FET sector's evolution in this research begins with the publication of the report of the unofficial Recess Committee in 1896. This report found that agricultural production could be increased through better organisation and education, which led to the passing of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899, (Government of the United Kingdom, 1899). The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction Ireland was set up in 1900. This department established Technical Instruction Committees which were to provide courses designed to meet local demands. In 1924, the Department of Education, which was influenced by religious institutions, gained oversight of technical education. A two-tier educational system was established, wherein vocational schools were tasked with the provision of technical education, and denominational primary and secondary schools catered to more academically inclined students, providing general, academic education. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, several reports on Ireland's educational system were published, emphasising the widespread neglect and misunderstanding of the vocational sector. The establishment of vocationally orientated 'New Colleges' further emphasised the divide between vocational and academic education by limiting the academic awards available through vocational education. The 1980s saw an era of economic crisis, with the government recognising the need for second-chance education and the importance of adult education which responded to local needs. In 1993, the report by the National Economic and Social Council called for greater recognition of vocational education at all levels, to

enable employment growth. The 1995 White Paper on Education, 'Charting Our Educational Future' (Department of Education and Science, 1995), acknowledges the expansion of vocational education, but criticises the sector's lack of coherence. The Education Act (1998) (Government of Ireland, 1998) promoted equality of access to adult and continuous education and was followed closely by The National Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) (Government of Ireland, 1999) which set out to promote and endorse the quality of further education and training. In 2000, "Learning for Life – White Paper on Adult Education" (Department of Education and Science, 2000) was published, providing a framework for the development of Adult Education. This was undertaken as part of the government's broader commitment to establish a comprehensive system of lifelong learning. The Further Education and Training Act (Government of Ireland, 2013b) led, among other things, to the establishment of SOLAS, the new authority for further education and training.

In later years the FET sector is being recognised more and more as a valuable entity which not only provides education but also promotes economic growth and fosters social inclusiveness. Government and institutional policies, including The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy (SOLAS, 2020), and Ireland's National Skills Strategy (Department of Education and Skills, 2022), aim at bringing about sustained sectoral development, and have contributed to enhancing FET sectoral perception. Recent strategies aim to elevate the status and quality of FET provision, and to align the FET and higher educational sectors more closely (O'Leary and Rami, 2017).

1.3. My Interest in this Research

When I began teaching in the FET sector, I perceived myself as different due to my status as a second-career teacher. With limited teaching hours, my engagement with colleagues was minimal. However, as my teaching hours increased, I had the opportunity to meet more colleagues and observed that many of them also came into teaching from previous careers. While I was aware of my own decision-making process and motivations for transitioning into teaching, this realisation sparked a deeper interest in understanding the reasons behind others' transitions into the teaching profession. Being a second-career teacher working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB; therefore, I am an 'insider researcher', which presents several ethical considerations (Herr and Anderson, 2015). As a researcher, and particularly as an 'insider', there is an onus to ensure that all information collected is used ethically and responsibly. Being an insider may create a power dynamic, which may influence the willingness of colleagues to participate or to

speak freely. There also exists a risk of bias, given that my preconceived notions about the FET sector may negatively affect this research. It is therefore important to remain objective and to mitigate bias through elements including crystallisation and transparency, which help enhance the integrity and credibility of this research (See Sections 4.8, 4.8.2, and 4.9.1). The notion of crystallisation embraces multiple perspectives and methods to explore complex phenomena. By viewing the subject through various 'facets' this approach moves beyond singular or linear interpretations, allowing for a richer, more nuanced understanding of the research topic (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005).

As a second-career teacher, initially it was my belief that transitioning from another career to teaching was a rare path. However, upon discovering that many of my colleagues also embarked on teaching as a second career, my interest in this area deepened. By exploring the motivations, challenges, and impacts of such career transitions, it is intended to uncover insights that may enhance support structures for second career teachers and contribute to broader research into the Irish FET sector. This research is intended to validate the experiences of SCTs and to enrich our understanding of the dynamic teaching landscape of the FET sector.

1.4. Research Questions

The aim of this research is to identify and explore the motivations for choosing teaching as a second career among teachers working in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. The overarching question guiding this research is:

Primary Research Question: What motivates second-career teachers to teach in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB?

Career change brings with it issues regarding professional identity (trans-)formation, which raised a further question:

Secondary Research Question: What challenges do second career teachers face in developing their professional identity within this educational sector?

1.5. Methodology.

The conceptual framework for this research consists of several elements, which are outlined in detail in chapter four (See Section 4.2). My constructivist ontological stance emphasises the significance of context in understanding the world. Knowledge is not a static entity awaiting discovery but is actively constructed by individuals interacting with their environment. This perspective holds that multiple realities exist, shaped by the diverse interpretations' individuals have of their experiences (Prasad. 2017). Therefore, the

motivations for career change and the process of professional identity (trans-)formation amongst SCTs are viewed as dynamic constructs which are continually shaped and reshaped by their experiences, interactions, and reflections.

Each teacher's motivations and identity are shaped by personal backgrounds, previous careers, and individual life experiences (Russell, 2013). Research from this perspective focuses on how each teacher interprets their own journey into the teaching profession, recognising that these interpretations are influenced by personal context and can vary widely between individuals. A constructivist epistemology emphasises the interactive process of learning and identity formation. It views teachers as active participants in their professional development, not merely as recipients of external knowledge. This perspective explores how SCTs actively negotiate and integrate their past professional experiences with their new roles in education.

In terms of this research, knowledge about the motivations and identity (trans-)formation process of SCTs is co-constructed between the researcher and the participants. Methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups are used not only to collect data, but to create a dialogue through which meanings are developed and understood collaboratively. Adopting a constructivist perspective allows a nuanced understanding of the factors driving career change in teaching and the process of identity (trans-)formation for SCTs (Yin, 2018). The use of subjective methods for data collection results in frequent contact between the researcher and participants, which highlights the importance of respect. This leads to the axiological position of the researcher. I believe that every step, from framing the research questions through to decisions regarding methods, data collection, and analysis are informed by values. The core values brought to this research are those of honesty, fairness, openness, and respect for the individual.

Methodologically, a case study research design is employed to address the research questions. Using a case study approach within a constructivist framework allows for an in-depth exploration of individual or group experiences in a real-world setting. This is particularly suitable for a constructivist approach, which values the detailed, rich descriptions of how individuals construct their realities (Miller and Fox, 1999). Each participant can provide a comprehensive picture of their unique experiences and the personal meanings they attach to their career transitions. Constructivism emphasises the importance of understanding phenomena within their specific contexts. A case study approach is designed to consider the context surrounding each case, which is important for understanding how SCTs' identities and motivations are shaped by their specific circumstances.

SCTs bring diverse backgrounds and experiences into teaching, which may influence their motivations and identity (trans-)formation. Case studies can capture this complexity, providing an accurate view of the processes involved. They are flexible in terms of the data collection methods they employ, such as interviews and focus groups, allowing the researcher to adapt their methods based on the evolving nature of the research and the needs of the participants. Constructivism values the personal stories and insights that participants share, which are vital for understanding the subjective dimensions of their experiences. Case studies focus on these personal stories, making them an important means of capturing the lived experiences of SCTs in a way that respects their personal viewpoints and constructions of reality (Creswell, 2009).

Data is gathered using a mixed-methods quant→QUAL approach over the period of one academic year. A mixed-methods design is used to answer the research question, as it allows for the collection of diverse data types. Initially quantitative data was collected through the anonymous responses provided by an online survey. Subsequently, qualitative data was gathered through one focus group and twenty-six semi-structured interviews. These methods are described in more detail in chapter four. The use of a quant→QUAL approach was chosen as it allows the research questions to be explored from different angles. Quantitative data provides a broad, numerical insight into the area of SCT motivation while the qualitative elements offer a deeper context and explanation of this area, essentially bringing the numbers to life (See chapter five). Combining the data generated by these elements provides a more holistic view of the findings and may make the findings of this research more accessible to a broader audience. In addition, the use of multiple data sources allows the results to be validated, enhancing the credibility of the research. Cross-validation, or data-crystallisation, helps to confirm the reliability of the data and to reduce accusations regarding bias. Undertaking the quantitative element prior to the qualitative elements allows for nuances and unexpected trends in the data collected to be explored, thereby providing a richer insight into the data (Creswell, 1999; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

An online, anonymous survey was initially conducted at the beginning of the academic year. A short time later a focus group was conducted with novice SCTs (See Table 6.2). The term novice is being used to describe a teacher with less than two years' experience teaching in the FET sector (Karataş and Karaman, 2013). Following this, 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted with more experienced SCTs (See Table 6.3). Data analysis for both the interviews and focus groups used content analysis (See chapter six).

1.6. Significance and Contribution to the Field

There has been little research conducted regarding the FET sector in Ireland (Maloney, 2021). The motivations of second-career staff to become teachers, and the process of professional identity (trans-)formation of those working within the sector are areas which lack investigation. This research is significant because it addresses this paucity, contributing to the literature regarding the FET sector and the teaching staff who work therein. This study reexamines existing perspectives and expands the understanding of identity (trans-)formation, a novel concept that involves simultaneous formation and transformation within this group. This research enhances the understanding of the FET sector and its teaching staff. It has the potential to guide strategies for improving novice SCT experiences, enhancing teacher retention and increasing sectoral recognition as an important part of Ireland's educational system.

The quantitative data gathered from all FET teachers within the City of Dublin ETB who participated has provided an insight into the motivations to choose teaching within this sector as a career. The qualitative data gathered from the focus group and interview processes gives a voice to second-career teachers allowing them to share their reasons for becoming teachers later in life and to explore the process of identity (trans-)formation amongst participants. This research has uncovered data that was previously unrecognised in the academic field. Consequently, this research can benefit both second-career teachers within the FET sector, as well as the sector itself. Understanding the unique perspectives and diverse motivations for career choice can allow tailored recruitment strategies and effective professional development programmes to be developed. Furthermore, understanding of these factors and insight in identity (trans-)formation can inform retention strategies and allow for the creation of a more supportive work environment with tailored mentor programmes that foster job satisfaction.

1.7. Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises seven chapters, an overview of each chapter is provided below.

1.7.1. Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter one provides a brief introduction to this research. It begins by providing a brief contextual overview of the Irish FET sector. It then moves on to explain my position and interest in the topic. The aim of the research and the research questions being addressed are stated. The methodology and methods being used in this research are provided and

discussed briefly. The significance and contribution made by this thesis are presented. Finally, an overview of the structure of the thesis is provided, briefly outlining the content of each chapter.

1.7.2. Chapter Two: Historical Context

Chapter two provides the reader with the context for this research. It begins by outlining the FET sector in Ireland. It then moves on to explore the vexatious issue of attempting to define this diverse sector. From here it presents a brief description of the evolution of the FET sector, providing an overview of the changing understanding of this organic educational sector. Following this, a section looking at educational policy is presented. The chapter concludes by looking specifically at the areas of apprenticeships, Youthreach and the awarding bodies which validate the education provided by the FET sector.

1.7.3. Chapter Three: Literature Review

Chapter three explores the literature pertaining to career change specifically in relation to teachers and professional identity formation. As there is a limited amount of literature available which relates specifically to the Irish context and the FET sector, international literature has been utilised. The literature review begins by explaining the planning and identification processes used. It provides the databases used and the search terms employed in the literature search. It describes the process of conducting the initial literature search and review, followed by a second search that uses terms identified from the initial findings.

Following this, the literature review examines the motivations of SCTs for choosing their careers. Typically, within the literature a tripartite framework of motivations is recognised, which consists of intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic factors. However, in this research altruistic and intrinsic motivations are combined, as altruistic motivation is regarded as a subset of intrinsic motivation. This research then presents the various terminologies used in discussing SCTs, followed by an exploration of the diverse pathways they take into the teaching profession, and an overview of their previous careers. From here, the literature review moves to explore the often-challenging process of professional identity (trans-)formation amongst SCTs. Identity is constantly evolving, with Mezirow (1978a) recognising the importance of past experiences in identity (trans-)formation. This process may be painful, involving confusion and disorientation as they relinquish or (trans-)form past identities into a new teacher identity. The review notes the importance of both formal and informal supports to help overcome personal and professional challenges. It concludes

with an exploration of the perceived benefits that SCTs contribute to the sector, emphasising the transferable skills, expertise, and self-confidence they bring to the educational sector.

1.7.4. Chapter Four: Research Methodology

Chapter four focuses on the research process. It begins by introducing constructivism as the chosen paradigm used in this research. Constructivism is well-suited to this research as it emphasises the unique perspectives and interpretations which individuals bring to their experiences. It provides a theoretical framework which allows for a deep exploration of the personal journeys and lived experiences of participants. The specific research questions framing this research are again provided. This research has been conducted using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating an anonymous online survey, focus group, and 26 semi-structured interviews. The conceptual framework for this research is also provided to clarify the relationships between key concepts, guiding the research process and ensuring a coherent structure for analysis. Quantitative and qualitative data are presented and discussed independently in chapters five and six.

1.7.5. Chapter Five: Quantitative Results and Discussion

Chapter five presents and discusses the findings of the online survey, based upon Watt and Richards (2007) FIT-Choice survey, in terms of current literature. Findings are presented under four themes which run through both the quantitative and qualitative findings as presented and discussed in both chapter five and six, aligning the two chapters and the data provided. The first theme is altruistic-intrinsic motivations. These include satisfaction with career choice, the importance of enhancing social equity, and shaping the futures of young people in the decision to become a teacher. Following this the importance of extrinsic motivations in career choice, including job security, time for family, and salary are presented. Several contradictory results are found. An example of this is job security, which appears as a strong motivator for survey participants (See Section 5.5.1), but this is not the lived experience of novice teachers, who are struggling to find security in their new career (See Section 6.4.1). The findings of the survey in relation to influences on career choice are presented and discussed, with this section finishing by presenting and discussing survey results regarding perceptions of teaching as a demanding career that requires expertise.

1.7.6. Chapter Six: Qualitative Analysis and Overall Discussion

Next the findings of the focus group and semi-structured interviews are presented and an overall discussion of the data produced by this research is presented under five themes, again considering current literature. The fifth theme is professional identity (trans-)formation. The results of the qualitative elements of this research show the appeal of teaching adult learners, and the desire of SCTs to positively impact society. A passion for teaching is clear, frequently drawing from previous educational experiences. Teaching for many is pursued as a preferred alternative career. Extrinsic motivators are then presented and discussed. Employment precarity, the desire for financial security, and a desire for a better work/life balance are clearly motivators for choosing teaching as a second career. The part played by personal networks, dissuasion, and supports are key elements in the process of career choice. Data from the qualitative elements of this research shows that teaching is chosen as a preferred alternative career, but in some cases, it is a fallback career, chosen because nothing in a desired career was available. The final theme presented in this section explores the process of professional identity (trans-)formation, using the framework provided by Mesirow' s transformational learning theory.

1.7.7. Chapter Seven: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Chapter seven begins by providing a summary of the thesis. It presents conclusions from this research, limitations are acknowledged and discussed, and recommendations based upon the findings are presented. These recommendations relate to potential policy change, as well as recommendations for the City of Dublin ETB, and for those considering a career change into teaching in the FET sector. Once again, the limited research conducted on both the Irish FET sector and its teaching staff is acknowledged. This thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge and proposes recommendations for further research.

1.8. Summary

This chapter presents an overview of the thesis. It introduced the context of my position as an 'insider researcher'. The rationale for this thesis, the scope of the research and the research questions were outlined. Following on from this, the methodology used to answer these questions is presented. The significance and contribution of the research are considered. Finally, a summary of the content of each chapter is provided.
In chapter two, a brief history of the FET sector is presented, in addition to exploring the difficulties it faces and the significant institutional developments and policy reforms which have shaped its evolution.

Chapter 2: History of the Further Education and Training Sector

2.1. Introduction

The Irish Further Education and Training (FET) sector is diverse and because of its focus on vocational education, apprenticeships and targeted programmes, it is often perceived in terms of facilitating the transition from school to the labour market. Viewing the Irish FET sector as a seamless pathway oversimplifies the complexities inherent within its structures and function (Stein, 2021). While the sector does cater to a wide range of learners, the diversity may mask underlying inequalities, such as unequal access to Higher Education, regional disparities and educational under resourcing. Framing the FET sector in terms of transitioning to the labour market reflects an economic and utilitarian ideology, which has the potential to sideline broader educational goals such as personal development, community engagement and critical thinking (Pantea, 2022). This viewpoint risks reducing education to a commodity tailored to market demands, which neglects the sectors' role in addressing social justice and lifelong learning.

The Irish FET sector has been characterised by ambiguity which reflects a broader perception of the sector as the under-valued and under-researched "black sheep" of Irish education (Maloney, 2021). The lack of clarity and overshadowing by more prestigious academic pathways have hindered the sector from establishing a distinct and reputable identity, negatively impacting societal perceptions. This chapter covers the history of the sector from 1896, when technical education began to take shape in Ireland. It explores the challenges the sector has faced, examining the difficulties and significant institutional developments and policy reforms which have shaped its evolution into a vital component of the Irish educational system, which offers diverse and valuable pathways for lifelong learning and career development. This historical context provides background information which helps in understanding the evolution of policies and societal views of the sector, that shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by the FET sector. This context is crucial for analysing why staff may be drawn to teach therein, and developing an understanding of how these factors may contribute to teacher's professional identity (trans-)formation.

2.2. Background To Further Education and Training in Ireland

Ireland's FET sector represents technical, vocational, and practical-based forms of education. This sector is often regarded for its economic significance, serving as a tool for

promoting employability, which overlooks the non-economic, civic benefits of the sector (O'Brien, 2013). As an example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1985, p.92) describe it as education which is:

> …oriented towards employment or makes people more employable in one group of occupations than another. Unlike general education, it has a single point of reference: work.

Clarke (2016) asserts that the FET sector in Ireland had a complex evolution from the vocational educational sector, with historical developments occurring in a disjointed, ambiguous, and isolated manner, heavily entwined with political and religious influences (Dowling, 1961; Coolahan, 1981).

2.3. Defining the FET Sector

The complexity of Ireland's FET sector has resulted in a lack of a conclusive definition, posing ongoing challenges for sectoral identity and the vocabulary used regarding it. Further Education and Training Colleges Ireland (FETCI, 2021, p.9) refer to the wide array of terminology and acronyms in use as a "tyranny of language [which] is increasingly becoming an obstacle to our collaborative efforts." They recognise that while they are endeavouring to bring "uniformity and consolidation to a heavily fragmented and siloed FET system" (p.9), the use of a bewildering range of names causes confusion, resulting in a lack of sectoral recognition. For Rami and O'Kelly (2021, p.279), uncertainty regarding the sector:

> …inhibits the coherence of approaches and understanding of FET. It is difficult to agree on the terminology of what constitutes an educator, a trainer, an instructor, a resource teacher. It can also be challenging for staff in these roles to articulate how the roles relate to the teaching profession.

Descriptions of the FET sector appear to reflect a lack of interest in, or understanding of, the sector (O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020). Often, and unfairly, FET is compared to other educational sectors, in terms of program provision and award outcomes, which ultimately devalues the sector.

The evolution of FET in Ireland is ambiguous and constitutes a broad and diverse sector that exists without a clear identity. "FET is truly unique" (SOLAS, 2020, p.21) and has developed "quite distinctive pedagogies" (Coolahan, 1994, p.100). Attempts at defining this expansive, extra-university educational system are complicated by a lack of clarity regarding not just the sector itself but even its very name. Fitzsimons and O'Neill (2024) recognise that 'FET' is a peculiarly Irish acronym, with 'VET' (Vocational Education and Training) more commonly used across mainland Europe. The unhelpful fluidity regarding

a name exacerbates any confusion regarding what the sector is and what it does. Tomás Ó Ruairc (February 18, 2015), Director of the Teaching Council acknowledged this issue in an address made to the FET Colloquium saying:

> …we in the Council talk about FE, and almost everyone else here talks about FET, and then Europe talks about VET, is a microcosm of the complexities of the issues we are talking about! (p.5).

Later in the same speech he continues:

> …we cannot agree on what we call this learning space (FE, FET, VET) and there seems to be a remarkable lack of consensus about what we mean when we use those terms (p.9).

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 (Government of Ireland, 1999) regards FET as consisting of:

> …programmes of education and training, which leads to the attainment by learners of a standard of knowledge, skill or competence which is not higher than the level at which, before the 3rd day of March 1999, the National Council for Vocational Awards has made awards (Section 10, Subsection 3).

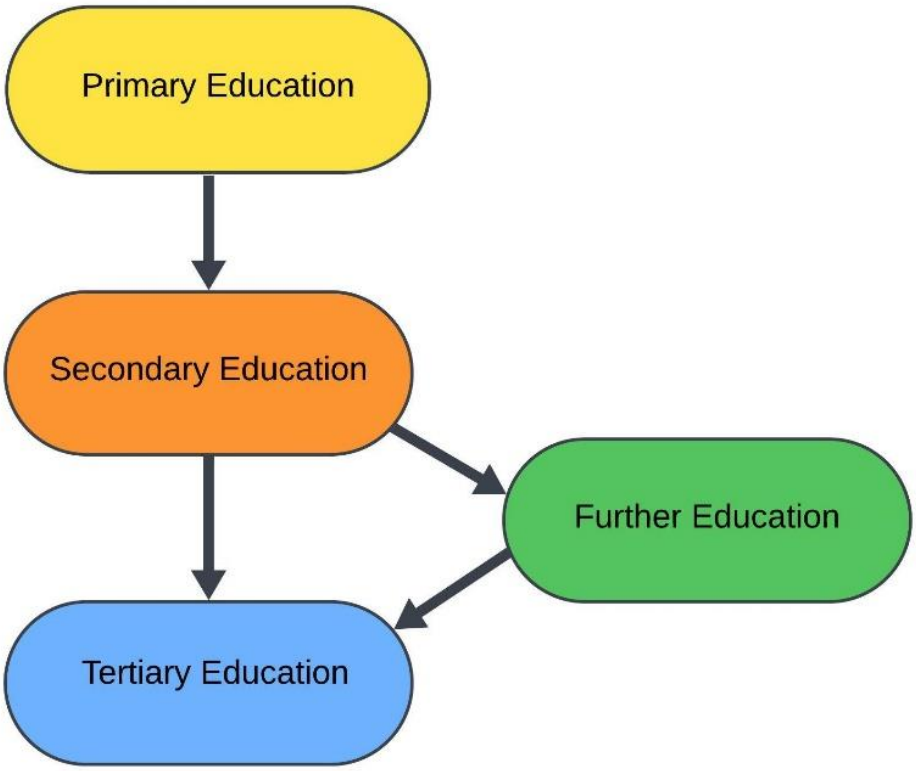
FET is described as "The Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) sector" (The Irish Times, 2006, para. 2) and "sub-tertiary" (Behringer and Coles, 2003, p.6), providing ongoing adult education primarily through community-based programs. O'Sullivan and Rami (2022, p.248) explain the difference between FET and HE, holding that FET "provides the intermediate-level skills for the economy, while the high-level skills are provided by higher education". Attempts at offering definitions frequently focus on what the sector is not, with Grummell and Murray (2015, p.2) seeing it as existing in a "vacuum-like position, defined by its absence and lack of being".

The Department of Higher Education, Innovation and Science compounds the complexity, using an unfair comparison with other educational sectors. It describes FET as education and training that occurs after secondary school but is not part of the third-level system (Department of Higher Education, Innovation and Science, 2021). This echoes a 1999 attempt to define the sector, which vaguely described it as "education and training other than primary or post-primary education or higher education and training" (Government of Ireland ,1999, pt.1, s.2). Essentially, the education that occurs in the FET sector is supra-second level education, in that it occurs above or beyond formal secondary education. The apparent ambiguity regarding FET, reflected in the difficulties in naming it, may be indicative of what O'Neill and Fitzsimons (2020, p.2) view as:

> …a deeper, and ongoing, ideological, and political struggle to name and claim the legitimate purpose and character of adult learning.

Diversity within the FET sector, which is recognised as a distinguishing characteristic, results in parameters which are difficult to define. Due to its development outside the traditional second- and third-level sectors, it does not neatly fit between the two (Geaney, 1998), as illustrated below (Image 2.1).

Image 2.1. Levels and Modes of Education of Ireland [adapted] (Freya's Ireland, 2010).



The Department of Education and Science (2004) acknowledges the diversity and range of educational services provided as a "distinctive feature" (p.21), listing the numerous programs provided as:

> Post Leaving Certificate courses, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (second chance education for the unemployed), programmes in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres for early school leavers, adult literacy and basic education, and self-funded evening adult programmes in second-level schools (p.21).

Despite its educational and sociological values, the Irish vocational sector, particularly FET, has been marginalised, under-resourced and is still perceived as having lower status than HE. This has negatively impacted the prominence and perceived educational quality of FET (O'Brien, 2013; O'Leary and Rami, 2017), a situation which Walsh (2011, p.366), describes as a "legacy of neglect".

FET has been referred to by Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn in 2012 as "the black sheep of the education system" (Flynn, 2012, para.1), "the backwater of the education

system" (McGuire, 2013, para.7), and in 2014 as the "Cinderella of the broader education system" (McGuire, 2014, para.9), which is "sometimes overlooked, often undervalued" (McAuliffe, 2020, para.1). The use of unfavourable language regarding the FET sector results in what McAuliffe (2020, para.2) identifies as a "perception of it as a route that is less valid than higher education, 'second best'". Using negative language undervalues the benefits provided by the sector and may be seen to imply that the FET sector is in some way flawed, with students and staff being seen as "second-class citizens" (The Irish Times, 2006, headline).

FET is a growing sector within the Irish educational framework, providing a diverse range of unique opportunities to progress-orientated or employment-orientated students. It serves as a transitional stage for those preparing to move onto HE or employment, providing a diverse range of educational opportunities for people over the age of 16, who often come from non-traditional academic backgrounds (Mulvey, 2019). Through the provision of full- and part-time programs, students are allowed to partake in courses or apprenticeships that will assist them in progressing along their chosen career path.

Despite uncertainty regarding definitions and boundaries, the FET sector is perceived as being at the core of community life, enabling social cohesion and integration. For O'Leary and Rami (2017, pp.4-5):

> …with a diverse populace of students from all parts of the community and comprising all social groups, FE providers are typically inclusive institutions and have an important role to play in enhancing social integration and social mobility in England as indeed they do in Ireland.

McGuinness *et al*. (2014, p.33) identify the 10 complimentary objectives of FET institutes as "addressing both labour market and social inclusion agendas" with a focus on those who may be considered as "starting from further behind".

In the following sections, a brief historical overview of the development of the FET sector is provided, essentially following the FET timeline offered by Murtagh (2014).

2.4. 1896-1921

By the close of the 19th century, developments in technology, education, and training across Europe coupled with deindustrialisation resulted in Ireland steadily becoming less competitive (Mjoset, 1993). In response, a campaign to integrate technical education into the educational system brought growing pressure on the British government, which held political control of Ireland, to reverse the decline in competitiveness (Ferriter, 2019). The latter half of the 19th century witnessed increasing demands for a system of technical

education in Ireland. In 1896, the unofficial Recess Committee reported that agricultural production could be increased through better organisation and education. This Committee, comprising of prominent figures of all religious and political persuasions, considered a wide range of issues regarding Ireland's social and economic future (O'Doherty and O'Donoghue, 2021). Eventually, in conjunction with sustained pressure for a system of technical and industrially related education in England, the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act 1899, was passed (King, 1998).

This Act recognises the value of technical education, calling for it to be administered by a specific government department. Consequently, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction Ireland (DATI) was established in 1900, to foster economic and industrial growth, creating "an innovative, and original industry-education tandem" (Byrne, 1982, p.237). This pioneering amalgamation of two disparate elements reflects the government's belief that the most appropriate manner of dealing with agricultural development was through higher education.

Unfortunately, the wide-ranging scope of this department's remit meant it was "a polyglot department with wide-ranging and diversified functions" (Byrne, 1982, p.236), and technical education was just one component. Nonetheless, DATI sought to boost Ireland's economic growth and development through endeavouring, for the first time, to regulate apprenticeships and offering evening classes to workers. Individual Technical Instruction Committees (TICs) provided courses that met local demands and co-operated with employers' bodies to develop programs that equipped young people with skills necessary for the growing economy (Duff, Hegarty and Hussey, 2000). These skills included "…cookery, laundry, home nursing, hygiene, and other rural home industries" (Parkes, 1990, p. 16).

By 1902, TICs had established a network of technical schools, focusing heavily on the academic application of art and science to industry rather than the teaching of trades (Hyland, 1983; McGuinness *et al*., 2014; McCloat and Caraher, 2019). This limitation existed because, under the terms of the 1899 Act, technical instruction was viewed as training in the principles of art and science, as appropriate to the needs of industry. The DATI was in fact prohibited from providing instruction which related to any trade or industrial practice (Parkes, 1990).

2.5. 1922- 1965

In 1922, the leaders of the newly formed Irish Free State inherited an educational system which comprised three separate, self-enclosed educational sectors:

i. National – providing primary schooling,
ii. Intermediate –providing academic, secondary education, and
iii. Technical education - providing vocational training.

Technical education at this time is described by Akenson (2012, p.14) as "the poor orphan of the Irish educational world, [due to the] paltry" level of funding it received. In 1924 oversight of technical education was transferred to the newly established Department of Education (DoE) which adopted a hesitant approach towards it, favouring humanities due to religious influence particularly that of the Catholic Church (Walsh, 2011; Clarke, 2012). The Church's historical role as a key contributor of educational resources endowed it with both physical and intellectual assets, allowing it to wield considerable influence and resulted in the governments hesitancy in contesting its authority (Rami and Lalor, 2006). The Commission of Inquiry (Technical Education) 1926 was established to examine the value of technical education in Ireland (Duff, Hegarty, and Hussey, 2000). While the agriculture sector was a major employer, the government recognised the need to develop the industrial sector. This advisory body was further tasked with ensuring that the needs of trade and industry were being met. The commission recommended fundamental change, including the establishment of two distinct educational systems, continuation schools and technical schools, and these recommendations were largely embodied in the Vocational Education Act 1930 (Government of Ireland, 1930) and the Apprenticeship Act 1931 (Government of Ireland, 1931).

Under the Vocational Education Act 1930, a nationwide system of 38 Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) was established. This was reduced to 33 with the amalgamation of 5 town committees with their adjacent county committees. These VECs were to place a specific emphasis on vocational education in addition to the provision of both technical and continuation education to prepare people for the labour market. The emphasis on providing practical, vocational education resulted in VEC schools being restricted and unable to provide general academic education which was to remain solely within the remit of primary and secondary education (Hyland and Milne, 1992; Clarke, 2012). Ó'Buachalla (1989), highlights the consequences of this division, describing how the bishops received a guarantee from the Minister that vocational schools would not offer general or academic education to students aged 14-16, and would not enrol students in state examinations. This curricular separation extended to governance structures, further separating the areas of academic and vocational education. Tuohy (2002) notes the existence of a dual system consisting of two distinct qualification pathways for teachers.

Ribolzi (2002, p.85) views "vocational education and apprenticeship as a system, aimed at realising lifelong education". Apprenticeships are explored more fully in Section 2.11.
In the 1950s, vocational education at all levels was suffering from neglect, with second level education coming under increased criticism for academic bias (McGuinness *et al*., 2014). This bias partly stemmed from the curricular separation of 'academic' and 'technical' education, fostering a belief that academic education was superior. This situation was compounded by the relationship between the Catholic Church and the DoE. Lee (1989, p.361) views the DoE as a "traditionally moribund department", with Coolahan (1989, p.28) holding that it "did not have a distinguished record in taking initiatives". Lack of innovation resulted in disparity in program delivery between rural and urban areas, slow development of courses, and a lack of uniformity in the educational attainment of students. Consequently, the status of the vocational education system was sub-standard (Clarke, 2016). By way of context, the mid-1950s are seen to reflect a period of significant challenge and introspection. Ó'Gráda and O'Rourke (2022) starkly contend that this period represents a low point for the Irish economy, with a key public policy document acknowledging that concerns about Ireland's economic future were justified, questioning whether 35 years of "native government" (p.340) could secure satisfactory economic progress.
At secondary level more academically inclined students often attended private, fee-paying denominational schools. Tuohy (2002, p.104) held that the private schools unfairly:

> … "creamed off" the more academically able, and the rest went to the vocational schools. The general philosophy was that students with low academic ability were better suited to practical subjects.

Consequently, vocational schools often served a higher proportion of less engaged students who frequently viewed them as a temporary solution until a better opportunity presented itself (Coolahan, 1981). Vocational students were restricted to taking the Group Certificate examinations, being excluded from the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. Hence, the opportunity to sit the leaving certificate examinations was only available to a small minority, which Lee (1989, p.336) called "the then status symbol of a completed secondary education." Scholarship exams were available to enable a limited number of students without the financial means to pay the required fees to attend secondary schools and so take up academic education. This continued until the introduction of the free education scheme in 1966 which made secondary education free (Ó'Buachalla, 1988).
A small number of HE entrance scholarships were available to leaving certificate students, based upon examination results (Coolahan, 1981). Consequently, only small numbers of students had the opportunity to progress to HE or technical training which Walsh (2011,

p.366) explained as involving "training for skilled technical employment or attainment of professional qualifications in technical subjects". The lack of progression negatively impacted the employment prospects of those not afforded the opportunity. Increased competition in the labour market based on educational level saw the poorly educated being restricted to temporary, low-income jobs. At the higher level, training to receive professional qualifications in areas such as metal manufacture and building (Jackson, 1986) was limited geographically and financially.

The late 1950s saw the introduction of some daring economic policies, which effectively transformed Ireland from a country dependent on agriculture to one where industry played an increasingly important role (Kearns, 1974). Industrialisation heightened demand for appropriately skilled workers, prompting the government to support vocational education to meet labour market needs (Walsh, 2011). At this time, technical and vocational education was neglected and vastly underdeveloped, and the need for increased capital development was becoming clearer. Following a period of stagnation in Irish education the 1960s represent a time of significant transformation. Between 1960 and 1980, the wide range of reports on education reflected the proactive approach taken by the state in educational planning, leading to the establishment of many new secondary and third level institutions (Coolahan, 1981; Fleming and Harford, 2014).

In 1961, The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) who had previously identified scientific research and education as key elements in attaining economic growth, were invited by the DoE to undertake a review of technical education in Ireland. This was part of what Walsh (2011, p.367) considers a "dramatic reassessment in the Irish state's policy", which coincided with Irelands application to join the European Economic Community in 1962 under the Rome Treaty (Cooke, 2009). The OECD report (OECD, 1964) highlights a lack of awareness regarding both the need for vocational education and the limited investment in the sector.

This apparent lack of understanding may have been a consequence of Ireland's agri-food based economy, with the paucity of investment resulting from economic constraints. To achieve industrialisation several concurrent commissions were established to explore all facets of the Irish educational system. The 1960 Commission on Higher Education recommended the establishment of "New Colleges, distributed among the regions of the country…within a clear binary concept of higher education" (Government of Ireland, 1967, p. 49). This binary system was reflective of what O'Sullivan (2021, p.200) refers to as "Ireland's historical bias towards the academic over the vocational". A binary system for Godwin (1998, p.171) involves:

> …a dual system of autonomous universities on the one hand, and on the other polytechnics and colleges offering sub-degree work and possibly some degree courses under the auspices of a central accreditation body.

Universities are viewed in The Report of the Commission (Governmrnt of Ireland, 1967, p.122) as:

> …a place for the study and communication of basic knowledge. The university is the repository of the highest standards in teaching and scholarship… [adding] to existing knowledge and advances it beyond its present frontier.

The report also envisaged that 'New Colleges' would offer specifically vocationally focused courses, in "the humanistic, the scientific, and the commercial" (p. 127) fields, at pass degree level. This suggests that while there was apparent equality of opportunity, the inequality remained through capping the academic awards available through vocational education. These 'New Colleges', it was hoped, would relieve some of the pressure from an anticipated increase in demand for university places. Breatnach *et al.* (1968, p.10), commenting on the 1967 Report, note assurances that New Colleges would be vocationally focused and would not be classed as inferior. Their role was to award "a different kind of qualification based on a different kind of course".

While this Commission was working (1960-1967), on 20th May 1963, the Minister for Education announced proposals for the establishment of ten Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), essentially signalling the establishment of a "non-university sector" (O'Hara, 2010, November 27, p.1). McCoy and Smyth (2011, p.243), highlighting the entrenched two-tier system in HE, describe the division as:

> …a 'first tier' University sector and 'second tier' Institute of Technology sector, [with] distinct historical contexts and positions within Irish education.

2.6. 1966 - 1992

In 1966, a Steering Committee on Technical Education was appointed, which recognised the lack of suitable expertise in the workforce, noting that:

> Irish people generally have not had the opportunity to become technically skilled and the academic bias in the educational system has not helped this… (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1967, p.7).

The Committee in what may be considered as another key moment in the evolution of the two-tier HE system, recommended the establishment of a National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA). This would be the awarding body for certificates and diplomas, providing for the first time at national level a framework for recognising qualifications obtained through technical courses (Government of Ireland, 1979).

The 1980s witnessed an era of economic crisis, with long-term mass unemployment and political and economic instability. The white paper on educational development (Government of Ireland, 1980) recognises the guidelines of the 1973 report (Murphy, 1973) on adult education, prioritising among other areas "those wishing to avail of second-chance education" (Coolahan, 1981, p.275) in addition to promoting "technological and applied studies which have a direct relationship with manpower requirements" (*ibid*., p.252). Furthermore, the VECs were "seen as having an important role in the development of comprehensive adult education services attuned to local needs" (*ibid*., p.275).

At this time, the FET sector became primarily linked with the areas of labour market activation and social inclusion, which for Magee *et al.* (2018, p.36) is:

> …something complex and interwoven. It is not simply about presence at community activities but about belonging and contributing.

Williams (2008) portrays the role of further education as bringing about social inclusion through the promotion of employability skills for those who were unemployed. She notes that in addition to the broader social benefits which are frequently focused upon, involvement in work brings with it financial benefits which lift both individuals and entire communities out of poverty. In contrast higher education was seen as focusing instead on structural development, economic concerns and the "economic imperative" (O'Sullivan and Rami, 2022, p.287). While employability skills undeniably enhance access to the labour market, the assumption that social inclusion is inherently achieved through employment oversimplifies the complexities of marginalisation. Equating employment with inclusion overlooks the presence of structural inequalities which may be rooted, for example, in socioeconomic status or race. Narrowly focusing on employability may inadvertently reinforce a transactional view of education, sidelining its transformative potential (Mintz, 2024; Tanima et al., 2024).

In 1985, Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programmes were introduced in post-primary schools, with almost 16,000 participants in 344 schools (Lewis and Kellaghan, 1987). 39 were comprehensive or community schools, 118 were secondary schools (21.5% of national total number of secondary schools) and 223 were vocational schools (91% of national total of vocational schools) (Ó'Buachalla, 1985). Initially designed to provide vocational and flexible education to those transitioning into the labour market, these programmes, also known as Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, were described as the "principal transition course in Irish education" (O'Sullivan and Rami, 2022, p.278).

In 1987, the Labour Services Act (Government of Ireland, 1987) saw AnCo being amalgamated with the Youth Employment Authority and the National Manpower Service

to create one agency - An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) (See Section 2.11). Unlike previous bodies, FÁS was not modelled upon a UK design but was instead modelled on a combination of European archetypes. The Apprenticeship Act, 1993 (Government of Ireland, 1993) instituted standards-based training and empowered FÁS to develop training regulations for fourteen industrial apprenticeships, including mandatory off-the-job educational components delivered over blocks of time and not in one day segments. In 1994 FÁS also created the Community Employment Scheme, an ambitious initiative to get 40,000 long-term unemployed to engage in community-based, temporary, and part-time job placements (Wolfe, O'Donoghue-Hynes, and Hayes, 2013).

Boyle (2005) highlights the independence which FÁS enjoyed, noting that the governmental department with responsibility for FÁS, the Department of Labour, was never in control of FÁS or its budget. Attempts to either disband or gain control failed on numerous occasions. Interestingly, EU funding for programs went directly to FÁS and was not administered by the Department of Finance. However, a series of scandals related to spending arose in 2008 and five years later in 2013, Ruairí Quinn, the Minister for Education and Skills dissolved FÁS. In its place, a smaller organisation, SOLAS, was established, which assumed the apprenticeship function previously provided by FÁS (Frawley, 2013; McGuinness *et al*., 2014).

2.7. 1993-2007

The 1990s witnessed increased attention on educational policy with a focus on its relevance for economic growth and societal transformation (Clancy, 1996). In 1993, a report compiled by the National Economic and Social Council called for both an increased recognition of, and orientation towards, vocational education at all levels of education (Mjoset, 1993). This it was argued would enable employment growth, as many jobs required vocational rather than degree level education. In the same year, The Report on the National Education Convention (Coolahan, 1994, p.104), warned that:

> …one of the central problems in Adult Education, until now, has been a lack of coherent policy. It is clear that a policy framework for adult education is essential. Adult, Community, and Continuing education will be further disadvantaged unless it is brought into the mainstream.

To accomplish this the establishment of the Further Education Authority and clarification of roles among Government Departments was deemed necessary. In addition, Coolahan (1994, p.104) acknowledges the requirement for more adequate accreditation procedures, and the "obvious potential for an intermediate educational tier".

‘Charting Our Education Future’, the White Paper on Education, (Department of Education and Science, 1995) recognises the rapid growth in the provision of vocational education and training, however, it again was critical of the lack of coherence in the sector warning that developments have occurred in “an *ad hoc* and unstructured manner” (p.77), and it calls for future developments to be carried out in a more controlled way, which needed to be responsive to both student requirements and societal needs.

The Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education (Higher Education Authority, 1995) emphasises the need for an interface between further and higher education, which would increase access to HE for those who do not progress directly from secondary school. The evolution of further education would however have the effect of blurring the distinction between the two sectors (Clancy, 1996). Despite their distinctiveness, this blurring has the potential to widen access to HE for students in the FET sector, through developing and strengthening progression and transfer links between the sectors. Gallacher (2006, p.50) notes the use of “articulation arrangements” between colleges of further education and higher education institutes in Scotland. These consist of a blend of formal and informal arrangements some of which guaranteed places to allow students to progress. These articulation links, like the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS) (Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 2021a), also help students plan their educational journey by clarifying credit transfer, progression routes, qualification relationships, and entry and exit points.

A Government Green Paper, ‘Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning’ (Department of Education and Science, 1998), examines adult and post-leaving certificate education structures. It recommends expanding PLC, VTOS, and Youthreach courses, providing free education for the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups and introducing fees for other participants in educational and training programmes. A key aspect of this paper is its emphasis on formal recognition of teaching for Adult Education providers in the FET sector, while retaining the sectors flexibility. Implementation of this recommendation was considered a means of regulating standards, promoting accountability and autonomy, professionalising teaching, and encouraging ongoing professional development among FET teachers.

The Education Act 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998) was the first comprehensive educational legislation set out by the State, formalising many of the already existing educational practices and promoting equality of access to adult and continuous education. Shortly afterwards, the National Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 (Government of Ireland, 1999, P1, S2:4b & 4j) was enacted, which set out to “...promote

the quality of further education and training" and "…to promote diversity in education and training between further education and training and higher education and training".

The late 1990s and early part of the new millennium saw a period of significant economic growth and social change (Rami and Lalor, 2006). During this time, 'Learning for Life' - the Government White Paper on Adult Learning (Department of Education and Science, 2000) was produced. This initiated, among other things, an expansion of PLC courses. In 2003, The McIver Report (Department of Education and Science, 2003) recognises the distinctiveness of the FET sector despite ongoing issues, related to staffing and the use of a post-primary governance model. These elements, in addition to the use of the post-primary academic calendar in the FET sector, and "colleges operating in what are essentially second-level structures" (The Irish Times, 2006, para.3), continue to blur the distinctiveness of the sector, and suggests that FET is of a lower standing than HE (O'Leary and Rami, 2017).

Further Education and Training Colleges Ireland (FETCI) note that despite plans to integrate tertiary education, the FET sector continues to operate within a post-primary model of administration, unlike other HE institutions (Further Education and Training Colleges Ireland, no date). This governance structure includes the necessity for FET teachers to be registered with the Teaching Council. Registration follows several different routes, with Route 3 applying to FE. To be eligible for such registration, individuals must meet the degree qualification requirements and hold an accredited, initial teacher education for further education qualification (Teaching Council, 2015a). This requirement came into effect on 1st January 2019, in accordance with the Teaching Council (Registration) Regulations 2016 (Teaching Council, 2016) and Teaching Council (Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (Government of Ireland, 2016). This blending of dissonant elements adds to the ambiguity regarding the FET sector. For Rami and O'Kelly (2021, p.279):

> …second-level teachers working in FET are clear about their recognition as teachers as defined by the Teaching Council. New entrants into FET from the Council through Route 3 are less clear about this, as they currently straddle a well-defined traditional model of teaching in second-level compulsory education and a less well recognised - or, we would suggest, less well understood – model of teaching, training, and facilitation in FET.

2.8. 2008-2020

In 2008, the period of prosperity came to a crashing halt, plunging the global economy into recession, which slowed the rate of changes being implemented within the FET sector. In 2011, Ruairí Quinn announced the establishment of a new further education and training

authority, An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), which would be the strategic directing body for FET. The Further Education and Training Act (Government of Ireland, 2013a) was published in July 2013, leading to the dissolution of FÁS and the formal establishment of SOLAS, in addition to an assessment of the nature of FET provision and the implementation of a strategic plan for the sector (McGuinness *et al*., 2014). The emphasis for SOLAS was to support those who wish to:

> …attain and refresh economically-valuable skills to access and sustain all types of employment, tackling skills shortages and boosting the future growth and competitiveness of the Irish economy (SOLAS, 2014, p.51).

This new FET authority operated under the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and was to oversee the areas of funding, planning and coordination of national programmes for FET but not specifically for VET. However, it does encompass PLC courses, internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training, as well as adult and community education, which are essentially where vocational education and training occurs (O'Leary and Rami, 2017). In addition, it was charged with promoting an appreciation of FET (Quinn, 2013), and ensuring the delivery of relevant, high-quality educational programs, in a similar manner to the HEA. This work would be undertaken in collaboration with the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), HEA, QQI, and relevant State bodies and Government departments. McGuinness *et al*. (2014, p.23) describe the relationship between SOLAS and the ETBs as:

> …responsible for the delivery of co-ordinated education and training programmes across Ireland, while SOLAS will focus on planning, funding, and driving the development of a new integrated FET sector.

In May, the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013 (Government of Ireland, 2013b) introduced significant structural reforms in FET, streamlining the system by replacing the 33 VECs with 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). These became the statutory educational authorities for a wide range of educational provisions, including at the FET level. Prior to their dissolution, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn notes that:

> Today VECs provide a complex network of education and training provision in a varied range of settings. The role of VECs has grown far beyond what was envisaged and legislated for in 1930…VECs play a central role in the provision of adult and further education programmes, including PLC courses, the Back to Education initiative, community education, the Youthreach programme and the VTOS (Quinn, 2012, para.2).

In 2014, the first National FET Strategy 2014-2019 (SOLAS, 2014) was published, establishing the strategic direction for the FET Sector. This strategy identifies five high level strategic goals which are intended to aid in the development of "a world-class

integrated system of further education and training in Ireland, which will promote economic development and meet the needs of all citizens" (p. 120). These goals include:

i. Skills for the Economy
ii. Active Inclusion
iii. Quality Provision
iv. Integrated Planning and Funding
v. Standing of FET

This strategy, in conjunction with strategic processes implemented by both QQI and SOLAS ultimately enhances the convergence of the HE and FET sectors (O'Sullivan and Rami, 2022).

2.9. 2020 - 2023

Recent years have seen significant reforms in the FET sector, initiated by the 2013 Further Education and Training Act (Glanton, 2023). In 2020, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science was established, overseeing funding, policy formation and governance of the HE, FET, and research sectors. This inclusion of 'Further Education' elevates the visibility of vocational education pathways, acknowledging the sector as an important component in the educational system. That same year the second FET strategy, "Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020-2024" (SOLAS, 2020) was published, recognising the sectors historical challenges with serving marginalised and lower socio-economic groups (O'Kelly *et al.*, 2017). It aims to create a more cohesive post-secondary school sector, with a stronger identity, by simplifying structures, enhancing access pathways and boosting funding to raise the sector's contribution and profile.

On May 25th, 2022, Simon Harris, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and a strong advocate of the FET sector, launched an online public consultation to progress a unified Tertiary Education System. The need for change and unity in the tertiary education sector is echoed in the subsequent Public Consultation Report (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2022), which calls for equality for FET graduates who wish to enter Higher Education course through "streamlining and clarifying" (p. 15) the entry requirements. In June 2022, the final report by the Independent Expert Panel (SOLAS, 2022) was produced, and focuses on future funding for the FET sector. Following this, in July 2022, Minister Harris announced plans to move to an outcome-based funding model for FET, which ultimately will bring about improvements for those considered as most vulnerable.

As a result of the €3.7 billion investment in the Higher Education, Further Education and Training, Research and Innovation sectors made in Budget 2022, student course contributions are abolished, beginning with the 2023-24 academic year (Government of Ireland, 2022). Funding on this level is perhaps indicative of the value and contribution made by the FET Sector and illustrates a move away from viewing the FET sector as the Cinderella of the educational system, and instead celebrating its dynamism and diversity and recognising the key role it plays in the education and economic development. Positivity surrounding the sector is noted by Maloney (2021, p.14) who recognises the FET sectors move from:

> …an under-valued and under-funded sector, to a distinct and valuable part of the Irish education system underpinned by policy, strategy, and legislation.

Consequently, teaching within the FET sector has the potential to move from a misunderstood career into what O'Doherty and Harford (2018, p.657) call a "sophisticated profession".

2.10. Policy Reform

Reforming educational policy is a complex process requiring both top-down and grassroots strategies, in addition to change at both personal and societal levels. Significant reforms may face obstacles brought about by impractical infrastructure. Ireland has undergone significant political and social changes over the last century, which influenced education policies and strategies. Throughout the years, initiatives related to education and training may have been influenced by societal needs, stakeholders with vested interests, and broader government plans and legislative acts (O'Brien, 2013; Fleming, Harford, and Hyland, 2022; Hearne *et al.*, 2022). This section provides an overview of some of the key policies regarding the Irish FET sector.

The Vocational Education Act (1930) (Government of Ireland, 1930) established VECs in Ireland, which were to play a significant role in the provision of practical education and training at a local level. The late 1950s saw Ireland facing an economic crisis, which severely impacted economic, social, and political growth. Harford (2010, p.352) acknowledges that from the 1960s education has been identified by the Irish government as a "central plank of national policy".

The Industrial Training Act (1967) (Government of Ireland, 1967) marks a step forward towards more structured vocational training. Again, while not solely focused on further education, it aims to improve industrial training in Ireland. Shortly afterwards, the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act (1970) (Government of Ireland, 1970) was

passed, updating the Vocational Education Acts 1930-1962, further emphasising the importance of technical and vocational education. The 1970s saw a steep rise in the levels of unemployment in Ireland, perhaps exacerbated by over-emphasis on academic education, to the detriment of vocational training. Consequently, school leavers were frequently inadequately trained to enter the workforce (Barry and Bradley, 1991). The Youth Employment Agency was established by an act of government (Government of Ireland, 1981) to promote youth employment and training, marking a concerted effort to address both youth unemployment and skills development.

For the FET sector, coherent policy formation is made more problematic by the lack of clear definition regarding its context within the Irish educational system. A Green Paper, 'Education for a Changing World' (Government of Ireland, 1992), is the first in a series of collaborative and consultative documents produced and aims to involve the various stakeholders in the policy process. It asserts that the education system:

> …must seek to interact with the world of work to promote the employability of its students and in playing its part in the country's economic development (p.35).

Furthermore, it recognises the importance of a skilled and dedicated teaching force to maintain education quality, promote personal development and encourage critical thinking and civic engagement amongst students (O'Brien, 2013). It notes that the teaching profession consistently draws individuals of "high calibre and intelligence" (p.163) and is highly regarded for its significant contribution to society. It commends the high quality of initial teacher training for primary and secondary teachers but does not explore the provision of second career, or FET specific, teacher training. In addition, it acknowledges the need for, and imminent institution of, a Teaching Council which would be the governing body for all teachers. For Coolahan (2007, p.36), The Teaching Council represents an "overall cohesive agency to co-ordinate multi-faceted action", giving teaching a degree of professional status (Sexton, 2007). Prior to the establishment of the Teaching Council, teacher appointments were made under circular 32 of 1992 (Department of Education and Science, 1992) (See Appendix A), which lays out the educational requirement for employment and the planned review into maintaining the requirement for Irish to obtain a permanent post.

Policy creation for the FET sector is strongly influenced by international agencies including the European Commission and the OECD (Russell, 2017). The White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment (European Commission, 1994) explores the role of vocational training as a valuable instrument in improving economic growth and employment. It notes the vital role of education in fostering individual development,

driving growth, and creating employment. Subsequent EU policy documents (Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2002; 2004; 2006; 2008; 2010; 2015) recognise learner diversity and the demands placed upon teachers. Emphasis is frequently placed on the need for highly qualified teachers, ongoing professional development, and international cooperation within the FET/VET sector to enhance educational quality.

In 1993, a six-year National Development Plan (Government of Ireland, 1993), was submitted to the European Commission by the National Social Partnership. This plan explores, among other things, ways of reintegrating the long-term unemployed back into society, using "multi-dimensional strategies [including]…training and education" (p.6). A subsequent government White Paper, entitled 'Charting our Education Future' (Department of Education and Science, 1995, p.4), has as its core aim to:

> …address itself to the policy framework that can best embrace the diverse and multiple requirements for education action in the future.

It makes specific reference to the increase in teacher developmental requirements and the need for a national policy system, which is both effective and cohesive. It notes the need for a unified national policy and an extensive professional development programme for teachers. This programme should prepare them to adapt to significant changes within the education system while also addressing both personal and professional development needs. Later the FET Strategy 2014-2019 (SOLAS, 2014, p.110) recognises that enhancing the skills of FET teachers needs to consider subject expertise and challenges in aligning teaching resources with industry requirements. They also note that any policy regarding professional development of teachers within the FET sector must be cognisant of the specific abilities and needs of what Rami and O'Kelly (2017, p.273) referred to as:

> …a diverse group of teachers and tutors not necessarily trained in pedagogical competences and theory [who are] are providing engaging and valuable education and training programmes to distinct and challenging sets of learners.

Nevertheless, while the high level of initial teacher education provided in Ireland and the importance of teaching to national policy making have been recognised, Rami and O'Kelly (2021) note that while SOLAS advocates for a professional development model, there is no sector-wide mandatory teaching qualification standard. This may be the result of factors including the historical development of the sector, varied entry routes into teaching, the variety of contexts in which it operates, and a lack of sectoral research.

2.11. Apprenticeships

Ireland's FET system is strongly linked to the training of apprentices. Akkerman and Bakker (2012, p.153) view apprenticeships as "valuable learning and working trajectories for making successful transitions and relations between school and work". The European Council (2018, para. 4) considers apprenticeships as:

> …an essential element in vocational education and training systems. They are of benefit to both employers and learners. They strengthen the link between the world of work and the world of education and training. In addition to providing a pathway to excellence, quality apprenticeships also help encourage active citizenship and social inclusion by integrating people of different social backgrounds into the labour market.

Apprenticeships form a key component in economic revival, and diversifying available apprenticeship schemes has the potential to improve not only their visibility but their reputation, with them being viewed as a viable alternative to a purely academic path (University of Limerick, no date). However, the value of apprenticeships in Ireland is often overlooked or negatively perceived (Gray and Farrell, 2020).

Sadly, the status of apprenticeship training is not always held in high regard, resulting in it remaining somewhat ambiguous and isolated. Apprentice training appears to reside in a space outside school-based educational and vocational provision, a position which has resulted in it becoming the "Cinderella of the Cinderella service" (Rocks, Fazel, and Tsiachristas, 2019, p.5). It is regrettably noted by Gray and Farrell (2020, p.229) that "Ireland has the worst participation in apprenticeship schemes in Europe", a fact which is perhaps due to this prevailing attitude.

As previously noted, at the dawn of the 20th century, DATI had attempted for the first time to regulate apprenticeships in Ireland. This endeavour failed, as according to Nyhan (2009), the apprenticeship tradition which Ireland has inherited after independence, was non-regulated, relying on the voluntary support of employers. The discretionary nature of the incumbent apprenticeship model meant there was no compulsion on employers to comply with policies, until the enactment of the Apprenticeship Act 1931 (Government of Ireland, 1931). This Act sought to regulate apprentice education and training, wages, and duration, by placing limited obligations on employers and the establishment of apprenticeship committees. The enactment of these two pieces of legislation within a short timeframe effectively separated vocational education and apprenticeships, but apprenticeship training and support were provided by the VECs under the auspices of continuation education (Mulvey, 2019).

The 1931 Act failed largely due to the inability of trade unions and employers to cooperate. To remedy these issues, it was superseded by the Apprenticeship Act, 1959 (Government of Ireland, 1959), which had taken seven years to draft. From this act a new body was established, An Cheard Chomhairle, The Apprenticeship Board. This act attempted to reform the haphazard training of apprentices through voluntary cooperation and taking a broader approach to training which was deemed necessary given the rapid changes occurring within the labour market. The Apprenticeship Board set about standardising the length of apprenticeships, entry requirements and the format apprenticeships were to take. Attempts to establish a quality, standards-based apprenticeship program, to replace the previous system were largely unsuccessful, often due to a lack of employer support and monitoring (Boyle, 2005).

In 1966 the Department of Labour was established, and a year later The Apprenticeship Act, 1959 was repealed with the enactment of The Industrial Training Act (Government of Ireland, 1967). This act gave rise to An Chomhairle Oiliuna (AnCO), with the goal of providing training to individuals which would attract industry into the country. AnCO's formation was initially based upon the Industry Training Board model being used at that time in the UK and was seen to be representative of the interests of trade unions, employers, and the education sector (Boyle, 2005). Even though AnCO had the power to compel employers to release apprentices to partake in educational modules, almost 40% of apprentices were not released (Nyhan, 2009). A report by the National Economic and Social Council (1985, p.109) starkly testified that:

> …the system of apprenticeship had reached such a moribund and arthritic state that it would eventually die a slow death, especially in areas where rapid technological change is taking place.

Reviewing the situation, Ryan (2000, p.59) sums up the appalling state of apprentice training saying:

> Irish apprenticeship was in the 1980s an archaic, publicly unregulated, and declining institution, restricted mostly to craft occupations in industry and construction, that certified apprentices according to time-served rather than vocational competence.

In 1987, the merger of AnCO, the Youth Employment Authority and the National Manpower Service under the Labour Services Act (Government of Ireland, 1987) formed FÁS, which oversaw various training programmes, including apprenticeships, until it was disbanded and replaced by SOLAS (See Section 2.8). This act also established Youthreach in 1988 (See Section 2.12) (McGuinness *et al*., 2014). Since 2016, Ireland has significantly expanded its apprenticeship offerings beyond traditional craft apprenticeships, introducing

statutory apprenticeships in a wide range of sectors including finance and healthcare. This expansion has been driven by collaboration between industry stakeholders and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which have played an important role in the development of new apprenticeship programmes. These initiatives have aimed to modernise and elevate the concept of apprenticeships, aligning them with contemporary workforce needs and offering more diverse career pathways. The involvement of HEIs has ensured that these apprenticeships are not only industry-relevant but also provide recognised academic qualifications, further enhancing their appeal and value.

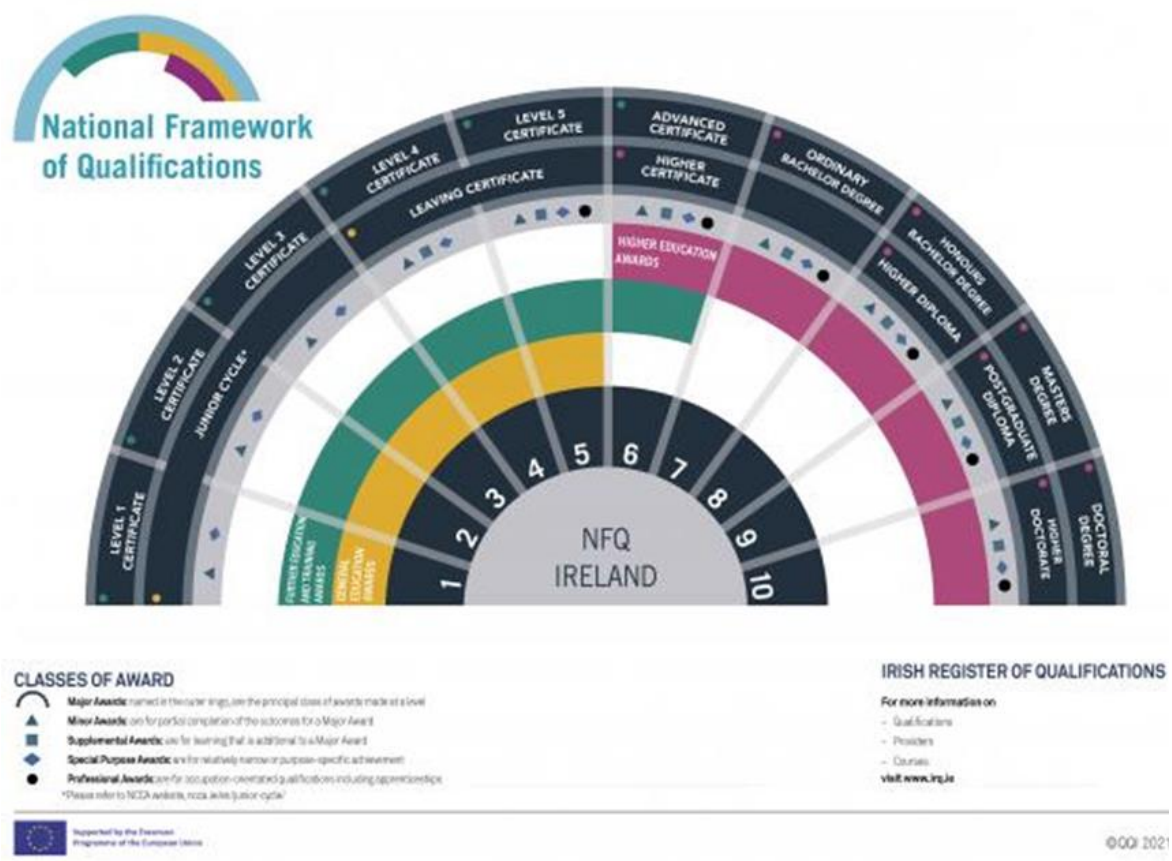
2.12. Youthreach

Youthreach is a programme offering second-chance educational and training opportunities in alternative settings for unemployed 15-to-20-year-olds, aiming to re-engage them with education. Many participants are early school leavers facing educational, social, and economic disadvantages. They have left post-primary schools, either by choice or expulsion, with no formal qualifications (McGuinness *et al*., 2014; Cahill *et al.,* 2020). Classes are typically smaller that in mainstream schools, with a strong focus placed on personal development as well as literacy and numeracy skills (Banks and Smyth, 2021).

2.13. Awarding Bodies

The 1980s raised the issue of mutual recognition of qualifications across Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC). This brought about discussion regarding the Irish Qualifications Systems and the potential for extending the remit of the NCEA. Instead of expansion, the decision was made to establish the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA). From 1991, the NCVA granted awards for post-leaving certificate courses and was replaced in 2001 by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), which was the first time a single organisation had certified all FET programs and provided a "horizontal convergence process within FET" (O'Sullivan and Rami, 2022, p.283). A vertical convergence between FET and HE was provided by the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), wherein all qualifications were presented in the same format, which allowed easier progression opportunities (See Image 2.2).

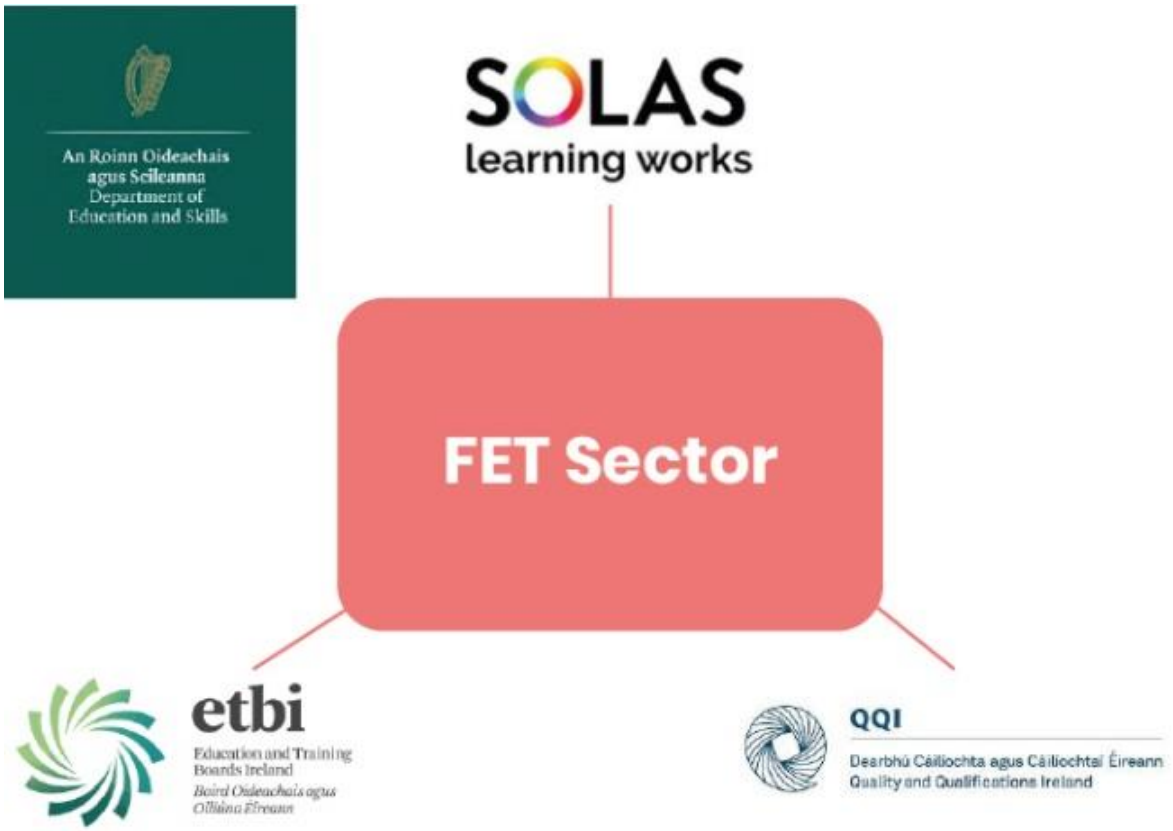
Image 2.2. National Framework of Qualifications (QQI, 2021b).



On 6 November 2012, FETAC was dissolved, with its functions and the functions of other awarding bodies, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), being passed to a new integrated agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

QQI has a broad remit within the education and training sector in Ireland. In addition to granting and recognising awards, and developing the NFQ (See Image 2.2), it also has responsibility for the external quality assurance of the FET sector. The move from a multiplicity of awarding bodies across the FET and HE sectors, to just one, ensures that educational awards are easily comparable and that learners have access to transfer and progression opportunities across the entire tertiary educational sector. This step has had a positive impact, albeit minimal, regarding perceptions of the FET sector. The establishment of the ETB's, QQI, and SOLAS, formed what O'Sullivan and Rami (2022, p. 287) referred to as "the FET Triangle" (See Image 2.3).

Image 2.3. The FET Triangle (Munro, 2020. p.278).



While all actors may appear as being equal, O'Sullivan and Rami (2022, p.272) acknowledge that within this trinity exist:

> SOLAS, as the policy coordinator and funder, the ETBs as the providers, and QQI as the quality standards and certification body.

Perhaps, there exists an unspoken hierarchy, with SOLAS and QQI setting the strategic direction for the ETBs to follow. While QQI validates the FET sector through its accreditation system, there are still misconceptions and a lack of consensus regarding what FET is and what it does. Crucially, the "legacy of neglect" (Walsh, 2011, p.366), and current practices and language used to relate to the FET sector has resulted in an air of inferiority. This may persist until FET is no longer perceived as merely an alternative route running parallel to universities, offering alternative routes to higher or professional qualifications Instead, FET needs to be recognised as a route with the same validity and value as the traditional higher education pathways provided by universities.

2.14. Summary

The FET sector is recognised as a uniquely important, yet poorly understood element of the Irish educational environment. This chapter provides the foundation for understanding the current landscape in which SCTs work. By examining the sectors evolution, it

highlights the unique challenges and opportunities that shape the professional environment, informing the analysis. Vocational training has evolved in Ireland over the last 120 years, and it continues to change to meet the needs of students, the economy, and society. Policy and legislation have resulted in the creation of an educational sector which has often struggled to fit in.

Historically, the professional identity of teachers in the Irish FET sector has been shaped by a fragmented and evolving educational system. This system has operated on the margins of mainstream education and given its focus on vocational training and addressing unemployment, it has been influenced by socio-economic priorities and policy shifts. The result has been that teachers are often framed as facilitators of workforce readiness and not as professionals (Dille and Røkenes, 2021). The lack of a unified qualification framework and a policy for teacher development has further negatively impacted professional recognition. While the establishment of SOLAS emphasised lifelong learning, its focus on employability reinforced the economic narrative of FET, framing teachers in terms of labour market activation (Nada, 2023). These historical dynamics have resulted in enduring challenges in professional identity (trans-)formation, including under-recognition and precarious employment.

In chapter three, literature related to motivations for, and challenges in, career change is presented. In addition, literature exploring second-career teachers, and professional identity formation is offered.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the motivations for career change and to explore the process of professional identity (trans-)formation among second-career teachers (SCTs) working within the Irish Further Education and Training (FET) sector. The literature reviewed in this chapter includes national and international literature which focuses on SCTs and motivations for career change. The dawning of the new millennium has witnessed an increase in literature related to SCTs (See Appendix B). Some of the literature focuses on the motivational factors and experiences of student-teachers, others explore those of newly qualified or experienced teachers. A lacuna regarding literature which specifically focuses on SCTs within the Irish FET sector is noted. The text in Section 3.2 discusses the process of conducting a literature review for this study. Section 3.3 examines the concept of teaching as a career, while Section 3.4 offers definitions of second-career teachers. Section 3.5 focuses on motivation for pursuing teaching as a career. Section 3.6 examines the pathways into teaching as a second career. Section 3.7 discusses the various careers previously pursued by SCTs as reported in the literature. Section 3.8 focuses on the development of a professional teacher identity, while the benefits that SCTs bring into the teaching profession is discussed in Section 3.9. Section 3.10 explores the importance of supportive relationships. Finally, the challenges faced by SCTs are highlighted in Section 3.11.

3.2. Literature Review Process

The literature review provides an overview of the main themes and subthemes found within current, pertinent academic literature (Denney and Tewksbury, 2013). It is a process which involves the systematic, comprehensive examination of existing research, relevant to the chosen topic. It begins by identifying key themes and concepts pertinent to the research question, then searching for, analysing, and synthesizing information found in these sources to both form a coherent arrangement of, and identify gaps within, current literature (Rewhorn, 2018).

3.2.1. Scoping and Planning

Based upon the systematic process described by Koutsos, Menexes, and Dordas (2019), relevant databases to be searched are identified, namely ‘Academic Search Complete’,

'Education Research Complete', 'ERIC International', and 'Google Scholar'. A preliminary search is then conducted using previously identified search terms, to ascertain relevant national and international literature regarding the motivations for SCTs choosing a career in the FET Sector in Ireland. No limiters are initially set relating to date, academic journals, or peer reviewed articles, to gauge the volume of literature available. Following initial reading of literature, another more detailed search is conducted, using an expanded vocabulary with variant forms of search terms employed.

These new key words are used with Boolean operators to create search strings. Boolean operators allow a search to be broadened or narrowed as required, using words like "AND" "OR" or "NOT", reducing the risk of inadvertently limiting the search (Jaffe and Cowell, 2014). The wildcard character (*) is also included. This indicated that all possible endings of truncated words, used in the search should be included, allowing variant forms of the search terms to be identified. These are entered into each database singularly, or in different combinations, and change as appropriate, to retrieve relevant literature (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Examples of Search Terms

Career Change	Motivation	Challenges	Additional Words added via Boolean Operators 'AND', 'OR'	Additional Words added via Boolean Operator 'NOT'
"Second career teacher"	"Second career teacher" AND "motivat*"	"Second career teacher" AND "Challen*"	"Further Education"	"Northern Ireland"
"Second-career teacher"	"Second-career teacher" AND "motivat*"	"Second-career teacher" AND "Challen*"	"Further Education and Training"	"Primary School"
"Career change teacher"	"Career change teacher" AND "motivat*"	"Career change teacher" AND "Challen*"	"FET"	"Secondary School"
"Career switch teacher"	"Career switch teacher" AND "motivat*"	"Career switch teacher" AND "Challen*"	"Vocational Education"	
"Change of career teacher"	"Change of career teacher" AND "motivat*"	"Change of career teacher" AND "Challen*"	"Vocational Education and Training"	
"Career switch* teacher"	attraction to teaching.	"Career switch* teacher" AND "Challen*"	"VET"	
"Career chang* teacher"		"Career chang* teacher" AND "Challen*"	"Republic of Ireland"	

3.2.2. Identification, Screening and Presentation of Literature

The Irish FET sector is under-researched (O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020; Maloney, 2021; Rami and O'Kelly, 2021), resulting in limited availability of literature specific to the Irish

context. Consequently, literature from outside Ireland is used. Following the identification of literature results are transferred to an EXCEL spreadsheet, alphabetised by article title, and reviewed. This review allows the results to be screened to identify duplicates or literature which is considered as ineligible due to context, focusing on primary or secondary school SCTs for example. The remaining literature is then used in the review process. While reviewing articles, frequently recurring references which had not been identified within the searches previously conducted are investigated for relevance to the study (Denney and Tewksbury, 2013).

3.3. Teaching as a Career

While numerous titles are used to describe teaching, including profession, occupation, and vocation (Balyer and Özcan, 2014), Goodwin (2012) notes that teaching is often viewed as a semi-profession, with the idea of the teacher as a professional being contested. 'Career' is a title that is frequently used within the literature. For Brewer (2020, p.8) "a career is an undertaking within a specific context" and brings with it specific knowledge, characteristics, and a specialised skill set which allow those who possess them to view and understand the world in a specific way and to construct a future. Historically, career or occupational choice was typified as a long-term, even lifelong, commitment to a specific employment which was influenced by such elements as loyalty, status (real or perceived), educational attainment, and job security.

Contemporary understandings of 'career' now view it in terms of a continuous process of taking opportunities and exploration, recognising careers as dynamic in nature, with multiple short-term commitments replacing long-term pursuits (Kazi and Akhlaq, 2017). Lortie (2020, p.84) highlights the difference between teaching and other careers, a distinction which may make teaching a less attractive career prospect, when he writes that:

> …when compared to most other kinds of middle-class work, teaching is relatively 'career-less'. There is less opportunity for the movement upward, which is the essence of career.

3.3.1. Career Choice and Career Change

Career choice is not one specific moment but a continuous process which involves numerous interrelated elements. The reasons why an individual chooses anything, including career, are influenced by multiple motivational factors and experiences (Mezirow, 1978a; Höpfl and Hornby-Atkinson, 2000; O'Sullivan, MacPhail, and Tannehill, 2009). These have the potential to initiate critical self-examination and draw them in a specific direction which may ultimately result in transformation as they develop

their professional identity (Mezirow, 1978a). These motivators are explored more fully in Section 3.4.

Ellis (1993, p.6), views a mid-career transition as a "natural phenomenon", involving the move away from an initial career where an individual has worked, trained, and developed expertise, and into a career such as teaching. Such teachers are referred to as "second-career teachers" (Ellis 1993, p.6) or "late-entry teachers" (Varadharajan and Buchanan, 2021, p.59). Regardless of title, they are recognised as possessing both life experience and a wealth of career knowledge (Bullough and Knowles, 1990). Changing career, for Fernandez, Fouquereau, and Heppner (2008, p.386) involves:

> …workers disengaging from their previous situation and engaging in new ones, the process identified as career transition' (CT).

Varadharajan, Buchanan, and Schuck (2020, p.8) note that:

> …transitioning to a new career is never a smooth process; there will be tensions and frictions for the individual concerned [as they] navigate and negotiate the changes both within and beyond their being.

Heppner (1998) recognised three categories of CT:

i. Task change involving movement within the same company or organisation.
ii. Position change involving movement from, or within, a company which results in minimal change of duties.
iii. Occupation change involving a radical change in duties.

Career paths are becoming more varied with a key element of career change being the realisation that an individual has made a conscious choice to leave a career in which they were established. The decision to change career may be voluntary or involuntary, being driven by disappointment, failure, necessity or choice (Storey, 2000; Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003; Brewer, 2020). Nalis, Kubicek, and Korunka (2021, p.1), when discussing the involuntary reasons for career change refer to:

> …career shocks…unpredictable events stemming from changes both inside and outside organisations.

These have the potential to influence a career path. Mezirow (1978a) explores how a dramatic event can be the catalyst in bringing about change, potentially resulting in an individual changing career and ultimately reframing their professional identity (See section 3.8).

For many the change of career into teaching is prompted by arriving at a crossroads in life, and as shown in Section 6.4.5 of this research, may be facilitated by personal or professional network of relationships or connections. Social and professional networks are dynamic, growing or dissolving over time with each transition (Ibarra and Deshpande,

2004). Networks function in a variety of ways, providing practical and emotional supports, encouragement, and useful information regarding upcoming job opportunities or may even be offering a teaching position (Anthony and Ord, 2008; Barabasch, Merrill, and Zanazzi, 2015; Christensen, Welch, and Barr, 2018; Paniagua and Sánchez-Martí, 2018). Mayotte (2003, p.683) refers to interpersonal networks and contacts who can offer help or support during the process of career change as "knowing-whom competencies." The benefits offered by these connections are not limited to the initial process of finding or applying for a job. Their benefit stretches into the period of career transition, where they may act as role models, guides, or supports (Barbulescu, 2015). Doerr (2021) posits that utilising social contacts for a career change may positively affect socialisation in the new work environment by providing "insider information" (p.13), potentially facilitating greater job satisfaction and stronger professional identity (trans-)formation. Available literature indicates that job satisfaction among SCTs is reported as being relatively high (Bar-Tal *et al*, 2020). Job satisfaction encompasses factors including job fulfilment and comfort, which are influenced by internal factors such as self-efficacy and external factors such as work conditions (Evans, 1997). Factors which negatively influence satisfaction present as stressors, with recognised sources including frustration caused by the demands of their new career, and the discrepancy between expectations regarding teaching and the challenging reality of the new career. Maturity, prior training, life-experience, and higher altruistic-intrinsic motivation of SCTs are often mistakenly believed to make them better at handling stress than their first-career colleagues (Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014; Troesch and Bauer, 2017). Supports within teaching positively impacts career satisfaction and help mitigate stress. However, formal support during career transitions is often lacking due to the previously mentioned misconceptions about SCTs' capabilities (See Sections 6.5.2 & 6.5.2.1).

Regardless of the motivation for career change, such decisions are significant events for the individual and for their families. Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003, p.96) recognise that "since such life-changing decisions are rarely whimsical they are worthy of closer attention". Several factors are required for career change to take place, including the supports offered by family and friends (See Section 6.5.2.3), and easy access to information and resources (Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006; Castro and Bauml, 2009).

3.4. Defining Second-Career Teachers

Within the literature a variety of descriptions and titles are used regarding those who choose to enter the teaching profession later in life, with some authors using terms interchangeably. Many of the terms used are implicitly negative, suggesting that there is a 'correct' route into teaching, namely entering teaching as a first career choice. There is almost an implication that those who do not follow this career path are in some way intruding into a profession. The word 'second' is frequently used in connection with the FET sector – "second chance education", "second chance educators" (Hickey *et al.,* 2020, p.2), and is perhaps suggestive of a hierarchy within the various elements involved. This implication is compounded by the lexicon in use around the FET and Tertiary educational sector in general, which reinforces the inferiority of FET and the superiority and primacy of Higher Education, and all connected with it. Within the terminology used to describe those who enter teaching later in life may be a subtly exclusionary undertone. This may be indicative of a view that those who decide to enter teaching later in life are looking for a second chance to have a career and are essentially tolerated intruders into a profession and a culture.

For Ellis (1993, p.6), a mid-career transition is a "natural phenomenon", involving the move away from an initial career where an individual has worked, trained, and developed expertise, and into another area. Unruh and Holt (2010, p.3) use the terms "alternatively certified teachers" and "alternative-entry teachers" (p.5) to describe those who made this career move. The use of the term 'alternative' applies a label which shows separation and inequality, and through its current usage it has become synonymous with falsity, 'alternative facts' for example.

The term "change-of-career teacher" is used by Anthony and Ord (2008, p.360) and Baeten and Meeus (2016, p.174). For Johnson and Kardos (2005, p.11) this group is referred to as "teachers who enter at mid-career", which suggests that a career is a continuum, regardless of area of employment. If so, those entering the teaching profession are not entering a second career but are instead continuing along their career path. They have gained experience and expertise earlier in life which they then use within an educational setting. In contrast, Laming and Horne (2013, p.326) use the title "career change teacher" when describing those who they see as "taking up teaching" (p.330). Again, this suggests that careers are separate life elements and as such those entering the profession later in life are novices within their new career. The name "career changer" is used by Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990, p.197), Laming and Horne (2013, p.333) and Baeten and Meeus (2016,

p.173). Wilcox and Samaras (2009, p.173) use the phrase "career switchers" while Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev (2022, p.172) elongated this, using "career switchers into teaching", almost implying an intrusion into the teaching profession. Lee and Lamport (2011, p.1) use the phrases "non-traditional entrants to the profession of teaching" and "second-career educators". Chambers (2002) uses the term "career changers" (p.212), while Fry and Anderson (2011, p.2) use the title "non-traditional teachers", implying that traditional teachers enter the profession as a first career.

Perez-Roux (2019) considers career change teachers as retrained professionals, while Williams (2010, p.639) calls them "expert novices", a position which SCTs may be uncomfortable holding. Alharbi (2020, p.88) views them as:

> …transplants, having joined a teaching program after developing professional expertise and meaningful careers in other professions,

suggestive of SCTs virtually trespassing into the profession against their will. Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt (2014) note that not all SCTs decide to enter teaching as an afterthought. They found that in some cases, career change teachers had initially intended to pursue a career in teaching but were unable to do so for a variety of reasons (See Section 6.3.5). Respondents in Chambers (2002) study reveal they had considered teaching as a career early in life but rejected the notion. This rejection may occur due to "career inaction" (Verbruggen and de Vos, 2020, p.377), wherein there was a failure to act on a desired change earlier in life. This inertia may be due to uncertainty about the correctness of their desire or personal circumstances making the move too risky. Taylor and Hallam (2011, p.331) take a more negative stance, viewing SCTs as:

> …vocational teachers who had suppressed a long-standing interest in teaching although they sometimes felt drawn to it almost against their will (p.331)

almost suggesting that their career path had been hijacked by teaching. This notion of an almost intrusive career contrasts sharply with the benefits derived from the career, noting that:

> …teacher identity was expressed in terms of personal and professional growth and fulfilment with concomitant increased self-confidence, self-esteem, happiness, pleasure, and emotional support (p.323).

Chambers (2002) uses the profile title previously found in Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990, p.204) who describe such teachers as "homecomers". They consider the title 'career changer' as inappropriate for this grouping, given that their plans to become teachers earlier in life "were thwarted by negative parental and societal attitudes, market forces, and/or financial obligations" (p.204). In addition, the idea of teaching as vocation which

may grow stronger in later life (See Section 3.4.2.1), again subtly emerges as they refer to other career change teachers as "the converted" (p.207). These are individuals who had not seriously considered teaching as a career until circumstances caused them to become disenchanted with their career choices and caused them to reconsider their professional plans. For Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003, p.98), those changing career into teaching are grouped as "the freelancer", "the late starter", and "the successful careerist". By far the most frequently used term used to describe this cohort is 'second-career teachers' – with and without hyphenation (Chambers, 2002; Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006; Castro and Bauml, 2009; Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt, 2010; Berger and D'Ascoli, 2012a; Laming and Horne, 2013; Baeten and Meeus, 2016). Lee and Lamport (2011, p.21) offer a helpful clarification, pointing out that "the title 'second-career teacher' implies that teaching is at least a second if not third or fourth career".

The distinctions previously noted not only highlight the variety of titles applied to second-career teachers and career trajectories, but also underscores the importance of exploring the diverse terminologies, such as 'teacher', 'tutor', 'adult educator', or 'practitioner', that are used to describe the roles of educators working within the FET sector. Each potentially carries unique implications for professional identity (trans-)formation, interactions with students, societal perceptions, autonomy, and individual expectations (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009; van den Berg *et al*., 2020). Use of the title 'teacher' may imply a formal, structured role associated with primary or post-primary education. These sectors involve defined curricula, increased accountability, classroom management and discipline. In contrast, a 'tutor' may suggest a more flexible, individualised coaching, being frequently linked to specific skill delivery or short-term engagement (Invernizzi, 2001). An 'adult educator' highlights a learner-centred, participatory approach which is aimed at facilitating lifelong learning (Holmqvist, 2022). 'Practitioner' is a broader, more neutral term, perhaps encompassing diverse roles within education and training (Tully, 2020; Brennan and O'Grady, 2023). Recognising these distinctions avoids oversimplifying complex professional landscapes.

Overall, the terminology used around SCTs appears to have some implicitly negative connotations. This may be indicative of a perception of them as failing in, or lacking the commitment to remain in, a previous career. In addition, they may be resented as second-rate, late entrants, who are seen as being predominantly extrinsically motivated to enter the profession, believing the 'grass to be greener' in education. Negative feelings, and the way they are voiced have the potential to cause SCTs to feel dissatisfaction, making the transition into teaching and the formation of a new identity more difficult. This may occur

through systematic or individual blocking of the supports necessary for the creation of necessary peer and structural connections (Trede, Macklin, and Bridges, 2012).

3.5. Motivation

Motivation for SCTs refers to the driving force behind their decision to transition into teaching. These motivations are varied, potentially incorporating intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic elements. In the following section the motivations for choosing teaching as a career, and specifically as a second career, which are evident in academic literature are presented.

3.5.1. The Motivation to Become a Teacher

Wigfield, Muenks, and Eccles (2021) hold that motivation is the energy which lies behind our actions. Motives comprise a diverse set of complex, synergistic processes which stimulate a person to behave in certain ways to achieve specific goals (Talevich *et al.*, 2017). Motivators not only initiate behaviour but also sustain and focus it, significantly impacting teachers' lives and the process of professional identity (trans-)formation. The ability of motivators to maintain an individual during a period of transition into a career in teaching is particularly valuable as a new professional identity is formed (Ryan and Deci, 2008; Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020).

For O'Sullivan, MacPhail, and Tannehill (2009, p.178) "teaching is done in service to others and because of its social importance", highlighting the altruistic-intrinsic value of the profession. In a similar way, Watt and Richardson (2012, p.125) state that "teaching motivations matter" and literature relating to both first- and second-career teachers frequently attempts to identify and understand the wide variety of motivational factors behind the choice of teaching as a career (See Section 3.4.2). These motivators to change career it should be noted are "multifaceted, complex, at times emotionally charged and contradictory" (Anthony and Ord, 2008, p.364). Alexander, Chant, and Cox (1994, p.40) explicitly ask the key question: "What motivates people to become teachers?" Their work highlights eight key themes in answer to that question, which fall into the categories of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations, which are explored in more detail in the following section. These factors are seen as constituting the 'push' and 'pull' factors which provide the momentum for career change (Watt and Richardson, 2007).

3.5.2. Tripartite Framework of Motivators

Teachers frequently have "complex and multi-layered reasons for choosing teaching" (Laming and Horne, 2013, p.333). Much of the literature exploring these motivations for second-career teaching choice utilises a tripartite framework of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic to explain the reasons for making decisions (Rosyid, 2016; Prabjandee, 2020; Kristmansson and Fjellström, 2022). Watt and Richardson (2007) warn of a lack of concurrence regarding what constitutes each of these categories, particularly in relation to what constitutes intrinsic and altruistic motivators. Within the literature, altruistic motivation is considered as being either a separate entity or an extension of intrinsic motivation (Thomson, Turner, and Nietfeld, 2012; Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014), with Tang, Wong, and Cheng (2016, p.350) explicitly referring to motivation which is "altruistic-intrinsic". Given the close relationship and frequent intricate intersection of these two elements, they will be examined in the same section, ensuring alignment with the discussion of results (See Sections 5.3 & 6.3).

3.5.2.1. Altruistic-Intrinsic Motivation for Second-career Teachers

Deci and Ryan (2000, p.56) define intrinsic motivation as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence" and acknowledge that "people freely engaging in activities that they find interesting, that provide novelty and optimal challenge" (p.256). For Fishbach and Woolley (2022) individuals are intrinsically motivated when pursuing the goal becomes paramount and the work brings internal satisfaction, what Börü (2018, p.761) recognises as "immaterial aims."
Altruistic-intrinsic motivation is frequently identified as the primary influence on the decision to enter teaching as a second career (See Sections 6.3 to 6.3.5) and indicates stronger identity (trans-)formation (Heinz, Keane, and Foley, 2017; McKevitt, Carbery, and Lyons, 2017; Saito, 2024). Chambers (2002) identifies SCTs as being predominantly intrinsically motivated, exhibiting a strong need to support and positively impact their students. For SCTs, reconnecting with social and civic values in education is important, as it allows them to align their newly forming professional identities with broader societal contributions. This alignment not only reinforces their initial motivation but may also act to strengthen their commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of students. Embedding their teaching practice within a framework of social responsibility can allow SCTs to find a deeper sense of purpose and fulfilment (O'Brien and Rudd, 2019).
Heath *et al*. (2013) perceive education in more altruistic terms, as a means of reducing socio-economic gaps in society (See Section 6.3.2). Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt (2014)

regard intrinsic motivation as also related to aspects of the work involved, including the enjoyment attained and the intellectual challenge it presented.

Some SCTs enter teaching because of previous positive educational experiences or encounters with teachers who acted as positive role-models (See Section 6.3.4). Like the findings of Richardson and Watt (2005), Anthony and Ord (2008) recognise that prior teaching-related experiences are the most common motivation for SCTs. These positive experiences encourage individuals to view teaching as a viable career choice, believing they possess the necessary aptitude and skills for the profession. Chambers (2002, p.214) describes this positive identification in terms of a desire "to give back some of the benefits they received from their teachers". While this positive identification is an important element, conversely negative identification can motivate career choice. Previously suffered negative educational experiences of students may motivate them to become teachers, through a desire to bring about change and provide others with a better experience (Taylor and Hallam, 2011; Deci and Ryan, 2013; Passmore and Prescott, 2020).

Altruistic-intrinsic career values such as a desire to contribute positively to or transform society and to help students achieve success are among the most predominant motivators for choosing teaching as a career. These motivations are viewed as being empathetic in nature and are influenced and nurtured within the family (Biney, 2015; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Li and Guo, 2024). Altruistic motivation may be considered "pro-social" (Bøgh Andersen and Surritzlew, 2012, p.20), and within available literature it is commonly referred to as the most dominant influence on career choice, strengthening commitment and increasing career satisfaction, with individuals often referring to their work in terms of a vocational calling (Giersch, 2021; Haruna and Sackey, 2023). Positive experiences regarding teaching and learning, in addition to a passion for teaching and self-perception regarding teaching ability, are frequently rated as important factors in entering teaching as a second career (Wisehart, 2004; Berger and Girardet, 2015; Jehee *et al*., 2020; Kristmansson and Fjellström, 2022) and are evident in the findings of this research (See Sections 5.6.3, 5.6.4, & 6.3.4).

Choosing to teach as a second career is often fuelled by a passion for education. This is essentially the drive to positively impact the lives of students, helping them develop through teaching and learning. SCTs often have a deep appreciation for the opportunities that education can provide and feel a sense of duty and commitment to give others the same opportunity (Chu, 2023). Passion for education not only motivates SCTs to change career but also enhances their effectiveness in the classroom (Scotti, 2022). This passion can be nurtured through supportive relationships and effective mentoring (Conway *et al.,*

2012). For Wilcox and Samaras (2009, p.173) this passion essentially involves getting “a second chance to make the difference they want to make in the world as teachers”, which helps SCTs utilise their skills and talents to have a positive impact in the lives of students, and on the teaching profession.

Passionate and caring teachers are recognised as inspirational, instilling similar qualities into others (Phelps and Benson, 2012). For Wisehart (2004), a passion for education extends beyond merely teaching skills and improving students’ lives. It also involves a deep commitment to personal and professional growth and the (trans-)formation of one’s identity. Identity (trans-)formation is not a one-time occurrence, but a perpetual process influenced by the broader educational environment. Reflection and re-evaluation of experiences allows individuals to refine their identity to meet the demands of teaching and to continually strive for excellence in teaching.

Perceived teaching ability (See Sections 5.6.4 & 6.3.4) often stems from an individual’s prior experiences, leading them to believe they have the required skills to be successful as a teacher (Watt, Richardson, and Smith, 2017; Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė, 2023). For Berger and Girardet (2015, p.112) perceived teaching ability is a fundamental aspect of career selection:

> …individuals choose occupations for which they think they have good abilities and contrarily, tend not to choose professions that do not fit their abilities.

Altruistic-intrinsic motivations potentially lead to greater personal satisfaction and sustained engagement, positively impacting identity (trans-)formation. However, SCTs who are driven by altruistic-intrinsic motivations may face a stark disparity between their ideals and the realities of teaching (Bergmark *et al.,* 2018). Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010, p.169) recognise this mismatch as the "challenge of motivation and reality" in teaching, resulting in a significant "culture shock" (Schwab, 2002, p.165).

The motivators of the tripartite framework are frequently referred to in terms of being either ‘pull’ or ‘push’ factors. ‘Push’ motivators (See Sections 3.4.2.2, 5.5, & 6.4) are associated with the individual's internal characteristics and emotional traits (Gódány *et al.,* 2021). ‘Pull’ motivators tend to be intrinsic-altruistic in nature and encompass a potentially complex variety of personal reasons which draw individuals to a career, making it appear attractive (Coppe *et al*., 2021). The motivation to become a teacher is portrayed by some authors in terms of being an academic calling or vocation (Geoghegan, 2023). Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) describe altruistic-intrinsic motivation as the desire to help others, and society, to improve. The motivation to enter the teaching profession may consist of a wish to contribute to society, to work with young people, personal fulfilment, or following

a vocational calling (Manuel and Brindley, 2005; Corcoran, Whitburn, and Rice, 2023). Anthony and Ord (2008) note that despite the existence of a myriad of potential motivating factors, a life-long desire to be a teacher may be the only draw required to cause an individual to change career (See Section 6.3.5). For Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010), SCTs in comparison to first-career teachers are strongly motivated to enter the teaching profession by a desire to help young people, to pass on subject knowledge, and to contribute to society.

Anthony and Ord (2008) list seeking a challenge, job security, a lifelong wish to be a teacher, access to educational opportunities, and improved work/life balance as 'pull' factors for SCTs (See Sections 5.6 & 6.4). The literature acknowledges the dynamic and complex nature of 'push' and 'pull' factors in career choices. Berger and D'Ascoli (2012a) studied 483 second-career VET teachers in Switzerland and recognise both 'push' and 'pull' factors. These factors may combine, presenting contradictory motivations which influence decision-making regarding career change (Anthony and Ord, 2008; Watters and Diezmann, 2015; Rinke and Mawhinney, 2017; Coppe *et al*., 2021).

3.5.2.2. Extrinsic Motivation for Second-career Teachers

Deci and Ryan (2000) define extrinsic motivation as engaging in an activity primarily for outcomes that are not inherently linked to the activity itself, such as a higher salary or additional holidays. Motivation as previously noted are complex and frequently interconnected and while multiple motivators may be present one may be more prominent (Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014). For Thomson, Turner, and Nietfeld (2012) extrinsic motivations are described as contrasting with, even incompatible with, intrinsic motivation.

While many studies suggest that altruistic-intrinsic motivation is prevalent, extrinsic motivators are recognised as influencing teacher career choice (Richardson and Watt, 2005; Jothi and Wesley, 2017; Tang *et al.,* 2020). Kristmansson and Fjellström (2022) identify two categories of extrinsic motivation. The first relates to lifestyle beyond teaching, including work/life balance and holidays, while the second, which includes elements such as job security and income, relate to working conditions.

Extrinsic motivators are frequently described as 'push' factors, typically linked to personal or previous work experiences. One such 'push' factor may be dissatisfaction caused by perceived lack of opportunities for personal growth or hierarchical career progression / promotion within a previous career (Wise and Millward, 2005). McGinley *et al*. (2014) recognise that slow career progression can also lead to career disquiet. They also recognise

that an absence of social supports and encouragement or active dissuasion regarding remaining in a profession make the decision to change career easier to make (See Sections 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 6.5 to 6.5.2.3). They speak of the "perfect storm of influences" (p.96), wherein a combination of factors including current dissatisfaction, a poor sectoral outlook, and a lack of "anchors" (p.96), which include strong professional identity or supports, lead to career change. Coppe *et al.* (2021) identify two main types of 'push' factors: gradually increasing irritants like boredom or feelings of alienation, leading to "initial career detachment" (Berger and D'Ascoli, 2012a, p.320), or a specific event that triggers a move to teaching.

A study of the motivations of 74 Australian graduates who had decided to enter the teaching profession conducted by Richardson and Watt (2005), reveals security of employment is an important draw into teaching (See Sections 5.5.1 & 6.4.1). As noted in Section 3.3.1, historically careers were viewed as lifelong commitments. In contrast, contemporary attitudes towards career have shifted significantly, with career change now widely accepted. This flexibility results in individuals experiencing less long-term job security, which may result in job security becoming less important (Carless and Arnup, 2011). While job security may not be the strongest motivation, the literature often notes a desire to avoid job instability or to move to a career offering higher levels of job security in times of financial uncertainty (See Sections 5.5.1 & 6.4.2). While choosing a secure career brings financial stability by providing a stable and steady income, frequently it is of lower importance than many intrinsic-altruistic motivations, implying that individuals prioritise personal fulfilment and a desire to contribute meaningfully to society over purely practical benefits of a stable income and job security (Jothi and Reeves Wesley, 2017; Alfi-Shabtay and Hemed-Kotka, 2021; Ballado, 2022; Kristmansson and Fjellström, 2022; Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė, 2023).

As seen in Sections 5.5.3 and 6.4.2, family circumstances, a desire for a better work/life balance, and family obligations are frequently cited as initiating a re-evaluation of personal goals (Mezirow, 1978b; Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003; Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt, 2010; Haasler and Barabasch, 2015). Lee (2011) found that participants had left higher paying careers for teaching, perceiving teaching to have better holidays and overall to be more "family friendly" (p.9). In some cases, participants in his research were aware of the sacrifices they made because of their previous career, and the toll it had taken on their personal life and wanted to make a change. However, the search for a family-compatible career and other practical considerations are often not high priorities in the decision to change career (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Tang *et al* (2020, p.4)

note an emphasis on work/life balance amongst "millennial generation preservice teachers". If teaching is perceived as a career which supports such balance, it may appear an attractive career option. However, if the reality does not align with expectations, this may negatively impact identity (trans-)formation and retention. While individuals may strive for a satisfactory balance between work and personal life, frequently for novice teachers work interferes with family life and intrudes into free time to a greater extent than for those working in non-teaching professions (da Silva and Fischer, 2020).

Within the literature the decision to change career into teaching may be unplanned (Murtagh, Lopes, and Lyons, 2011), and is sometimes identified as a 'fallback' option (See Sections 5.5.4 and 6.3.5). Fallback careers are final option or backup careers chosen when more desirable careers are unattainable. Pursuing teaching as a fallback, or last resort career, is a stereotype encapsulated in the phrase 'those who can, do; those who can't, teach". This view of teaching as a career for the less talented has been frequently discredited by research (Richardson, Karabenick, and Watt, 2014). Wong, Tang, and Cheng (2014) identify the presence of two subsets of fallback career. The first cohort chose teaching because of negative experiences in a previous career. Teaching for this group is not a last resort, instead being a preferred alternative that may bring about an improvement in the lives of others. If teaching is found to be enjoyable, it results in increased engagement in the profession. In contrast the second cohort chose teaching out of convenience and lack commitment to teaching. For this group a career in teaching is pursued out of "maladaptive…motivation" (p.82), seeking extrinsic incentives such as salary or holidays. Watt, Richardson, and Devos (2013) recognise an association between those who choose to teach as a last resort and greater negativity and intolerance shown towards students. Entering teaching as a fallback option, without a genuine motivation to teach, may hinder the process of critical reflection, undermining the process of professional identity (trans-)formation and limiting their effectiveness as an educator. This situation may be compounded by career stagnation in a previous role, which may motivate an individual to pursue teaching as a second career.

Career stagnation is marked by prolonged tenure in the same role without advancement or development in their professional profile, which may be due to organisational or interpersonal factors (Hall, 2002; Abele, Volmer, and Spurk, 2012). Conversely, Zamir (2018) considers stagnation from both positive and negative perspectives. On one hand it reflects a satisfaction, commitment, and confidence in their current position resulting in a lack of desire to change. On the other hand, it may be indicative of a lack of empowerment or opportunities for growth. Career stagnation or boredom may negatively affect an

individual's quality of life and is presented as both a deterrent to remaining in a current career and a catalyst for seeking career change (Shabbir, Ramzana, and Ahmad, 2020). Career stagnation may prompt an individual to consider career change in search of new challenges or opportunities for personal or professional growth. This change potentially offers a more rewarding experience and a new environment. A study by Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) focuses on a group of SCTs who, despite achieving high status, became dissatisfied with their previous careers in business. Their decision to move to teaching was based upon an ill-defined interest in education and showing no initial commitment to teaching they quickly became disillusioned. Dickar (2005) finds comparable results among participants who moved to teaching because of problems in their previous careers. Similarly, Watt and Richardson (2007) highlight that those with predominantly extrinsic motivations frequently fail to fully engage with teaching as the motivations may be "unfavorable *[sic]* to producing creative work" (Alias *et al*., 2020, p.159).

One frequently utilised taxonomy specifically designed to identify motivations for entering teaching, is the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) framework, which has been used in international and Irish research (Berger and D'Ascoli, 2012a; Watt *et al.*, 2012*;* Dickenson, 2014; Baeten and Meeus, 2016; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017; Low *et al.*, 2017*;* Kristmansson and Fjellström, 2022). This was developed by Richardson and Watt (2006) and Watt and Richardson (2007) and consists of four elements: task demands/task return, self-perceptions, intrinsic value, and fallback career. While some overlaps exist between this scale and the tripartite framework (See Section 3.5.2), Low *et al*. (2017, p.30) consider the FIT-Choice scale as possessing several advantages, including "its fine-grained classifications of teaching motivations and the practical implications that can be drawn from these classifications". For Başöz, (2021) the FIT-Choice framework when compared to the tripartite framework encompasses broader, more detailed categories regarding teaching motivations, including the impact of social influences, prior teaching and learning experiences, and social influences on career choice. Berger and d'Ascoli (2012b) however sound a note of caution, explaining that there are limitations to the use of the FIT-Choice scale. While it is considered as exhaustive it is still possible for individuals to join the teaching profession for other reasons which are not represented within the framework, for example a change in physical ability, which they acknowledge is a rare and unlikely scenario.

3.6. Teacher Education Pathways to Second-Career Teaching

Numerous titles appear within international literature to describe the alternative teacher education pathways available to those entering teaching as a second career, including "alternative certification programmes", "fast-track programmes" and "alternative teacher education programmes" (Tigchelaar, Brouwerb, and Vermunt, 2010, pp.165-166; Unruh and Holt, 2010). These programs are found to attract a diverse range of students, with an equally diverse range of expertise, backgrounds, and motivations for entering teaching as a second career (Anthony and Ord, 2008; Lee and Lamport, 2011). They differ from initial training programs as they recognise that SCTs represent "a different student profile, [requiring] a different training approach" (Baeten and Meeus, 2016, p.173), which should be adapted to be more appropriate to the needs of this group.

Bowling and Ball (2018, p.110) writing from an American perspective describe these pathways as methods of preparing teachers by

> …means other than a professional educationally based teacher preparation program, such as: emergency certification, temporary certification, work-based programs, and structured university and/or private providers of alternatively labelled certification pathways.

Castro and Bauml (2009) recognise the benefits of these alternative route programs. They hold that they are more practical, more convenient, and less expensive than traditional courses. Schwab (2002) highlights the need to consider the specific needs of SCTs, particularly in relation to flexibility and provision of appropriate supports and holds that meeting these has positive impacts on this group.

Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021) identify five areas of difference in training SCTs, which they categorise as motivation, skills, knowledge, approach to learning, and beliefs. They aim to assist SCTs in applying these qualities to the classroom. In their study, Baeten and Meeus (2016) suggest that this is appropriate, maintaining that SCTs are more comfortable with undertaking self-directed learning and benefit from programs which are flexible in delivery, which recognise their previous experience and offer appropriate supports.

Bowling and Ball (2018) warn of inconsistencies within these courses, noting a wide variation in relation+n to selection processes, course intensity, and academic rigor. Brindley and Parker (2010, p.578) refer to these differences as "idiosyncrasies", which they believe make it inappropriate to consider or discuss them as being one area. They note the number of "fast-track programs" (p.579) which do not provide sufficient, if any, pedagogical instruction, field experience, or appropriate supervision. Such programmes potentially prioritise efficiency and market-driven imperatives. Emphasising rapid

credentialing to meet workforce demands rather than fostering a deep, reflective engagement with pedagogical practices. The focus on producing 'job-ready' teachers aligns with performative and target-driven models, where success is measured through metrics such as completion rates and employment outcomes (Nygreen, Madeloni, and Cannon, 2015). These potentially undermine the broader, holistic purpose of education. Furthermore, such programmes may reflect a creeping privatisation of education spaces which further commodifies education and teacher training. These risks reducing critical discussion on teacher identity, values, and the transformative potential of education in addressing social inequalities.

From a European perspective, Finland requires a three-year degree and a two-year master's degree to teach in vocational educational centres (Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011). In Poland there are three routes to becoming a qualified subject-teacher. Firstly, students may choose to major in teaching during a three-year degree program and a five-year master's degree in a specific subject. To teach a second subject additional specialisation is required entailing an additional 550 hours and pedagogical preparation for a minimum of 270 hours teaching practice. The third route requires completion of a master's degree and undertaking post-diploma studies in pedagogy (Zdybel, Bogucki, and Głodzik, 2011).

Closer to home, Wilkins (2017, p.1) critiques the emphasis on entry requirements for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in England, saying:

> …the current policy focus adopted in England and in many other countries on entry quality may detract from the more fundamental issue of ensuring ITE programmes provide the flexible and personalised professional learning environments that enable a diverse range of entrants to flourish.

Since 2013, the Teaching Council has required teachers working in the FET sector to hold a Teaching Council-accredited Teacher Education Qualification (TEQ). Additionally, the Teaching Council (2015b) stipulates the criteria to register under Route 3 for FET. Applicants are required to hold an Honours Bachelor's Degree (Level 8) or an Ordinary Bachelor's Degree (Level 7) plus an additional qualification or at least three years' relevant experience. Those meeting the degree requirements but lacking an accredited TEQ are eligible for a three-year conditional registration during which they must complete this requirement.

TEQs for those wishing to work in the FET sector are run nationwide in eight centres, six of which offer postgraduate only courses (Teaching Council, 2015c). The importance of specifically tailored TEQs for those intending to work in the FET sector is recognised by Rami and O'Kelly (2017) who acknowledge that second-level qualified teachers are recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland to work in the FET sector. However, it

should be asked if these teachers have adequate ITE training or practical teaching experience to effectively teach in FET. They highlight that teaching adults requires an understanding of the unique aspects of adult learners.

3.7. Variety of Previous Employment Amongst Second-Career Teachers

Individuals enter the teaching profession as either a first or subsequent career following employment in an area unrelated to teaching. Each SCT brings to the teaching profession a potential credibility and richness gained from past experiences (Ong, 2021). This wealth of experience arises not only from the diversity of their previous employment areas but is also to be found in the variety of their life-history, interests, and motivations. For Chambers (2002, p.212) those transitioning into teaching as a second career view themselves as being different from first-career teachers "in subtle but significant ways". Hunter-Johnson (2015, p.1361) recognises them as possessing both a "unique professional experience" and numerous skills, which they bring to the classroom, and for Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010, p.164) "they form an intriguing group".

Career changers comprise a diverse group who come from a variety of backgrounds, who may be drawn to teaching by social or professional networks (Varadharajan, Buchanan, and Schuck, 2020; Sullivan and Al Ariss, 2021). To demonstrate this variety of previous employment pathways, the entry profiles of participants in this research is provided in Table 3.2. The backgrounds of those who took part in these research projects are widely varied, ranging from areas where personal interactions and communication might be considered as fundamental, for example healthcare, to areas which potentially involve more time spent alone, such as chemical engineering. In addition, the lack of available data from Ireland illustrates the dearth of research into SCTs from an Irish perspective.

Table 3.2. Example of Entry Profiles of Second-Career Teachers.

Authors	No. of Participants	Research Participants Occupation Prior to Teaching	Location of Study
Crow, Levine, and Nager, 1990	13	Finance; Communication; Human Services.	New York, USA
Powell, 1997	1	Field Hydrogeologist.	California, USA
Chambers, 2002	10	Nursing, Marketing Research, Customer Representative, Publishing; Radio Broadcasting.	Illinois, USA
Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006	40	Business; Accounting; Law; Research Science.	Pennsylvania, USA
Morton, Williams, and Brindley, 2006	3	Marketing; Science; Paediatric Speech Therapy.	Florida, USA
Anthony and Ord, 2008	68	Business & Administration; Customer Service; Science & Technical; Media & Advertising; Government Departments & Law; Health, Teaching-Related Employment.	New Zealand
Snyder, 2011	3	Science; Engineering.	New York, USA
Tigchelaar, Vermunt and Brouwer, 2014	207	Research & Consultancy; Engineering & Technology; Management & Policy.	Utrecht University, The Netherlands
Alharbi, 2020	12	Police; Counsellors; Security Operatives; Lawyer Assistant; Tour Guide; Military.	Thebes University, Saudi Arabia
Shwartz, 2020	42	Chemistry; Chemical Engineering; Biotechnology; Food Engineering.	Israel
Coppe *et al.*, 2021	262	Health/Well-being; Economy/Management; Industry; Social/Education (not Teaching); Administration/Justice; Construction; Hotel/Catering; IT/Telecom; Communication.	Belgium (French Community)
Leshem *et al.*, 2021	15	Law; Art; Business; Marketing; Psychology; Accountancy; Communication; Behavioural Studies.	Israel

3.8. Professional Identity in Second-career Teaching

Identity is defined by Jenkins (2008, p.5) as "knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are". Professional identity development amongst SCTs involves a complicated metamorphosis of identities. Elements of old identities must be re-evaluated and, in some cases, unlearned to align with the norms, values and expectations of the FET sector, allowing for adaption and consolidation into a new professional identity (Stronach *et al.,* 2002). Stryker (1968, 2008) views individuals as encompassing multiple, hierarchical identities. He later went on to say that

these identities are linked to roles and positions within organisations. The professional identity of a teacher is central to their practice and their beliefs, essentially allowing them to interpret their experiences (Flores and Day, 2006; Cohen, 2008). For SCTs, the process of professional identity (trans-)formation can be challenging. For some the necessity to remain on a 'trans-professional state' (Li and Lai, 2022, p.1), being connected to their previous career to remain professionally current, may prevent them from fully developing an unequivocal teacher professional identity. For others the issue arises because they feel they are regressing in their career, essentially having to start again (Trent, 2018). These issues are made even more prevalent if the individual had a strong sense of professional identity within their last profession (Haggard, Slostad, and Wintertin, 2006).

3.8.1. Teacher Professional Identity

Mezirow's (1978b) transformative learning theory provides a framework for understanding the process of professional identity (trans-)formation. This theory posits that identity formation involves a profound restructuring of existing perceptions. For Mezirow, transformative learning occurs through critical reflection, where existing assumptions are challenged and ultimately reshaped. Using this theory the observations of Morrison (2013) on teacher identity formation among early career teachers can be viewed as part of the complex process where critical reflection and questioning brings forth personal growth and transformation (Gardner, 2014; O'Brien and Rudd, 2019). Lortie (1975) notes that the professional identity of teachers begins when they themselves are students and is based upon life experiences and interactions with educators, family, and society (See Section 6.3.4). While the foundations for teacher identity may be found in early teacher interactions, it is recognised as being affected by multiple factors, particularly in the case of SCTs. Mezirow's theory illuminates how the "personal in the professional" (Day, 2012, p.14) plays a critical role in shaping professional identity. It suggests that as individuals engage in reflective learning, they reassess and integrate their personal history and perspectives into their new professional role. This process of critical reflection allows them to transform their understanding of themselves within their professional context, highlighting the interplay between the personal and the professional in shaping identity (Day, 2014; Nielsen, 2016; Harold, Prock, and Groden, 2021).

As previously shown in Section 3.6, SCTs are frequently presented within the literature as being different. Owing to elements including maturity, life experience, and the pre-teaching expertise they have gained, SCTs may perceive themselves as different when compared to other teachers (Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt, 2000). In fact, there may

even be a subtle elitism among SCTs. Laming and Horne (2013) recognise that among SCTs, those who had graduated with a degree viewed themselves as "scholars" (p.334) whose responsibility was primarily to share their knowledge with students, while those without a degree focus more heavily on the social development of students. This may inadvertently result in the creation of what may unkindly be classified as second-class, second-class teachers. Grummell and Murray (2015) also recognise a distinction, noting that teachers with practical, vocational skills may be valued more than those with specific pedagogical training.

These differences have the potential to affect how meaning is constructed, how a new identity develops, and how this is integrated into previously developed personal and career identities, a process central to Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978b; Grenardo, 2022). Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Korthagen (2008, p.1546) report that SCTs' identities underwent "surprising experiences of change", because of the autonomy they were given. This surprise may be connected to the unanticipated emotional responses ranging from relief to experiencing isolation, self-doubt, and feelings of being a fraudulent imposter experienced because of the independence and autonomy they were afforded (Hutchins and Rainbolt, 2017; Doran, 2023). The level of autonomy afforded may vary significantly across sectors and institutions within the FET landscape, with varying degrees of rigidity or regulation. Autonomy may be constrained by standardised curricula or institutional policies. These differing conditions mean that this 'surprise' cannot be uniformly assumed across all SCT experiences.

The sense of connection experienced emphasises how past roles and experiences, infused with cultural and social influences, form "back stories" (O'Brien and Rudd, 2020, p.1), which impact the evolution of perceptions and identity. Mezirow (1978b), when exploring transformation and the restructuring of an individual's reality, recognises the importance of past experiences in identity (trans-)formation. This process of reframing involves ten phases, moving from an external or internal unsettling event, frequently initiated by a "crucial event" (Geoghegan, 2023, p. 816), or "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978b, p.104). Dilemmas are often encountered and usually don't lead to significant change. Some however are more intense, challenging pre-existing beliefs, potentially causing a crisis that necessitates a thorough re-evaluation of current positioning, possibly leading to radical life changes (Damianakis *et al.,* 2020). Mezirow's 10 phases follow the transformative process into a new role, with the final phase examining the individual's reintegration into a new life.

Given the uniqueness of everyone's life story and professional identity, all teachers need to be understood within that context of individuality (Wilson and Deaney, 2010; Abas, 2016). The use of the term 'professional identity' implies that teaching is a profession. Helterbran (2008, p.123) explores the "profundity and the complexity of the issue of professionalism in education". She notes how perceptions of teaching as a profession differ between teachers and non-teachers, with teachers typically not being given the recognition, rewards or respect that are afforded to other professions. Buchanan, (2020, p.80) summarises these perceived deficits in a single phrase, which undermines the status of teaching and encapsulates some of the negative perceptions regarding SCTs explored in Section 3.5, namely an attitude of "anyone can teach", implying that minimal knowledge and skills are required.

Work and personal lives are not independent, and SCTs bring with them identities created outside, and within, the teaching environment. These non-occupational identities, (nationality, family, gender) are also important as they form connections with cultures and individuals who are important in the lives of novice-teachers (Shaik, Makhecha, and Gouda, 2021). These individuals may provide love and support, and novice-teachers may wish to prove to them that they can be successful in their new-career. Novice-teachers must attempt to construct a new identity while making sense of their new role within the teaching profession (Suzanne, 2012). For Grier and Johnston (2008) identity is not static but is constantly evolving and developing through engagement with "a community of practice" (p.59). Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018, p.29) acknowledges the occurrence of:

> identity renegotiation…a process in which teachers develop their identities to better match the environmental conditions and to develop professionally.

This dynamic concept is central to Mezirow's theory, involving critical assessment and the integration of previous and new experiences. This produces a hybrid identity which Guo *et al*. (2019) perceive as being potentially beneficial as it arises from the harmonious integration of multiple identities. This integration, according to Mezirow (1978b), is a crucial part of the transformative learning process where learners reconcile their old and new identities through reciprocal interactions within specific contexts. These interactions help SCTs adopt identities that are influenced by peers who may be first-career or SCTs who may be at a variety of stages of their own career journey.

Shwartz and Dori, (2020) note the critical role prior experience plays in the approach SCTs take to teacher education, adapting to a new professional environment, and ultimately contributing to professional identity formation. This theme of prior career experience is explored more fully in Section 3.9. Williams (2010) and Wood, Farmer, and Goodall

(2016) observe the potential to retain a strong occupational identity, potentially causing resistance to new ideas. It may also cause resistance to identity transformation, particularly if they believe they are being demoted to the role of novice.

Identity change can also be understood as a painful process, involving confusion and disorientation (Mezirow, 1978b; O'Neill and McLoughlin, 2023). Grier and Johnston (2008, p.58) acknowledge that in letting go of a previous identity:

> …many career changers felt a loss of identity because of their societal perception that one should not leave a successful career…to become a teacher.

Despite experiencing uncertainty and losing elements of their previous professional identity, career changers frequently bring valuable skills into their second career. These enhance their communication abilities, boost self-confidence, and improve interactions with colleagues. For SCTs transitioning into a new profession, establishing a sense of belonging may be challenging, requiring support from colleagues and management. Belonging encompasses civic, social, emotional, and secure dimensions, and is crucial for SCTs who may struggle with imposter syndrome when they feel disconnected from these aspects (Dromgold-Sermen, 2022) (See Sections 6.6.1 to 6.6.3). Civic belonging involves integration into a new professional culture. This is closely linked to social belonging which focuses upon forming supportive professional relationships and emotional belonging which is tied to personal fulfilment. Finally, secure belonging is closely linked to feeling secure and valued within the workplace. When SCTs experience a lack of belonging it can negatively impact effectiveness in the classroom, confidence, job satisfaction, and ultimately the process of professional identity (trans-)formation.

Berger and Lê Van (2018) sound a note of caution, holding that while constructing a new identity as a teacher is essential it is also important for SCTs to retain their identity from their original career and to strike a balance between their areas of expertise and their new profession. This balance highlights Mezirow's emphasis on integrating old and new perspectives as important elements of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978b). Retention of former identity may be a challenge when changing career and attempting to immerse themselves fully into a new profession. However, integrating former identities into a new professional identity instead of merely allowing them to be overwritten or discarded allows SCTs to maintain an important sense of connection with the ideals engendered by previous careers (Caza and Creary, 2016). Such integrations for Mezirow (1978b) are important as they involve critical reflection which informs new roles and leads to identity (trans-)formation.

3.9. Benefits Brought by Second-Career Teachers

SCTs have a unique profile, and numerous authors examine the advantages they bring into the educational system, as well as the challenges they face. Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) recognise that the move to a second career in teaching may be viewed in vastly differing ways, with some perceiving it positively while for others it is an "implausible choice" (p.197). A frequent theme within literature is the benefits SCTs bring into the teaching profession. For Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev (2022) these strengths, which are derived from the diligence, real-world experience, content knowledge and maturity gained in previous employment cultures, may be considered as a "dowry" (p.172). Fry and Anderson (2011, p.2) consider SCTs as being full of potential, bringing with them "rich and varied life experiences." Furthermore, they see SCTs as bringing with them a combination of self-confidence, subject expertise, and professional maturity, which they can incorporate into their teaching. In fact, participants in research by Hunter-Johnson (2015) go a step further, believing that their previous experience would not just benefit them but would positively benefit the teaching profession.

3.9.1 Skills Transfer

SCTs bring with them both 'hard' and 'soft' skills (See Sections 5.5.1, 6.3.1 to 6.3.5). Hard skills are frequently explicit and for Lyu and Liu (2021) they include specific technical abilities. In contrast, soft skills are more implicit in nature and include cognitive, customer service, social, and project management skills. Frei, Kocher, and Buschor (2020, p.351), when exploring skills transfer, identify this concept as:

> the participants' competencies acquired in their first career and their life experience [which] are transferable to the teaching.

Haim and Amdur (2016) warn that skills transfer is often an assumption and is not an automatic process. While SCTs may be aware of the valuable skills they are bringing, it may not be easy to translate skills, competencies, values, attitudes and knowledge from a previous career into teaching due to factors including contextual differences, change in professional identity or conflicting institutional and cultural norms (Coppe *et al*., 2021). In addition, while understanding how to move skills from a previous career into teaching may be the issue in some cases, for others, they note that the skills may not be relevant to teaching and may not be transferable.

Research into SCTs has identified numerous valuable 'soft' skills which are brought into the teaching profession. Among the skills considered as beneficial by Lee and Lamport (2011) are organisational, managerial, and technical/computer skills. Other research

recognises the existence of skills which have developed during the time prior to entering teaching in the areas of negotiation and coping, multi-tasking, problem-solving, and the ability to engage in analytical and reflective thinking (Anthony and Ord, 2008; Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt, 2010; Coppe *et al*., 2021; Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev, 2022; Robb, 2024).

Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Korthagen (2008, p.1542) recognise that for SCTs, teaching was "complex and quite different in nature, compared to their previous jobs." As a result of these variations, they sound a note of caution, pointing out the scarcity of evidence supporting the notion of an automatic transference of previously acquired life skills and competencies into teaching. Trent (2018) agrees, asserting that transferring skill may be problematic as skills may not adapt to the new teaching environment and may not benefit teaching practice. Pflug (2020) similarly found that the skills and experiences brought from previous careers had mixed impacts and result in different supports being required during career transition.

The specific, technical skills, or 'hard' skills which SCTs bring with them into the teaching profession require refreshing. Casner *et al*. (2014) acknowledge the loss or degeneration of unused cognitive skills over time, while Fisher *et al*., (2018, p.1) note that "complex skills with limited opportunity for practice have been shown to degrade without continued refresher training." This has the potential to negatively impact the quality of teaching being provided. To counteract this, remaining up to date with changes in practice are essential, and so revisiting areas of professional experience may be ways of ensuring skills retention. SOLAS (2014, p.272) recognised this issue, noting that in addition to regularly updating pedagogical competence:

> FET tutors must ensure that their vocational competence is regularly upgraded, as it is their responsibility to prepare learners for current and emerging skill needs.

Undertaking refresher training may provide means of retaining competency and slowing skills degradation and knowledge erosion, in what is termed the "curve of forgetting" (Finkenbinder, 1913, p.8). This process however can cause resistance if professional registration has expired or if the decision to change career was heavily motivated by 'push factors' (See Section 3.5.2.2).

3.9.2. Experience in Content Area

In addition to the skills transfer process, a recurring focus within the literature is the experience and subject specific knowledge which SCTs bring with them to the teaching profession. This experience makes a critical contribution to both the work environment as a

whole and to subsequent information retention by students (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994). Fry and Anderson (2011) recognise that SCTs bring with them real-world, expert knowledge, which Kristmansson and Fjellström (2022, p.1) refer to as "highly relevant vocational experience". In a similar manner, Alharbi (2020, p.88) describes a "skill carry-over", whereby SCTs can bring career relevant skills and expertise from their previous career into their new teaching domain, making them ideal for teaching in specialised programs (Chambers, 2002). For Shulman (2013, p.8) this is "the accumulated wisdom of practice", gained through previous work experiences.

These competencies are gained through both experience and training. This knowledge, along with associated competencies, allow the bearer to make unique connections between the real-world and the classroom, in a way in which those without previous experience cannot. SCTs can also bring a broader perspective to teaching, as their expert knowledge is not focused solely on theory, but on its practical application. This greater understanding of the subject matter, alongside practical expertise, and the ability to provide concrete examples and real-world applications of concepts, has a positive impact on student learning (Storey, 2000; Chambers, 2002; Baeten and Meeus, 2016; Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev, 2022),). Lee and Lamport (2011) also recognise the strengths which SCTs bring to the school environment, which they view as appealing to those hiring new teachers. Along with real world experience, they note the benefits of previous training in information technology, in addition to familiarity with coping with work pressures.

3.9.3. Autonomy / Self-Confidence

SCTs bring with them professionalism and elements of career knowledge which support higher levels of self-confidence (Bullough and Knowles, 1990; Shwartz and Dori, 2020; Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021; Robb, 2024). This self-confidence, according to Coppe *et al*. (2021) is evident in the decision to change career. Such a decision may suggest they have faith in their career-adaptability which is their ability to successfully move into a new profession as a teacher. This however is by no means certain. The self-confidence which may be the result of a strong professional identity in a previous career may not transfer into any new career (See Section 6.6.1 & 6.6.2). Their motivations, the precarious position they may find themselves in, the change in circumstances, and their new positioning as a novice (potentially viewed as a demotion), may ultimately undermine their confidence. Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) make the point that this is not the first transition these career changers have gone through. They previously moved into a career and have built up:

> …a repertoire of adaptation mechanisms for responding to the opportunities and constraints of a different occupation (p.200).

Self-confidence, when combined with the self-insight identified by Tigchelaar, Vermunt, and Brouwer (2014) allows SCTs to exhibit more autonomy and to assume authority more easily than first-career teachers (Dickar, 2005). Le Cornu (2013) identifies opportunities to engage in ongoing professional training to develop pedagogic practices and relationship building as having the ability to further enhance this self-confidence.

Self-confidence however is not a universal feeling, as career changers may feel anxiety regarding multiple issues, some of which Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010) recognise as being specific to those in a second career. These include concerns regarding career decisions and choice, identity, perceived status-loss, financial problems, demands caused by the new career, and uncertainty about the future (Haggard, Slostad and Winterton 2006; Johnstone, 2007; Sexton, 2007; Baňasová, 2018; Kulcsár, Dobrean, and Gati, 2020).

3.10. Supportive Relationships

Jorissen (2003, p.43) recognises that "new relationships become critical…during a career transition, in terms of identity development". This does not mean that existing relationships are any less important in providing support and guidance for initiating and maintaining a career change (Higgins, 2001). Positive relationships, built upon respect, integrity, and mutual trust, are frequently identified as important elements in the career of all teachers (See Sections 6.5.2 to 6.5.2.3). These promote resilience, build competence and self-confidence, and increase job satisfaction, which allow SCTs to face challenges in times of heightened stress and to develop a stronger professional identity (Johnson and Down, 2013; Le Cornu, 2013; McKevitt, Carbery, and Lyons, 2017; Agarwal, Brooks, and Greenberg, 2020; Dutton *et al*., 2024; Sharma and Akram, 2024).

Supports from family, friends, and those with experience in teaching are crucial in developing the self-confidence to act when meeting the demands of transitioning into a teaching career (Mezirow, 2000; Luyckx, Goossens, and Soenens, 2006; Tigchelaar, Brouwerb, and Vermunt, 2010; Tan and Kramer, 2012). Such supports significantly shape confidence, emotional well-being, a sense of belonging, job satisfaction, and successful professional identity (trans-)formation (Brannan and Bleistein, 2012; Bar-Tal *et al.,* 2020).

Social supports are particularly important for career changers who "experience isolation…in contrast to the camaraderie they felt in previous occupations" (Crow, Levine, and Nager, 1990, p. 208). Family and friends of novice SCTs are not expected to provide

advice or to offer suggestions directly linked to their new teaching role. Instead, they are recognised as an "anchor during career transition" (Veldandi, Mishra, and Saxena, 2023, p.101), providing stability during the time of change. This support is most often tangible in nature, for example providing financial resources or assistance with childcare or other obligations (Muthuswamy, 2023). Family and friends are also recognised as offering significant, holistic support through listening, providing encouragement, and emotional support during all phases of the transition into teaching (Haasler and Barabasch, 2015). Access to a supportive professional environment (See Section 6.5.2.1) is recognised as assisting in transitionary processes (Le Cornu, 2013; Dutton *et al*., 2024). Peer support can be provided by coworkers in an *ad hoc* manner, or more formally by mentors, creating what Brannan and Bleistein (2012, p.534) refer to as a "web of support". While both groups can provide positive support and affirmation, reducing feelings of isolation, co-workers are the most frequent point of contact for pragmatic supports while mentors provide constructive feedback and pedagogical supports. *Ad hoc* peer supports, frequently provided by veteran teachers within a school environment, provide pedagogical guidance and emotional support as well as appreciation (Van Lankveld *et al.,* 2017). These are recognised as assisting in providing resources, building relationships, and supporting adjustment to a new profession and work environment, which assist in developing a strong professional identity through inclusion (Mezirow, 1978b; Burton, Boschmans, and Hoelson, 2013; Barni, Danioni, and Benevene, 2019). Effective formal support involving critical dialogue and feedback can play important roles in fostering job satisfaction and a passion for education (Wisehart, 2004; McCarthy and O'Brien, 2020). Formal support mechanisms offer novice SCTs a space to reflect on their practices and assist them reconcile previous experiences with their new role, even though mentoring often lacks direct observation and associated opportunities to discuss teaching methods (Conway *et al.,* 2012). These supports allow SCTs to address concerns, connect skills gained in their first career to those required in teaching, ultimately enhance their professional identity and career success (Tigchelaar, Brouwerb, and Vermunt, 2010; Brannan and Bleisten, 2012; Masdonati, Fournier, and Lahrizi., 2017; Timor, 2017; Bar-Tal *et al.,* 2020; Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar, 2021). Supportive relationships are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural conditions and contexts in which individuals live (Phelan and Kinsella, 2009). These relationships are shaped by the interplay between 'habitus' (internalised tendencies which are shaped by past experiences) and 'field' (the social spaces in which an individual operates) as outlined by Bordieu (1969). These dynamics, and the broader structures of

power, class, and culture influence not only who forms part of an individual's network but also the nature and quality of the supports provided.

The literature notes that SCTs may lack encouragement and support during their transition into teaching, leaving some feeling they have been left to fend for themselves (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Reasons for this include assumptions regarding SCTs' prior experience and resilience based upon age, perceived maturity, and prior experience. These may lead to misconceptions about their ability to cope with the demands of teaching without support (Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006). Teachers who experience a lack of support speak of feelings of isolation and feeling like "… a chicken with [its] head cut off" (Brindley and Parker, 2010, p.587). Berger and D'Ascoli (2012a) note that for SCTs, the absence of supportive relationships was a contributing factor to leaving their original career and turning to teaching. Due to insecurity in a new environment some SCTs find it difficult to ask for assistance from colleagues or from management, believing that doing so makes them look like a failure (Butler, 2007).

While transitioning to a preferred career may be appealing, numerous factors must be considered, adding pressure to make the 'right' decision. Gati and Kulcsar (2021) note that even a preferred career might not align with what is perceived as the 'best' career decision, highlighting the complexity of career change. This mismatch may serve as a reason for experiencing dissuasion from family or friends (See Sections 5.6.2 and 6.5.1). Dissuasion goes beyond a lack of support and involves active efforts to discourage an individual from pursuing a chosen path, and may come from relatives, colleagues, or the media. Those perceived as having authority or higher credibility often exert the most significant influence and are the most cited sources of dissuasion (Suryani, Watt, and Richardson, 2013). Within the literature, dissuasion does not typically focus on a perceived lack of teaching ability. Instead, it stems from areas such as career stability, salary, challenges that SCTs may face which render teaching to be an undesirable career, or a belief that entering the teaching profession would waste the individual's talents (Watt and Richardson, 2007; Smith, 2022). While these factors are commonly cited as deterrents, they are reported as not strong enough to dissuade individuals who are determined to transition into teaching, indicating a significant level of commitment among SCTs who choose to change career despite highlighted concerns, potentially indicating strong altruistic-intrinsic motivations (Berger and D'Ascoli, 2012a, 2012b; Berger and Girardet, 2015; Nesje, Brandmo, and Berger, 2018).

3.11. Challenges Faced by Second-Career Teachers

Entering a new career brings with it additional challenges for both first career teachers and SCTs (Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006). SCTs are entering a profession which is recognised as having many inherent challenges and stressors (Watt and Richardson, 2008; Klassen *et al*., 2011). These may be exacerbated if perceptions and expectations about teaching and the teaching profession are not met in the real-world, and it is found to be more challenging than expected (Keane, Heinz, and Lynch, 2023). Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010) see the sudden move from idealised expectations regarding teaching into the reality of a classroom, as having the potential to cause a "culture shock" (p.169) or "reality shock" (p.176), which potentially may lead to feelings of disenchantment, but may also stimulate critical reflection and transformation.

Lasky (2005, p.191) holds that "vulnerability is one of the most fundamental of all human experiences", with the potential to allow individuals to experience positive and negative emotions. This can be born out of negative feelings of powerlessness or anxiety or from a positive attempt to grow emotionally, to bring about a positive change, or to develop a relationship. Changing career, and the subsequent personal and professional experience may bring about feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in a new environment (Mellon, 2023). Overall, the coping mechanisms which SCTs have learned in their previous professions, form part of their prior frames of reference to accommodate change, are shown to equip them to deal with stress and other work-related challenges (Mezirow, 2000; Williams, 2013).

3.11.1. Classroom Management

Bullough and Knowles (1990) identify how radical differences between former work environments and the classroom have the potential to make the move into teaching more challenging. Within their research they identify a participant as being "a person used to being respected yet struggling within a hostile environment" (p.105). The consequence of previously working in an ordered environment may be the creation of unreasonable expectations or the generation of unrealistic attitudes regarding classroom life, which may make the transition into a second career more difficult. Within the literature, and as illustrated in this research (See Section 6.3.1), SCTs differentiate between working with teenagers and working with adult learners. Sirk, Liivik, and Loogma (2016) recognise that adult learners are viewed as being more knowledgeable and motivated than younger learners which results in teachers having a positive attitude towards them. Furthermore, adult learners are perceived as requiring less discipline and expecting a high quality

specialist education which encourages teachers to continually develop their professional skills and knowledge.

However, while discipline among adult learners may not be as pressing an issue, mature students face specific challenges. Teachers therefore must not only be cognisant of the variety of learners in the classroom but should be skilled in recognising and dealing sensitively with the various learning styles they are presented with (Gregersen and Nielsen, 2023). Students returning to learning may have left education many years before embarking on a FET course. Adult learners returning to the classroom may lack confidence and being in a formal educational setting may cause anxiety. Previous negative educational experiences and a lack of writing or digital skills may also make adjusting to the learning environment particularly problematic. Consequently, additional resources and planning may be required to facilitate learning.

Classrooms have the potential to be chaotic environments, even for experienced teachers, regardless of previous experience (Mazta, 2020). Many find this a struggle, a phenomenon which Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Korthagen (2008, p.1546) call "practice shock". Haggard, Slostad and Winterton (2006) found that issues with classroom management were reduced by adapting to the classroom setting. Other struggles they note may be addressed using the "unique competencies" (p.317) that SCTs possess, an assumption which Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Korthagen (2008) are cautious of. Classroom management is not merely a discipline issue. Other elements which have the potential to causes problems in adapting to a new role and work environment include complexities regarding workload and required daily tasks (See Section 6.4.1). Administrative challenges have the capacity to cause issues relating to time management. The demands being made on teachers' time and energy by assuming new professional responsibilities are identified by many, including Wilcox and Samaras (2009), as sources of dissatisfaction and concern among career change teachers. Castro and Bauml (2009) note that in many cases, SCTs are already in possession of time-management skills, gained in previous careers. These however may not be sufficient or appropriate to the specific instructional context, given the unpredictability of the environment, which may be vastly different to previous work contexts.

3.11.2. Difficulty Adjusting to a New Position

The move from one career to another, and the subsequent adjustments required is a process frequently described as a 'transition' (Bar-Tal *et al.*, 2020*;* Shwartz and Dori, 2020), which can be a difficult time, particularly for SCTs in precarious, non-permanent positions (Fitzsimons, Henry, and O'Neill, 2021). This is reflective of Mezirow's (1978b) phases of

Transformative Learning, wherein the change process alters an individual's context as they gain new knowledge, build competence, and develop a new professional identity. To accomplish this, they must undergo a process of unlearning prior to learning new skills, involving critical reflection and reassessment of prior assumptions (Mezirow, 1978b; Gardner, 2014). This allows them to both assume their new professional identity and deal more effectively with the complexities of the teaching profession (Perez-Roux, 2019). For Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2011, p.39) transition is "a turning point or a period between two periods of stability". These periods of change they view as anticipated (expected), non-anticipated (unsure of the process or outcome), and non-events (expected but do not occur). The process can be challenging with the outcome depending upon elements including the individual's attitude and coping mechanisms, their support network, and the current situation in which they find themself (Schlossberg, 2011; Wilson *et al*., 2014; Ares, 2018).

SCTs may come into teaching without previous experience (Shah, 2022; Gisselbaek *et al*., 2024). Their lack of familiarity may lead to challenges, such as doubts about their ability, what Stewart (2023, p.471) refers to as facing the "imposter monster" (See Sections 6.6.1 to 6.6.3). Individuals at the beginning of a new career in teaching may experience feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and not being an equal with peers (Živković, 2020). These uncertainties may result in a lack of self-confidence and feelings of inadequacy and a sense of not belonging which manifest in a belief that they are an imposter. Feelings of fraudulently acquiring a teaching position, an inability to accept praise or success, anxiety regarding being judged, and a fear of being exposed as being incompetent, may result in a prevailing need to justify their presence in a profession and a compulsion to meet or exceed the perceived expectations of others (Chapman, 2017; Živković, 2021; Smith *et al.*, 2024). Feelings of being an academic phoney can lead to increased stress, reduced job performance, decreased satisfaction, and difficulty in forming a strong professional identity (Wilkinson, 2020). This difficulty may be exacerbated by feelings of being an outsider and despite having a successful career in their previous profession not fitting into their new environment (Johnston *et al.*, 2023).

While SCTs bring valuable skills from their previous careers they still require support from family, friends, and colleagues to build confidence and to effectively transition into teaching (See Sections 6.5.2 to 6.5.2.3). This support is essential for integrating their skills with new pedagogical strategies (Baeten and Meeus, 2016). For SCTs, skills from their previous career may impede their successful transition into a new profession (Alharbi, 2020; Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev, 2022). This may happen firstly if SCTs believe they

need to prove to themselves and others that they are part of a legitimate profession, on equal footing with traditionally recognised professions (Sexton, 2007). Additionally, it may occur in individuals whose previous careers did not expose them to unpredictable situations that demanded adaptability and flexibility (Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Korthagen, 2008). Frei, Kocher, and Buschor (2021, p.349) note that:

> …prior professional experience can be a resource or a barrier and is not transferred automatically. Career changers need support from teacher educators and mentoring lecturers in helping them to identify links between their prior experience and their new career.

Furthermore, Chambers (2002) recognises issues relating to SCTs who are considered as being less amenable to change. This difficulty changing, and resultant behaviours including attempts to maintain older identities and non-engagement with the new work environment, may have a negative impact upon the development of a new professional identity. Outside the classroom the struggle of being a novice may continue. Those moving into teaching from positions of respect or responsibility may find it difficult to adjust to their new role. While they may be highly experienced in specific areas they must now adjust to this new position (Williams, 2010). Haim and Amdur (2016) note that some novice SCTs feel frustrated when their pre-teaching competencies are overlooked. They also recognise that this cohort experiences additional pressures to become as proficient in their new teaching career as they were in their former career.

Anthony and Ord (2008) describe how career changers may face issues relating to lack of adequate resources, limited career opportunities, and adjusting to their new status within a sector which has low status (McGuinness *et al*., 2014). The move from one career into another has the potential to impact "professional stature" (Laming and Horne, 2013, p.336), whereby career change and the change in professional identity give rise to a subsequent status shift, ultimately changing how individuals are treated by others. The shift from expert in a previous career to novice in a new field can be difficult. However, acknowledging the previous career of SCTs, considering them as resources, and providing them opportunities to share their expertise and knowledge in their new profession assists in building confidence and facilitates their overall integration into their new work environment (Coppe, Marz, and Raemdonck, 2023). Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) identify issues which are more acute for SCTs who had positions of responsibility or had been in advanced or managerial roles within a previous career. They note that being in a subordinate position, novice SCTs miss the camaraderie of their previous occupations which results in heightened feelings of isolation.

Le Cornu (2013) acknowledges the importance of support and encouragement from principals to help early-career SCTs adjust to their new role. In situations where principals provide professional and emotional supports, teachers are seen to "flourish" (p.5), building self-confidence and competence (Mezirow, 1978b). However, in some circumstances there is dissatisfaction with the perceived quality and abilities of school leadership and with the support they provide in helping SCTs adjust to the challenges of a new career. Laming and Horne (2013) identify these issues as most strongly felt by those who had high expectations regarding positive leadership particularly amongst those who previously worked as managers, professionals, or who had been self-employed. Criticisms are identified relating to leadership style, decision-making ability, and level of qualification of those in a leadership role. These criticisms may arise from SCTs who hold positive self-perceptions regarding their own leadership abilities, perhaps believing they are overqualified to be in the novice-teacher position (Ma *et al.* 2020).

3.11.3. Personal Challenges

Alongside the professional challenges faced by SCTs, personal challenges must also be met. Finding a balance between work responsibilities and the numerous other elements of life can be stressful (Williams, 2013; Kärner *et al*., 2021). Authors frequently refer to the sacrifices which SCTs must make, from initially entering a teacher education program right through to beginning in the classroom. For Lee and Lamport (2011) these sacrifices pertain to having less time for family and friends in addition to having less free time to engage in pastimes and surrendering financial independence. The reality of a lack of available time contrasts sharply with the desire for more quality time to spend with family and friends (See Sections 3.5.2.1, 3.5.2.2, 5.5.3 & 6.4.1). This lack of time may also impact novice SCTs ability to interact with colleagues, which ultimately has a negative impact on their engagement and the formation of their new professional identity (Powers, 2002). SCTs are also seen as frequently struggling to strike a balance between the demands of their new career and their responsibilities. These include the pressure caused by the diverse challenges they face around family commitments, professional obligations, and financial difficulties, that those entering teaching as a first career may not have (Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006; Geoghegan, 2023).

Personal challenges are often deeply intertwined with social challenges, as individuals' struggles may be shaped by broader societal structures and conditions. Consequently, personal experiences cannot be fully understood without considering the social contexts that influence them. Frequent references are made in literature to the financial

circumstances of those transitioning into the teaching profession. Williams (2013) notes the financial constraints placed upon student SCTs and their families. Financial issues may arise from reduced earnings, living expenses, payment of tuition fees, or a combination of these factors, meaning that SCTs need to have access to financial resources during their transition (Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton, 2006; Castro and Bauml, 2009; Vogelsang, Shultz, and Olson, 2018). The Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), which represents teaching staff in the FET sector highlights the difficulties faced by novice-teachers entering the profession, saying:

> …initial positions for new entrant staff fall far short of full-hours and are often fixed-term positions. This precludes many from taking up appointments as it is simply unsustainable to pay accommodation costs in urban areas (Teachers' Union of Ireland, 2022, p.3).

The lack of job and financial security brought about by this situation results in novice-teachers being unable to engage fully with, or to feel secure in, their new profession. Potentially this may impede the processes of building self-confidence and reintegration, which may negatively affect the formation of a new professional identity (Mezirow, 1978b). Baeten and Meeus (2016) note the sacrifices which SCTs must make, particularly as many may have ongoing financial commitments. They recognise that if there is to be a reduction in income for those starting into a teaching career, access to adequate finances may become an important factor. These financial concerns may potentially have a severe negative impact upon the ease of transition and identity development of those who have entered the profession because of predominantly 'push' factors.

Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton (2006) report that while studying, SCTs face serious financial burdens and stresses. Having left well-paying careers, many now face difficulties balancing their personal and family finances, as they considered holding a paying job as being "virtually impossible" (p.321). Castro and Bauml (2009) recommend that as a way of supporting continuing education for SCTs, financial assistance should be made available. This could be made available through the provision of loans, grants, and payment plans, which would assist student SCTs in their attempts at replacing lost income.

3.12. Summary

This literature review offers insights into the existing knowledge regarding the factors motivating SCTs to transition into teaching and identifies gaps in existing knowledge. It both informs and shapes this research. Firstly, it has informed this research by grounding it in established theories while identifying areas needing further exploration. This foundation enhances this study's ability to contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge

on SCTs and their identity (trans-)formation. It has shaped the research by helping to refine the research questions. Reviewing motivational literature has identified the key factors driving individuals to pursue a career in teaching, particularly within the FET sector. Furthermore, it highlights the benefits of SCTs and the importance of supportive relationships, which help in navigating career change. Understanding SCT motivations, exploring how SCTs are defined in the literature, and understanding the variety of previous career skills SCTs bring into teaching helps to differentiate their unique motivations, experiences, and benefits from those who choose what may be considered as a more traditional path. Reviewing initial teacher education pathways and the challenges faced by SCTs further informs this research, particularly in understanding the complexities of career change and professional identity (trans-)formation.

In chapter four an outline of the research methodology employed in this research is presented, in addition to discussing the rationale and validity for its use. In addition, ethical issues regarding its use are addressed.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Chapter three provides an overview of the literature which relates to career change and motivation for entering the educational sector. and second-career teachers. This helps contextualise the first research question by showing what is already known and where further investigation is required. Literature regarding career change and professional identity formation identifies challenges and supports necessary for positive identity (trans-)formation, which provides a basis for answering the second question. This chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate the research question:

> What motivates second-career teachers to teach in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB?

and a secondary research question:

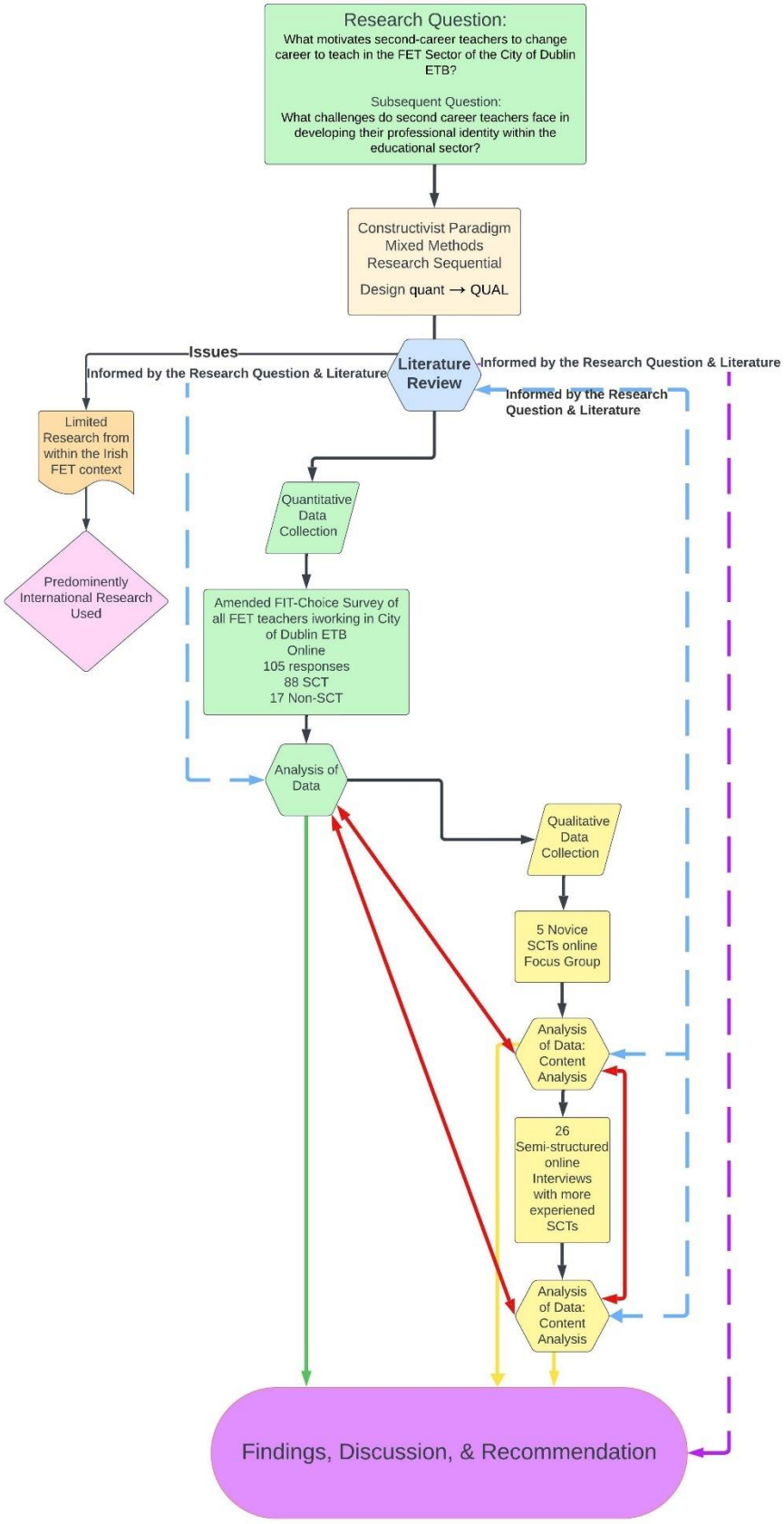
> What challenges do second career teachers face in developing their professional identity within this educational sector?

It begins by exploring the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research. My positioning as researcher, the sample population, the data collection and analysis processes, and ethical considerations are also provided.

4.2. Conceptual Framework

Image 4.1 presents the conceptual framework for this research. It provides a visual roadmap of how this research has been conducted. The research questions are presented and are addressed through a mixed-methods study. Academic literature was reviewed and provided a foundation for the research, and so it is frequently returned to. Quantitative and qualitative methods were sequentially used to provide the data for analysis. The results of the analysis are discussed and provide recommendations for policy and practice.

Image 4.1. The Conceptual Framework for this Research.



4.3. Philosophical Assumptions

All research is founded on a series of basic philosophical beliefs which provide a unifying framework which relate to the very nature of existence, how knowledge is attained, and ultimately what it will be used for (Ritchie *et al*., 2013). Research paradigms may be considered as the preferred ways in which information is collected and understood, to create new knowledge, and are founded upon four key interrelated areas which define a research paradigm: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018a). Sutrisna (2009) perceives each as having a specific place, with epistemological beliefs being ultimately dictated by ontological beliefs, in a relationship which he views as "inevitable" (p.52). He considers axiology as developing from these elements, which in turn lead to the methodology. Research paradigms may be considered as the preferred ways in which information is collected and understood, to create new knowledge and are founded upon ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. For Heron and Reason (1997, p.274), "the notion of a paradigm or worldview as an overarching framework that organises our whole approach to being in the world".
This research seeks to understand the motivations for choosing to work in the FET sector, and to explore the process of professional identity formation. The chosen paradigm for this research is constructivism. Constructivists, or interpretivists, maintain that knowledge is socially constructed, and it can only be understood if viewed from the perspective of the individuals who are living the experience. Constructivists value context and hold that the world is socially constructed, with multiple truths which are ambiguous and constantly changing, and as such it cannot be examined scientifically. Constructivism is not without its opponents. Those who favour a positivist approach for example view it as "soft scholarship [which signals] the death of empirical science" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018a, p.40). Positivism is rooted in the physical sciences and is frequently associated with empirical scientific enquiry and the use of the scientific method, which remains for some "the only legitimate mode of conducting scientific inquiry" (Prasad, 2017, p.2). Constructivism is ontologically relativist, holding that there is no absolute truth or objective reality. Instead, individuals construct their own realities based upon their unique experiences. Everything is relative to the individual, their context, experience, and the meaning attached to truth (Russell, 2013). It holds that utilising subjective, qualitative methods provides the depth needed to fully understand the meanings and feelings behind a phenomenon (Goldkuhl, 2012; Halfpenny, 2015). Within the context of this research, it is recognised that knowledge is constructed by the individual through social interaction and

lived experiences. This in turn can be subjectively investigated and interpreted through interviews and focus groups.

Epistemologically, constructivism highlights the subjective nature of knowledge, with individuals considered as co-creators of understanding, each possessing a nuanced view of the world. This worldview is based upon the part values and subjective experience play in attempting to gain knowledge (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2018). Knowledge gained in this way must be interpreted to discover the underlying meaning. Furthermore, constructivism sees knowledge as active and continually evolving, being changed by an individual's interactions. The constructivist axiology emphasises the subjective and dynamic nature of value creation. Values evolve and change based upon encounters with new information and new experiences. Because of its subjective nature, research is value bound and value laden. As constructivism seeks to both explore and understand experiences, the methodology used is most often qualitative in nature, using methods such as interviews. The data provided offers a means of extracting rich and thick descriptions through analysis which identifies themes and patterns in responses, which is particularly relevant for this study.

Mixed methods research (MMR), which combines, integrates, and enhances elements from both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study is used in this research (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The use of MMR offers a broader focus on, and deeper insight into, the research topic. This is achieved by exploiting the strengths of a wider range of methods than would not be available if a single method design were used. MMR is underpinned by a pragmatic paradigm, rejecting the "either/or choice of qualitative and quantitative research" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010, p.644), and drawing on the strengths of both methods. MMR is often employed when investigators believe that using elements from both methods may offer a clearer understanding of the research problem, as it provides "more information or better information" (Creswell, 1999, p.460).

This research uses a quant→QUAL sequential design. The quantitative survey provides data regarding the motivations of FET teachers within the City of Dublin ETB, which is both externally valid and generalisable. In contrast the qualitative focus group and interview processes provide rich, contextualised insights into the lived experiences of second-career teachers.

Quantitative research methods are positivist, with researchers remaining objectively distant from participants as they analyse information gathered using structured methods, such as surveys. In this research quantitative data is provided by the responses to the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) choice survey, developed by Watt and Richardson (2007).

Online survey benefits include geographical spread, reduction in completion errors. and fewer missed items when compared to paper surveys. Disadvantages include respondents being overwhelmed by numerous unwelcome surveys arriving by email and so not responding (Nayak and Narayan, 2019). This anonymous online survey took approximately ten minutes to complete and provides information from FET teachers regarding the factors that influenced their decision to enter the teaching profession, in addition to the factors that influence their choice to remain in the profession. This data offers an overview of the reasons why teaching staff in the City of Dublin ETB chose to work in this educational sector. Research into this area has not previously been conducted and the data provided will shed light on the factors which influenced the decision-making process.

Following from this, qualitative data is supplied through a focus group and 26 semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research methods use less structured approaches than quantitative methods. They have constructivist foundations, holding that the reality being studied is directly related to the interactions with, and interpretations of, the researcher in collaboration with the research participants in their natural environments (Thomas, 2006). The qualitative methods used in this research provide comprehensive and contextual data concerning an individual's experiences regarding their motivation to become FET teachers. In addition, they allow for exploration of the development of professional teacher identity among FET teachers within the City of Dublin ETB.

4.4. Position of the Researcher

Researcher position has the potential to influence how research is conducted and ultimately the results it produces. Berger (2015, p.220) considers identifying researcher positioning as:

> …turning [of] the researcher's lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation.

Costely, Elliott and Gibbs (2010, p.1) when exploring research being conducted within a researcher's own area of practice notes that insider researchers:

> …draw upon the shared understandings and trust of their immediate and more removed colleagues with whom normal social interactions of working communities have been developed.

Herr and Anderson (2015) note the importance of a researcher positioning themselves honestly, identifying themselves as an insider if relevant. While this position is valid, they

warn that doctoral students undertaking research must adopt the perspective of being an "outsider within" (p.90). They contend that doctoral students who are familiar with the environment and identify with the research being undertaken must endeavour to remove themselves from it in every way possible.

Prior to undertaking this research, my positioning as a researcher was considered and is acknowledged as being an insider collaborating with other insiders (Herr and Anderson, 2015), given that I am a second-career teacher working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. Shah (2004) held that social insider researchers have advantages concerning knowledge of the area being investigated and negotiating access, particularly in relation to obtaining interview data.

Being an insider researcher presents several risks and challenges, which may call into the question the credibility or ethical nature of this research. A number of these are now provided, along with the steps taken to proactively address them.

4.4.1. Bias and Subjectivity

My move into teaching as a subsequent career later in life resulted in them undertaking a variety of previous roles and gaining a diverse range of experience. I have never held any positions of status within the City of Dublin ETB. They do however recognise that a power imbalance may occur within the researcher - participant relationship.

As an insider, the researcher may bring preconceived notions or personal biases that may influence the research. These may lead to selective observation or conformation bias, where information that supports the researcher's existing viewpoint is focused on. In addition, researcher assumptions may lead to important details being overlooked, potentially due to assuming that the context is understood, leading to a failure to ask probing questions or to fully explore the circumstances. To overcome this, keeping a research diary and regular reflection on personal perspectives and how these might affect the research was conducted (See Appendix C). This research was approached with a "beginner's mind", where assumptions are consciously set aside (Stefik and Stefik, 2005, p.10). In addition, involving the research supervisors and their skill in reviewing this work help to maintain objectivity.

4.4.2. Role Confusion

The dual role of being both a researcher and an SCT working in the same ETB has the potential to lead to role confusion, where it becomes difficult to separate professional or personal identity from the role of researcher. This can affect a researcher's ability to

critically analyse situations or to challenge the *status quo.* To address this, clear role boundaries are established, in addition to maintaining a professional distance and maintaining focus on the research objectives (Greene, 2014).

4.4.3. Access to Sensitive Information

The possibility exists that participants may share sensitive information because of an existing relationship. This may create an ethical dilemma about what to include in the research and how to protect participants' privacy. To mitigate this, ethical guidelines, such as obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, transparency with participants and anonymising data are strictly adhered to.

4.4.4. Impact on Relationships

Conducting research within my own ETB has the potential to strain personal or professional relationships, especially if the findings are sensitive or critical. Participants may also feel pressured to respond in ways that they believe align with my expectations. To overcome this, clear and open communication with participants regarding the purpose of the research and their rights has been maintained. Ensuring anonymity and emphasising the voluntary nature of participation help to alleviate concerns. The importance of being mindful when sharing or discussing findings, particularly in settings where participants may be present, is also noted.

4.5. Case Study

The intention of this research is to focus on understanding the dynamics present within the choice to enter the FET sector as a second career and to explore the process of professional identity (trans-)formation in SCTs. This is achieved through examining and explaining the factors which underlie the processes through the provision of in-depth, contextually bound descriptions. The research question underpinning this work seeks to explore the motivations for choosing teaching as a second career and is not attempting to prove a hypothesis. As this question is a 'why' question, regarding a decision-making process in which context may be important, Yin (2018) suggests that a case study may be an appropriate methodology to use.

Case studies within a constructivist paradigm facilitate the in-depth exploration of phenomena within their real-life context, providing a flexible yet challenging methodology which has "been around as long as recorded history" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p.302). Their unique strength lies in their depth and capacity to deal with a wide array of evidence to

identify hidden subtleties and provide rich, textured, and in-depth qualitative data. Case study methodology emphasises "the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity" (Crabtree and Miller, 1999, p.10). Its use offers a means of gaining a new insight into the individual lived experiences of participants, and the meanings given to these experiences. In the context of this research this is the experience of career change and identity formation as experienced by second-career teachers within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. This is accomplished through the collection, in-depth exploration, and reflection upon the rich data collected from participants. Classically, case studies focused upon an individual as the case. A more contemporary understanding of case study methodologies holds that a process or a phenomenon may be considered as the case (Yin, 2018).

Stake (2008, p.119) contends that a case study "is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied". Case studies allow a researcher to focus and examine a phenomenon within its context. Creswell (2009, p.13) recognises that:

> …case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth… one or more individuals…using a variety of data collection procedures.

Eysenck (2013) believes that case studies do not need to prove something, instead they provide an opportunity for learning something through an authentic exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of participants.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the motivations for choosing to work as a teacher within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB and the subsequent (trans-)formation of a professional teacher identity. Therefore, an explanatory case study is used to examine the reasons 'why' and 'how' choices were made. Lune and Berg (2017) contend that to provide depth to a case study, multiple methods for collecting data should be employed which will provide a meaningful examination of the case. To achieve this, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in this research, allowing nuances in behaviours to be studied in detail.

4.5.1. Designing the Case

A case that aims to explore human activity within real-world contexts, particularly when the activity is complex, may be challenging to clearly define (Gillham, 2000). Yin (2018) provides a model for designing the case study which describes the subject, the unit of analysis, the context and the illustrative theories within research which follows a case study design. Based upon this model, the design for this case study is provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Case Study Design Summary.

The Subject	Second-career teachers who have entered the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB
The Unit of Analysis	The motivational process for entering the teaching profession.
The Context	The FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.
Illustrative Theories	Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning
Data Collection	quant→QUAL sequential design Survey →Focus Group → Semi-structured interviews
Data Analysis	Linked to the research questions. **Quantitative:** Preparation for data analysis - Data validation, data editing and data coding, followed by data analysis using descriptive statistics. Interpretation of statistical results in context revealing underlying trends and to draw valid conclusions. **Qualitative:** Content analysis of the interviews following the process - 'compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding' (Yin, 2015, p.185).

4.6. Sampling

Gentles *et al*., (2015, p.1777) view sampling as "the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives". These sources, drawn from the larger population, then form a representative "information rich group" (Patton, 2015, p.283). There are two main sampling methods used in research, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling employs the random selection of participants using simple random, systematic, stratified or cluster sampling. In principle, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected to participate, thereby creating a sample which is truly representative of the population. In contrast, non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which a researcher deliberately selects a particular section of the broader population using a non-random, subjective method to include or exclude specific elements. As a result, each member of the population does not have an equal chance of being included. The sampling method chosen should maximise the ability of the researcher to answer the research questions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).
The sample population for the quantitative element of this study were all FET teachers working within the City of Dublin ETB. Based upon the Cochran formula, for a finite population, the ideal sample size was 278 responses from a population of 1000 teachers, to provide a Confidence Interval of 95%, a Confidence Level of 95%, a Z-score of 1.96, and a Standard Deviation of 0.5 (Calculator.net, 2023). For the qualitative elements of this research, the sample population were specifically second-career teachers within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.

Morse (1995, p.147) notes that frequently the term data saturation is used in relation to data collection but stresses that "there are no specific guidelines for the *a priori* estimation of the amount of data require[d]…" The sample used must she feels be both appropriate (large enough for replication) and adequate (participants must be experts in the field). Saturation therefore is not achieved by frequency of response or simply reaching a numerical target but by the researcher immersing themselves in the data, allowing them to discuss it with confidence and certainty (Morse, 2015).

In the context of this study, the population for both elements was potentially large, demographically mixed and dispersed across thirteen educational centres, and so volunteer sampling is used for both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this research. This sampling method provided every member of the sample population an opportunity to participate, as they had the choice whether to participate in the research or not. Within the case study method samples may be self-selecting which is time efficient as volunteers contact the researcher. In addition, those who make contact may be considered as being interested and willing to participate.

Other sampling methods, including snowball sampling were considered but not utilised. The use of volunteer sampling was deemed appropriate for this study considering the research question. Individuals were asked to answer or discuss questions related to topics which were personal and possibly sensitive. Volunteer sampling allowed individuals who are willing to discuss their career choices to freely choose to participate without any feelings of coercion. While volunteer sampling allowed me to work with a specific population of interest, limitations regarding its use are recognised. This entails the inability to control the composition of the sample and so it is susceptible to accusations of researcher bias. In addition, there is no evidence that the sample is representative as those who participate may not represent the entire population and may not provide the best information (Gill, 2020). In the context of this research, it is considered to be the most appropriate to use, as the research aims to generate knowledge regarding the experiences of second-career teachers and not the prevalence of these experiences (Yin, 2018).

For this research, all FET teachers within the City of Dublin ETB were invited to complete the survey. Following this novice SCTs were invited to participate in a focus group. As they are at the early stages of their career transition and are most likely still grappling with the initial challenges of adapting to a new career, and in the early stages of their identity (trans-)formation, their experiences and specific insights were considered as being particularly relevant for understanding initial motivations and the early stages of identity (trans-)formation. Exploring this group separately could help to identify any specific

challenges they are facing. A focus group was believed to be an appropriate means for conducting an in-depth exploration of the common motivations, fresh experiences, and challenges SCTs face as they complete their initial teacher training and navigate their new roles.

All SCTs were invited to participate in the interviews. By including SCTs at different stages in their careers, a more complete picture of experiences can be captured. While novice SCTs may offer more insight into early motivations and challenges, more experienced SCTs can offer reflections on factors that provided long-term success in their career change and the sustainability of their motivations. The inclusion of data from both groups ensures that findings and recommendations are relevant, making this research more applicable and useful for policymaking and designing support initiatives. 971 links to the survey were emailed out via the City of Dublin ETB's 'all-staff' email function for each FET college, and 105 surveys were returned (10.8%). 5 volunteers participated in the focus group and 26 interviews were completed. Profiles for participants in both the focus group and interviews is available in Tables 6.2 and 6.3.

4.6.1. Participant Recruitment

Recruitment of participants for this research involved two recruitment processes. Following the granting of ethical approval by DCU's Research Ethics Committee, approval from the Data Protection Unit in DCU, and the approval of the City of Dublin ETB, through the Director of Operations and Quality (FET) (See Appendix D), an initial explanatory email was sent to all FET teaching staff, which contained the plain language statement (See Appendix E). A second email was sent the following day, with an invitation to participate in the online anonymous survey. This survey instrument used the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT choice) survey, created by Watt and Richardson (2007) (See Appendix F). The email contained a link to the survey along with the consent form (See Appendix P). Contacting all FET staff within the City of Dublin ETB increased the sample size thereby reducing the margin of error. Individuals could choose for any number of reasons to either provide incorrect or misleading information, creating a response bias, or choose not to participate, creating a non-response bias (Lehdonvirta *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, responses may not be representative of the entire population, and may lead to inaccurate data being provided, which ultimately damages the results of the research. These biases can be reduced through using easily understood questions and response formats, designed and presented in an appropriate manner.

Considering the research question, a focus group and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Recruitment of volunteers to participate in both these elements followed a similar process, with participation being limited to second-career teachers within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. Volunteer sampling was used to identify suitable, information rich participants willing to take part in the focus group and semi-structured interview processes. For the focus group, novice second-career teachers were invited to participate.

4.6.2. Data Collection Strategy

Focus groups provide a forum for moderated group discussion of pre-determined topics and allow researchers to explore collective attitudes and experiences, yielding rich data that can identify agreements or conflicts. Insights may arise during discussion and allow sharing and comparison of outlooks and experiences. Drawbacks are recognised as including the key part played by the researcher in instigating conversations. Conversations are seen as being more naturalistic than natural, lacking the depth provided by interviews (Gill and Baillie, 2018; Morgan, 2018). Interviews provide a means for exploring the 'why', 'when', and 'how' of an event or experience, and as such may be viewed as "the most productive mode for producing narrative data" (Holt, 2010, p.113). McCoyd and Kerson (2006, p.400) considering them to be "the gold standard" of qualitative research. Prior to participating, participants read the Plain Language Statement and completed the appropriate consent form (See Appendices I & J). The focus group took place online using Zoom, lasted one hour, and was audio-recorded to allow transcription, prior to the recording being permanently deleted from Zoom. Open-ended questions (See Appendix K) were used to guide the conversation. I facilitated the interactions amongst participants to explore common themes and differences in motivations and experiences, with participants being given the opportunity to share their personal stories and insights. Following completion of the focus group, online semi-structured interviews (See Appendix L) were conducted using Zoom and lasted between 35 minutes and one hour. These again were audio-recorded and were permanently deleted after transcription. Each interview was conducted by me and used a set of pre-defined questions to guide the conversation. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility to explore topics in greater depth as they arose. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences, while I probed for additional insights and clarifications as required.

Deakin and Wakefield (2014, p.2) hold that:

> …the online interview should be treated as a viable option to the researcher rather than just as an alternative or secondary choice when face-to-face interviews cannot be achieved.

They do however caution that online interviews and focus groups should not be considered as an easier option when compared to traditional face-to-face setting, recognising that there are benefits and drawbacks to both. While online discussions allow participants to see and talk to each other in real time, they may still produce a level of disconnect (de Villiers, Farooq, and Molinari, 2021). Face-to-face encounters permit trust and a rapport to be built, allowing a researcher to collect contextual data and improving communication through the recognition of visual clues. In contrast, Watt *et al.* (2022) found that a rapport could develop even when conducting telephone interviews, therefore it must follow that a rapport can be established in an online video setting where visual connections are possible. Regardless of the method used to conduct an interview or focus group, it is acknowledged that participants may become upset during the process as it relates to their decisions to change career and their early days in the teaching profession. Discussion of these is not expected to raise issues which are embarrassing or likely to cause distress or anxiety, beyond what may be experienced in everyday life. In the unlikely event of this occurring, participants were informed from the outset that they could refuse to answer any questions, stop the interview, or withdraw completely from the research without explaining their decision. Assistance was also available through the Employee Assistance Service provided by the City of Dublin ETB if participants became distressed. No participants became upset during the focus group or interview processes and no requests to remove data has been received.

4.6.2. Piloting the Study

Both the quantitative and qualitative elements were piloted using easily accessible participants who are not involved with the City of Dublin ETB, prior to use in this research. Piloting is more than just a dress-rehearsal for undertaking research. It assists a researcher in assessing their research lens and affords an opportunity to practice and refine data collection and analytic procedures in advance of undertaking the final study. Using a pilot study provided an opportunity to test the validity of the research instruments. It also allowed me to try different approaches in relation to procedures and assisted in the development of relevant lines of investigation and provided conceptual clarifications regarding the research design (Yin, 2018).

4.6.3. Challenges in Data Collection

A number of challenges were faced as part of the data collection process. The link to the online survey, which was attached to the initial email would only open on desktop PCs or mobile phones and was not accessible on networked laptops. This necessitated sending a follow-up email to everyone to explain the issue, which while embarrassing and frustrating, also served as an opportunity to re-advertise the survey (See Appendix M). Using Zoom also had some issues. Technical difficulties were encountered, with some minor connectivity issues and delays caused by Zoom updating its platform regularly. Thankfully these issues did not interrupt the interviews and are considered as not affecting the quality of the focus group or interviews.

4.7. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining the data produced by the research methods used. Its aim is to reveal any underlying trends or patterns, which allows the researcher to interpret and make sense of the results, considering context and data quality (Albers, 2017b). Following transcription of the focus group and semi-structured interviews, texts were read through, and initial notes taken to become familiar with the content. Data was coded using NVivo, with paper-based tables also used to allow data to be visually accessible. Codes were merged, renamed, grouped, and used to build broad themes that address the research questions. These themes were reviewed to ensure they provide an accurate representation of the data for analysis. Finally, each theme was named, and these are presented in Table 6.1 and are thereafter discussed in the context of relevant literature with illustrative quotes from participants.

Data analysis for this research involved analysing the results of the three sources of data. The quantitative analysis of the survey results informed the gathering and analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the focus group and interviews in several ways. It allowed for the identification of the strongest motivations which allowed key trends and patterns to be identified. These helped to guide the topics and questions used in the focus group and interviews, ensuring that the qualitative analysis probed deeper in the motivations highlighted in the survey. The qualitative findings were used to validate and explain the quantitative findings by providing context and meaning to them. The focus group preceded the interviews. Insights and themes that emerged helped refine and adjust the interview questions by prioritising the most relevant themes. This interconnection of data sets offers a richer understanding of SCT motivations and identity (trans-)formation.

4.7.1. Survey Analysis

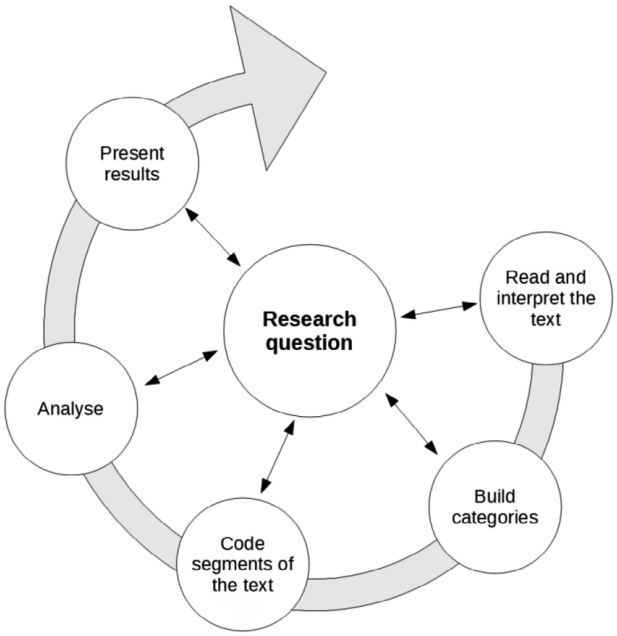
Data gathered from the online survey was analysed using exploratory data analysis to summarise and gain a deeper understanding of the data. Visual methods were used to identify patterns, trends, and outliers. Within this research quantitative and qualitative data was coded, which organised the raw data into conceptual groups, which were used to develop the thematic structure used later in this thesis (See Appendix N). This process helped to clearly present the findings, to uncover deeper insights within them, and supported the construction of a coherent narrative around them (See Tables 5.1 & 6.1). After the initial coding of the quantitative data, it was analysed using descriptive statistics. Following from this the statistical results were interpreted in context to reveal underlying trends and patterns in the data, ultimately allowing valid conclusions to be drawn (Albers, 2017a; Schoonenboom, 2023).

The analysis of the qualitative data which follows builds upon the quantitative findings, offering deeper insights into the patterns and trends identified in the data. By exploring participants' experiences and perspectives, the qualitative analysis contextualises and explains the numerical results, adding depth. The use of MMR ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions and results in a more detailed analysis.

4.7.2. Focus Group Analysis

The phases used in the analysis of the focus group and interviews are presented in Image 4.2. The Focus group was transcribed and read in detail multiple times before being uploaded to NVivo, which is a qualitative data analysis computer software package and annotated. Annotation involved labelling words, phrases, or sentences with a series of initial codes to identify key categories. Excel spreadsheets and paper tables were used to visually organise, categorise. and sort data. These allow for ease of recognising code frequency, cross-referencing and data comparison. The use of labelling codes allowed patterns within the responses to be identified and organised. Categories were then created by grouping and combining the previously created codes together. These categories were named and the connections between them were identified and labelled, creating data segments. Content analysis of the codes and segments was conducted, allowing specific words, concepts, or themes within the transcript to be identified. It follows the method proposed by Yin (2015, p.185), which involves "compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding".

Image 4.2. The Five Phases of Qualitative Content Analysis (Kuckartz, 2019, p.186).



4.7.3. Interview Analysis

In the same manner explained previously in Section 4.7.2, each interview was transcribed, read several times in detail, uploaded to NVivo, annotated and organised in Excel and on paper tables. Content analysis was again used for the data provided by the interviews. Both the focus group and interviews provided a rich insight into the motivators and identity (trans-)formation of SCTs.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

To protect individuals who voluntarily participate in research ethical principles must be appropriately applied. While ethical principles apply in quantitative research it is particularly true when the participants are engaging in qualitative research where personal information is being gathered (Arifin, 2018). Prior to beginning, permission to conduct this research was obtained from Dublin City University's (DCU) Research Ethics Committee (REC). The initial application was returned, seeking clarification of several issues. These primarily pertained to participant anonymity and recording of the interviews and focus groups. The application was amended and sent to the Data Protection Unit (DPU) in DCU for approval, prior to being resubmitted for ethical approval. The DPU returned some suggestions and comments, and once these were addressed, they had no further questions on the application. The amended ethical application was resubmitted to REC and a formal letter of approval was received (See Appendix O).

Costerly, Elliott, and Gibbs (2010) stress the importance of researcher's clearly identifying their own positioning (See Section 4.4), believing that the insights and depth of knowledge brought to the research by an insider are significant, however it is also important to demonstrate an ability to understand alternate viewpoints. Engaging in insider research carries specific ethical implications, particularly concerning the potential for participants to feel pressured to take part due to pre-existing relationships and the challenges of maintaining confidentiality. As an insider, I was acutely aware of these issues and took several steps to mitigate them. To ensure participants did not feel pressure to participate, it was clearly communicated that participation was voluntary. In the consent form, participants were also provided with an opportunity to opt-out of the research (See Appendices I, J & P). Given my insider role, maintaining confidentiality was particularly important to protect participant identities and to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their experiences openly. All data was anonymised, and easily identifiable information was removed during the transcription stage. Furthermore, care was taken to keep the role of researcher separate from the researcher's professional role. This included avoiding any discussions of the research outside the formal research setting and ensuring that all interactions related to the study were conducted in a manner consistent with ethical research practices.

4.8.1. Consent

Participants in research have the right to make choices regarding their participation and to do this they must be fully informed. Clearly explaining what the research is for, what is expected of participants, and outlining any potential risks provides them with the opportunity to make a fully informed decision. Gupta (2013, p.26) considers informed consent to be "one of the most important aspects of research ethics". Information on the research was provided to potential volunteers by means of a plain language statement prior to them agreeing to participate. Each volunteer was also required to read the consent form prior to completing the online anonymous survey. Consent was also required from those who voluntarily participate in the focus group or semi-structured interview processes. Those who submitted survey responses were advised that once submitted, their data could not be removed as there is no way to identify it. Those involved in the focus group and interview processes were informed they could opt-out and have their data removed within twenty-eight days of the meeting or interview taking place.

4.8.2. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity refers to a response "which cannot be attributed to a specific source" (Clark-Gordon *et al.*, 2019, p.99) and is recognised as increasing engagement and self-disclosure among participants who feel less vulnerable. Confidentiality involves protecting privileged information and presenting it in a manner which ensures individuals cannot be easily identified through anonymisation, the removal of identifying features to a point where individuals cannot be recognised.

The online survey was completed anonymously using Google Forms. The composition of the survey questions and anonymity of responses greatly reduced the potential for identification of respondents. In contrast to the survey data, the focus group and interview processes produced data which was potentially easily identifiable. Anonymity was achieved through de-identifying all transcripts and removing identifiers. As previously noted, confidentiality in insider research is particularly challenging because of pre-existing relationships which may lead to concerns regarding privacy and the potential for participant identification. To address this strict anonymisation were implemented and professional boundaries were maintained to ensure all research-related interactions were conducted in a manner that safeguarded participant confidentiality.

Participants were made aware in both the consent form and the plain language statement that the information they provided in the research study was subject to the established legal limitations on confidentiality. Additionally, they were informed that transcripts of the interviews and focus groups would not be made available, however anonymised sections would be used as direct quotes within the dissertation or any further publications. The process of data protection and secure storage of data, which assisted in ensuring confidentiality, is examined next in Section 4.8.3. Wiles *et al.* (2008) note that total confidentiality may not be achievable, given that even after anonymising the data, the researcher still knows who the respondents are.

4.8.3. Data Protection

Upon submission, the data produced by the online surveys was uploaded to DCU's secure Google Drive, and data on Google Forms was permanently deleted. Survey responses were anonymous and no information which could potentially identify participants was required. To protect the identity of participants the interview and focus group recordings were uploaded to DCU's secure Google Drive, allowing the original recordings to be permanently deleted. The information on this drive is only accessible by the researchers.

The recordings of the interviews and focus groups were transcribed by me, anonymised and then permanently deleted from DCU's Google Drive.

4.8.4. Benefits to Participants

The benefits of this research may include, but not be limited to, providing an understanding of the motives and desires of SCTs which may assist in the recruitment of and provision of supports to other second-career teachers. On a personal level the nature of this research affords participants an opportunity to reflect on their career journey to date. Furthermore, the research contributes to the currently limited research and knowledge on the Irish FET sector and the staff working there-in and may generate future research into this sector and the phenomenon of SCTs. All participants within this research were volunteers who did not receive any recompense for their involvement.

4.9. Validity and Reliability

Ensuring validity and reliability in research helps in reducing bias. Reliability refers to consistency, constancy, and the repeatability of the research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). Issues regarding vagueness at all stages of the research therefore should be avoided. Creswell and Plano Clarke (2011, p.239) consider validity in MMR as:

> …employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis and the interpretation that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination.

They cautioned that using MMR raises additional concerns regarding validity than would not occur if the quantitative or qualitative elements are used separately. Quantitative research must provide internal and external validity. Internal validity investigates whether the design, implementation, and analysis allowed the research question to be appropriately answered. External validity is concerned with the generalisability of the findings. In qualitative research there are expectations regarding credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Consequently, specific validity checks are required for both elements. A method of testing validity in qualitative research is through crystallisation (See Section 4.9.1). A potential threat to validity lies in the choice of inappropriate participants and using an inappropriate sample size. To minimise this, all teaching staff within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB were invited to complete the online survey, with the aim of providing a wide and diverse sample. 105 (10.8%) completed surveys were returned. For the qualitative element, volunteer sampling was utilised. five participants took part in the focus group and twenty-six participated in the interviews. A

smaller number of participants are required as they are able to provide significant amounts of detail rich data. Validity regarding data interpretation is also considered. Multiple sources of data have been used to support the interpretations made.

The most frequently cited limitation of case studies is that the data collected provides little basis for generalisation, and the results are difficult to replicate (Forman *et al.*, 2008; Thomas, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2018b) and Simons (2014) disagree with this position, believing that generalisations from one case to another are possible, or they can occur by way of inferences made through a process of "interpretation in context" (p.465). Case studies may also be considered as lacking scientific rigor. This position is supported by the fact that the data is collected from a small number of participants who make judgements about the information they are sharing. Additionally, claims of bias may be made regarding selection, analysis, and administration of the research, which have the potential to render the results useless and invalidate the conclusions.

To mitigate against such claims, careful planning has been used throughout this research process to anticipate problems. Data collection and organisation are carefully undertaken using multiple data sources to reduce potential biases and to enhance the integrity of this research. Appropriate methods of data analysis have been used to provide accurate results. In addition, potential biases have been identified to avoid or reduce their occurrences and their impact on this research.

4.9.1. Data Crystallisation

Crystallisation as a method in research involves integrating multiple perspectives, methods, and sources of data to explore complex phenomena. By examining the subject through diverse 'facets', this method moves beyond singular interpretations or triangulation, offering a richer and more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the topic under investigation. (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005; Varpio *et al*., 2017).

Through its usage a more balanced insight of the research is obtained and biases that may occur if only one were used are overcome. Additionally, by considering the research question from different independent perspectives and using these to extract and analyse the data, the generalisability, validity, and trustworthiness of the research is increased (Flick, 2022).

4.10. Limitations

Research limitations may be recognised or unrecognised (Ott, 2024). Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) describe them as flaws in research design that could affect results and conclusions.

They emphasise that researchers must accurately identify and explain limitations, discussing their implications, suggesting alternatives, and outlining mitigation efforts.

4.10.1. Bias

Understanding limitations, such as biases are important for evaluating the validity and credibility of research (Ioannidis, 2007, p.324). Biases may occur at any stage of the research process and researchers may not be aware of the biases they possess. The use of different techniques for sampling, data gathering, and analysis may provide different results which may be interpreted differently. The potential use of alternative perspectives needs to be considered to ensure the most appropriate one is used, to avoid providing a one-sided picture of the research problem and the results.

Maintaining objectivity can be problematic as the paradigm being used is founded on the idea that knowledge is constructed through the subjective experience and interpretation of individuals. Objectivity is preserved by using multiple sources of data to confirm interpretations (See Section 4.9.1), remaining self-aware throughout the processes, through acknowledging biases (researcher reflection) and through proving a transparent and detailed account of decision-making processes and research practices which allows others to evaluate the level of objectivity (transparency). Prior to conducting this research, the research question was reflected upon to identify any pre-existing assumptions and to establish if there was an issue worth researching and recognising that my viewpoint may not be shared by others.

This research focused upon just one of the sixteen ETBs in Ireland, albeit the largest (Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 2022). This has the potential to limit the scale and depth of data collected which may ultimately lead to incomplete or erroneous conclusions being drawn. To overcome this, all FET teaching staff were contacted to provide as wide a sample as possible for both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this research (See Sections 4.6 & 4.6.1). The usage of volunteer sampling may potentially lead to claims of inherent biases. One such claim may be the presence of an in-group bias, whereby the participants are focused on one position, with the researcher giving preferential treatment to the views of those with similar characteristics to their own. Volunteer sampling may lead to a sample which is not truly representative of the population, thereby skewing the data and the research results. Other methods of probability and non-probability sampling were also considered but were not deemed suitable for this research. The use of a survey which is simple to navigate and accurate helps to engage participants and to limit this bias. As noted previously in Section 4.6, it is more important for me to ‘know it all’ than to count the number of times information is repeated. An additional concern regarding

volunteer sampling is that participants may have volunteered not to positively assist in the research but to make, or exaggerate, a point. Consequently, the results may not be truly representative. While being cognisant of these, volunteer sampling is considered to be the most appropriate method for this research. To minimize these biases, the study population is clearly defined and recruited in an appropriate manner and reliable research methods and data analysis techniques are utilised.

There exists the potential for a social desirability bias, whereby participants give responses that they perceive to be more socially desirable. The use of properly designed survey instruments and appropriate interview questions can mitigate against this (Larson, 2019).

A potential Stockholm bias (Winter, 2015) is recognised whereby the results of the research are changed by the researcher to avoid challenging the authority of those who are management within the organisation in which I work. To overcome this the results and findings of this research are drawn from the data collected to prevent inadvertently altering the outcome.

The qualitative methods being employed in this research are open to accusations of interviewer or recall bias. The former may occur when an interviewer's own beliefs influence responses, while the latter occurs due to distortions brought about by the passage of time. The use of a focus group and multiple interviews, as well as using crystallisation ensures that the data collected is both accurate and reliable (See Section 4.9.1).

Analysis bias may be present within the statistical analysis of the quantitative data and within the content analysis of the qualitative data. To overcome this, multiple data collection methods and data sources are used, and results compared, while remaining focused on the research question. The questions used in both the survey and semi-structured interviews have been checked for the presence of any leading questions, and the results are recorded accurately. The interpretation is conducted in a manner which is accurate and not merely intended to justify my beliefs or opinions.

4.11. Summary

This chapter established the rigorous and transparent framework used in conducting this research. It discusses the philosophical assumptions which form the foundation for all research and briefly examines three research methods, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. An overview of research paradigms is presented before an exploration of sampling techniques is provided. Following from this the research design chosen for this study is stated. The use of a mixed-methods case study allowed for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences within their specific contexts. This approach captured the

complexities and nuances of how motivations and identity evolve over time. The rich, detailed data which case studies provide can reveal the unique challenges and opportunities faced by SCTs, offering valuable insights into their personal and professional journeys. My positioning is indicated followed by the advantages and limitations of case study methodology. The chapter continues by providing information regarding the sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures undertaken.

Ethical considerations and limitations for this study have been presented, which ensure that this research is both ethically sound and aware of potential constraints, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings. Overall, these methodological foundations position this research within a clearly defined philosophical and ethical context and are important for producing sound research with valid insights.

In chapter five, the data gathered by the quantitative phase of the research is presented and discussed.

Chapter 5: Quantitative Findings and Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This research project explores the motivations for career change amongst SCTs working in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. To achieve this a quant-QUAL sequential design is used. Given the extensive amount of data gathered, quantitative and qualitative data is presented and examined separately.

Data from the survey is gathered to answer the research question:

> What motivates second-career teachers to teach in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB?

And the secondary research question:

> What challenges do second career teachers face in developing their professional identity within this educational sector?

This chapter begins with an overview of the process for data gathering, then presents and discusses the data gathered in the context of existing literature. Firstly altruistic-intrinsic motivations are presented, followed by extrinsic motivations. Table 5.1 presents a list of the main themes and sub-themes discussed. It then moves on to explore influences on career change and finishes with an exploration of perceptions of teaching as a career.

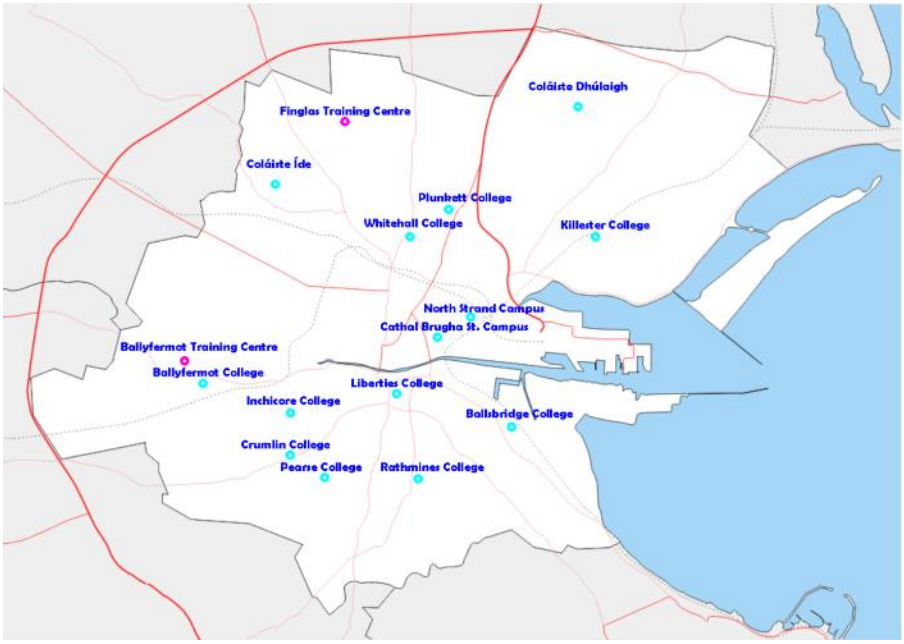
Table 5.1 Summary of Motivators and Perceptions of Second Career Teachers

Theme 1: Intrinsic-Altruistic Motivations
Sub-Themes:
i. Intrinsic Value
ii. Satisfaction with Career
iii. Enhancing Social Equity
iv. Shaping Futures
v. Working with Young People
Theme 2: Extrinsic Motivations
Sub-Themes:
i. Job Security
ii. Salary
iii. Time for Family
iv. Fallback Career
v. Social Status
vi. Job Transferability
Theme 3: Influences on Career Choice
Sub-Themes:
i. Social Influences
ii. Social Dissuasion
iii. Prior Teaching and Learning Experience
iv. Self-perceived Teaching Ability
Theme 4: Perceptions Regarding Teaching as a Career
Sub-Themes:
i. Expert Career
ii. Teaching as a Demanding Job

5.2. Overview of Quantitative Data Gathering

The data presented below has been collected through an anonymous online survey (See Appendix F), conducted between 31st August and 5th October 2023. It was gathered from teachers working in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB, who are based in 13 FET colleges (Image 5.1).

Image 5.1. Colleges of Further Education (City of Dublin ETB, 2022).



Quantitative data was gathered using the FIT Choice survey devised by Watt and Richardson (2007). While the survey items are true to the instrument, an amendment was made, with the word 'children' being changed to 'young people', reflecting the FET context in which the survey was distributed. While the FIT Choice survey has been previously used to investigate the motivations for career choice amongst post-primary student teachers (Heinz, 2008; Clarke, 2009) there appears to be no applications of the FIT-Choice survey to Second-Career teachers working within the Irish FET context. Participants voluntarily completed an anonymous online survey which took approximately five minutes to complete. The FIT-Choice survey is a validated, theory-based scale used to explore the motivations for choosing teaching as a career, career entry influences, and perceptions regarding teaching (Watt and Richardson, 2007; Shang *et al*., 2022). The survey includes 18 subscales and 58 items, each requiring a response through a Likert-type scale with seven options ranging from 1 - 'not at all important', through to 7 – 'extremely important'. The reliability of the instrument is tested by computing the Cronbach's Alpha (Appendices F & G) using SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha is a statistical tool used to check how consistently a group of questions or items in a survey measure the same thing.

This helps to see if the questions are reliable when combined to assess a specific concept (Goodbody and Martin, 2020). Reliability refers to the consistency of the measurements within the process. A variable can be considered as having high reliability if the value achieved is >0.70, which Johnson (2017, p. 1415) considered as being 'sufficiently high in reliability'. This test was conducted for each subscale and item, which produced results which prove the construct validity and reliability of the scale was acceptable (See Appendix G).

Prior to sending the link to the survey, a prenotification email with an explanatory subject line was sent to all-staff, methods suggested by Sammut, Griscit, and Norman (2021) to increase response rates. A link to the survey, and a copy of the plain language statement was sent by email to all teaching staff working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. Two reminder email messages were subsequently sent. A total of 105 survey responses were received (n=105), a response rate of approximately 10.8% based upon the 971 emails sent via the City of Dublin ETB's 'all-staff' email function. This was a lower-than-expected response rate, with Wu, Zhao and Fils-Aime (2022) reporting an average expected response rate to online survey of 44.1%. However, while a higher response rate would have been preferred a low response rate is not indicative of a large nonresponse error (Daikler, Bošnjak, and Lozar Manfreda, 2020).

The anonymous responses were divided based upon the response to question one: 'I worked in a non-teaching career for at least 6 months before becoming a teacher'. This yielded 2 groups: those who answered 'Yes', who are considered as being Second-Career Teachers ($N_{SCT} = 88$) and those who answered 'No', considered as being Non-Second Career Teachers ($N_{Non\text{-}SCT} = 17$). The margin of error (See Appendix H) is therefore calculated as 9.04%.

The margin of error indicates how representative the results of a survey are, and how much they may differ from the whole population. The small sample size produces a higher margin of error, however while the margin of error is somewhat high, the results still provide valuable insights into the surveyed population (Rahman, 2023).

Data integrity is critical to reliable data analytic results, so to ensure reliability the data was cleaned prior to beginning the analysis. Cleaning identifies data that is inaccurate, inconsistent, or incomplete, which ensures that the data is correct, relevant, and complete. To identify errors and to ensure the data is consistent and meaningful, it was checked for sources of error including null data and inconsistent data formats (Osborne, 2012). To validate the data, it was manually checked, and the formulas '=COUNTIFS' and '=SUM'

were used to ensure the number of results matched the number of responses from N_{SCT} and $N_{Non\text{-}SCT}$ participants.

5.2.1. Correlation Testing.

Correlation coefficients are statistical tests which show whether two variables are related, in addition to the strength and direction of any linear relationship between the data variables. The strength of correlations for the results are categorised based upon the scale provided by Ali Abd Al-Hameed (2022). Two correlation tests were considered, the Pearson test and the Spearman test. The Spearman test was chosen as the data was collected using a Likert-type scale, which is not truly interval in nature (Lantz, 2013) (See Appendices Q & R).

5.2.2. Tests of Normality.

Of the 105 respondents, 88 indicated that they were Second Career Teachers (SCTs), having worked for more than 6 months in a non-teaching position prior to entering teaching (Serow and Forrest, 1994). 17 indicated that they had not previously worked for 6 months prior to entering teaching, and so are considered as not being SCTs (See Table 5.2). The smaller sample size of non-SCT teachers means that a small number of unusual responses can skew the results. Consequently, care must be taken about using this data to form judgements.

Table 5.2. Number of Respondents who had Worked Less than 6 months in Non-teaching Positions.

Variable	Response	Frequency	%
Working for more than	Yes	88	83.8
6 months in a non-teaching position	No	17	16.2
Total		105	100

Tests of Normality, to identify univariate normality were then conducted using SPSS software. This software conducts two Tests of Normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, and the Shapiro-Wilk test (See Appendices S & T).

5.3. Altruistic-intrinsic Motivators

Intrinsic motivations are those which cause an individual to act because of inherent interest or enjoyment in the act, while extrinsic motivations cause an individual to act for a separate outcome. The original FIT-Choice survey instrument (Watt and Richardson, 2007) treats intrinsic and altruistic motivations separately. Within the survey instrument, altruistic

motivations comprise elements which explore enhancing social equity, making a social contribution, a desire to work with young people and contributing to shaping their future. Both altruistic and intrinsic motivations may be viewed as stemming from alignment with values held and because the differentiation between them is not very strong, they are frequently combined to create altruistic-intrinsic motivation (Balyer and Özcan, 2014; Tang, Wong, and Cheng, 2016; Tang *et al*., 2020). In this research, altruistic motivations are held as a subset of intrinsic motivation consequently the presentation and analysis of data gathered by the survey instrument uses this hybrid altruistic-intrinsic motivator. Altruistic-intrinsic motivators explore the social utility value of teaching emphasising the promotion of inclusivity and developing equity through education. This amalgamation helps in aligning the findings and discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this research.

5.4. Survey Results

The following sections present in graph and text format the findings from each question asked in the survey and discusses them in light of the research question.

5.4.1. Intrinsic Value.

Figure 5.1. SCT Intrinsic Value.

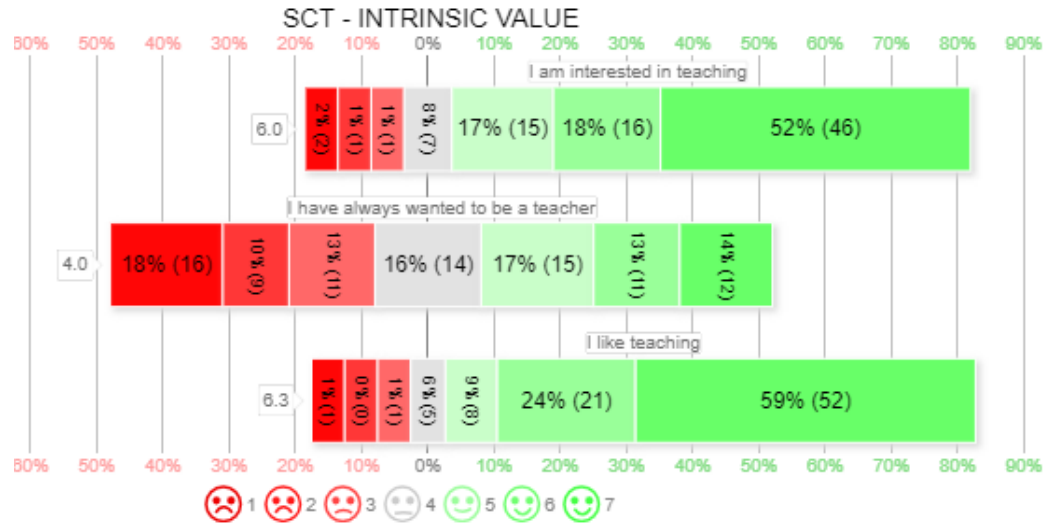
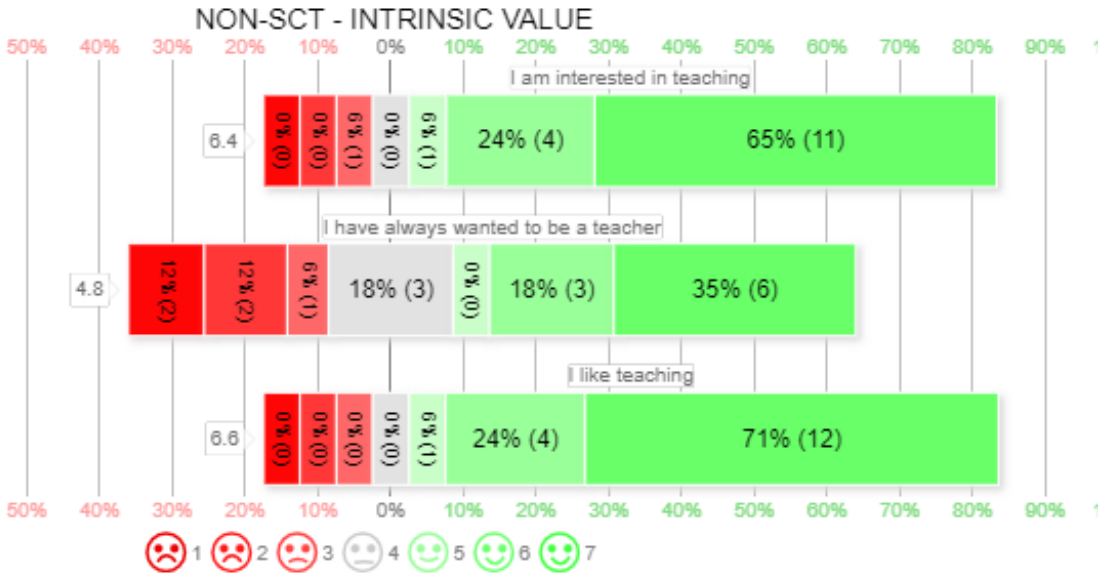


Figure 5.2. Non-SCT Intrinsic Value.



Intrinsic career value refers to the personal satisfaction and sense of fulfilment derived from a career and is consistently recognised as positively influencing career choice. This research (See Section 6.3) reflects the positive pattern of motivation found in the literature (Watt and Richardson, 2012; Heinz, 2013; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017; Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis, 2020). The enjoyment of teaching may stem from meeting needs such as autonomy and relatedness, where teachers feel empowered and connected (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These enhance intrinsic motivations and job satisfaction, leading to stronger, more resilient identity (trans-)formation. Among the most important intrinsic values regarding career choice are perceived usefulness and achievement, reflecting the highly positive results regarding social utility value seen in this research (Wigfield and Eccles, 1992).

Responses for both groups show a great deal of consensus (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Responses from both groups to statement three are the highest (M_{SCT} = 6.3; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 6.6), and responses to statement two are the lowest (M_{SCT} = 4.0; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 4.8). Intrinsic career value, or intrinsic subjective task value (Eccles and Wigfield, 2020), refers to an individual's affinity and enjoyment in teaching. While most respondents like teaching (SCT = 98%; non-SCT = 100%), it is not the fulfilment of a career goal for SCTs as only a minority (44%) considered teaching as being a long-term desire (M = 4.0). This contrasts with non-SCTs where teaching was a long-term goal for 53%. Among SCTs the strongest motivation is possessing the qualities of a good teacher (M = 6.3), jointly followed by good teaching skills, making a worthwhile social contribution, and providing a service to society (M = 6.0) and then working against social disadvantage (M = 5.6). Amongst non-SCTS the

strongest motivators are jointly providing a service to society and perceived teaching ability (M = 6.5) followed by having the qualities of a good teacher (M = 6.4).

The literature indicates that contributing to society and teaching are key motivators for pursuing teaching as a second career (Hunter-Johnson, 2015). Corcoran, Whitburn, and Rice (2023) suggest that education allows for a positive influence on individuals and promotes equity of opportunity in learning (Tang, Wong, and Cheng, 2016). This data suggests a strong altruistic-intrinsic desire to teach, i.e. to enhance social equity, to make social contributions, and to shape the futures of students, and presents an interesting contrast to other findings. However, the desire to work with young students does not emerge as a dominant factor. This suggests that such altruistic-intrinsic motivations do not translate into a desire to work with younger students (See Section 5.4.6 & 6.3.1), rendering the FET sector, where students are predominantly adults, a more attractive workplace environment.

A desire to make a social contribution and to bring about equity are care values among educators (Hartung and Blustein, 2002; Salyer, 2003; Heath *et al*., 2013). However, Hennessy and Lynch (2017) report that social and educational contribution and altruistic service are of moderate importance (M = 5.04) with the desire to enhance social equity ranking low in motivational factors. This contrasts with the results of this study, suggesting diverse priorities among SCTs, with some driven by societal goals while others focus on personal concerns. This variety highlights how different levels of motivation internalisation may result in varied motivations within the same profession (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

5.4.2. Satisfaction with Career.

Figure 5.3. SCT Satisfaction with Career.

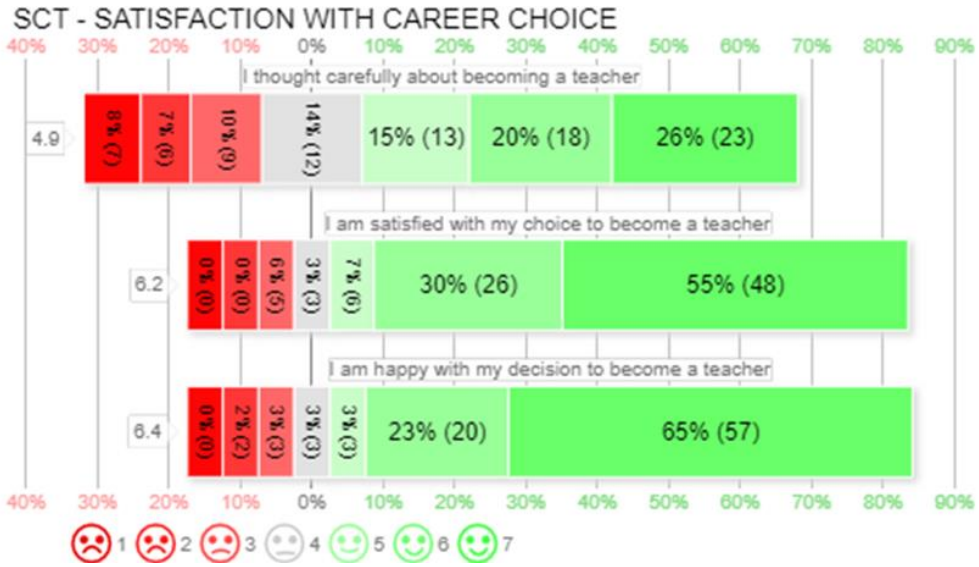
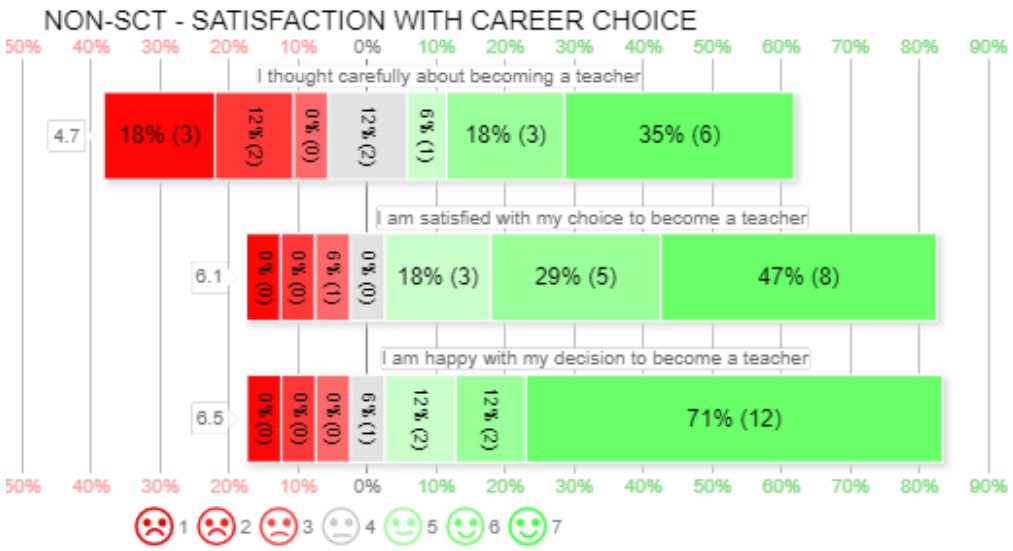


Figure 5.4. Non-SCT Satisfaction with Career.



Satisfaction with career choice amongst both groups is strongly positive, suggestive of stronger identity (trans-)formation (McKevitt, Carbery, and Lyons, 2017). Responses from both groups see statement three having the highest mean (M_{SCT} = 6.4; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 6.5), and statement one the lowest (M_{SCT} = 4.9; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 4.7). Within the City of Dublin ETB these findings reflect a general satisfaction amongst teachers working in the FET sector. Career satisfaction may be seen as arising when career choice aligns with an individual's altruistic-intrinsic motivations and fulfils the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Despite facing challenges including a lack of societal recognition, the highly positive results relating to career satisfaction suggests that for many working in the FET sector, the intrinsic-altruistic value of their occupational choice outweigh the negativity surrounding the sector (Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė, 2023). This is particularly relevant in the City of Dublin ETB, where the FET sector's focus on teaching adult students provides a unique environment that aligns well with these motivations. Most respondents report having thought carefully about becoming a teacher and that they are satisfied / happy with their decision. Research into teacher motivation shows that satisfaction with career choice is frequently highly rated by participants (Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis, 2020). Heinz (2013; 2015) notes the link between satisfaction with career choice, personal commitment, and likelihood of remaining in the career. This connection supports the alignment of an individual's career with their altruistic-intrinsic motivations and values which enhances job satisfaction and commitment (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Teachers working in this sector experience high career satisfaction

due to the alignment of their work with their altruistic-intrinsic motivations, which fosters strong professional identity (trans-)formation.

5.4.3. Enhancing Social Equity.

Figure 5.5. SCT Enhance Social Equity.

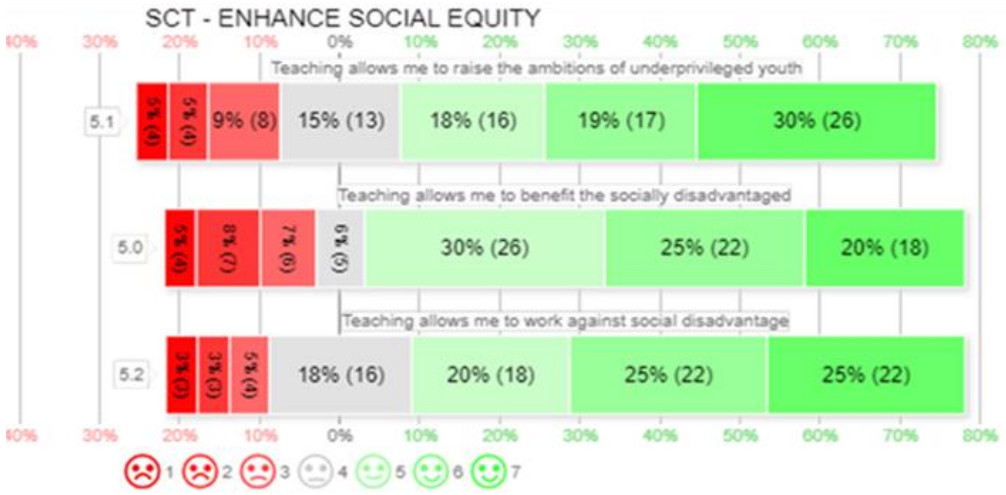
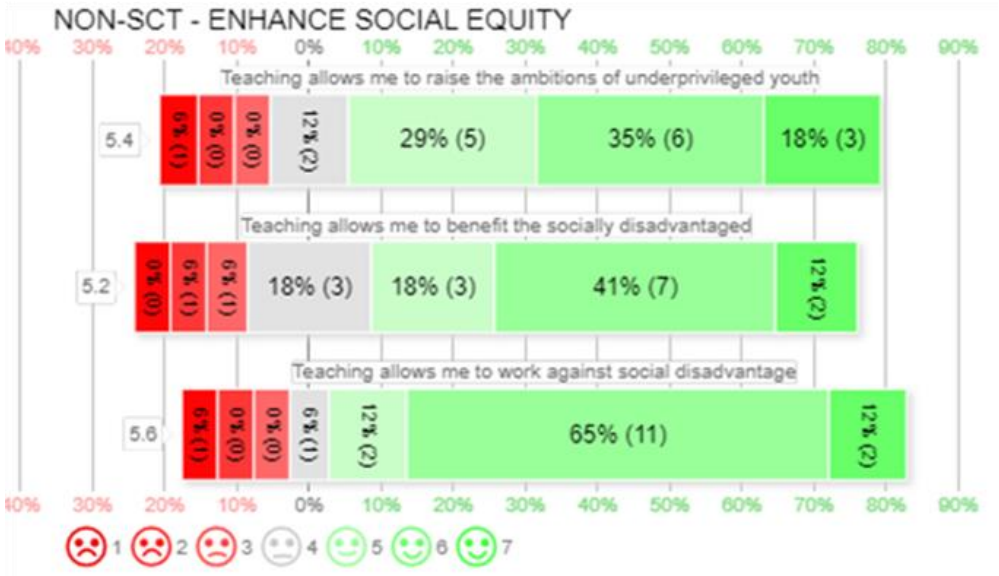


Figure 5.6. Non-SCT Enhance Social Equity.



Responses to this section are strongly positive. Comparing the highest and lowest positive and negative mean scores reveals broad consensus between both groups. The lowest score for both is statement two (M_{SCT} = 5.0; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 5.2) while the highest is statement three (M_{SCT} = 5.2; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 5.6).

5.4.4. Make Social Contribution.

Figure 5.7. SCT Make Social Contribution.

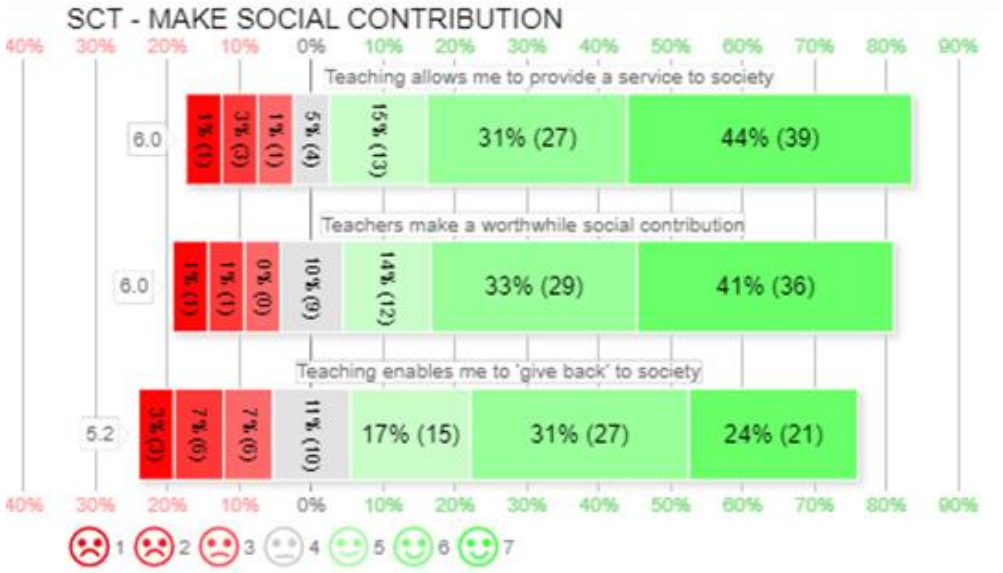
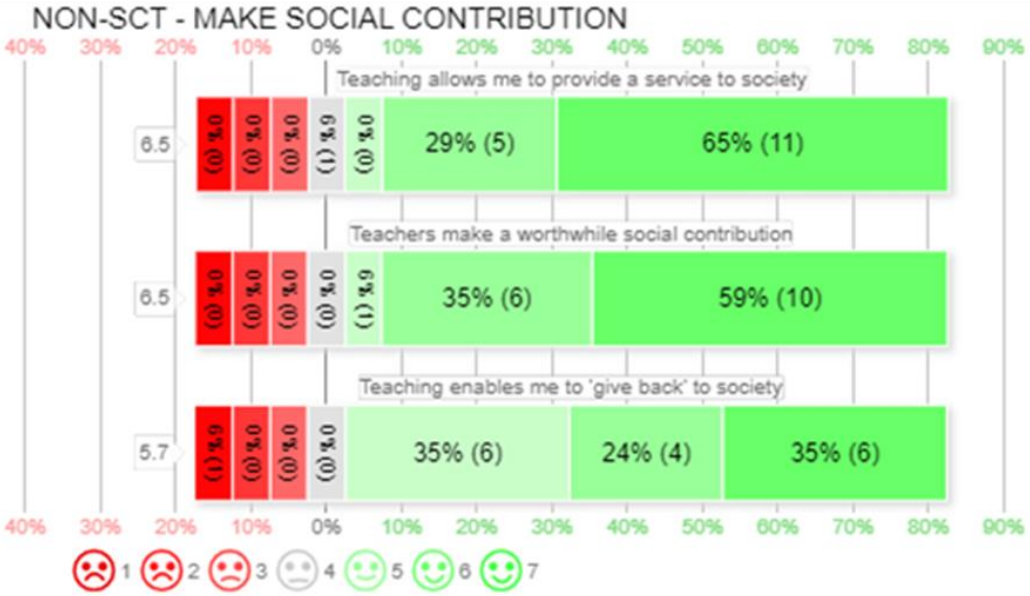


Figure 5.8. Non-SCT Make Social Contribution.



The responses from both groups in this research are strongly positive. For both groups the highest score is for statements one and two (M_{SCT} = 6.0; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 6.5). The lowest score for both groups is statement three (M_{SCT} = 5.2; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$=5.7). These positive responses highlight the commitment of FET teachers within the City of Dublin ETB. Enhancing social equity and making a social contribution are both positively viewed and can be considered as being highly important in the decision to become a teacher in the FET sector. These elements reflect a desire to contribute to society, to work against social

disadvantage, and to support the underprivileged, actions which may align with personal values and positively impact others, increasing job-satisfaction (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Educational attainment and access to education are recognised means of reducing socio-economic gaps (Heath *et al*., 2013). Often individuals who pursue educational careers value social contribution and advancing equity. This desire to bring about meaningful social change is an important factor in the decision-making process (Hartung and Blustein, 2002; Salyer, 2003). Teachers within the City of Dublin ETB often see their work as a way of directly addressing social inequalities and providing opportunities for learners.
Such values may reflect a high level of autonomous motivation, driven by deeply held beliefs (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Vianty (2018) suggests even higher motivational significance for shaping the future of young people ($M = 9.06$), time for family ($M = 8.94$) and enhancing social equity ($M = 8.42$). In contrast, Hennessy and Lynch (2017) observe that social and educational contribution are below moderate importance ($M = 3.87$), while altruistic service is moderately important ($M = 5.04$). They note that enhancing social equity is among the least influential motivational factors, contrary to this study's findings, where the desire for social equity among FET teachers plays a significant role in professional satisfaction and identity (See Section 6.3.2).

5.4.5. Shaping Futures.

Figure 5.9. SCT Shape Futures.

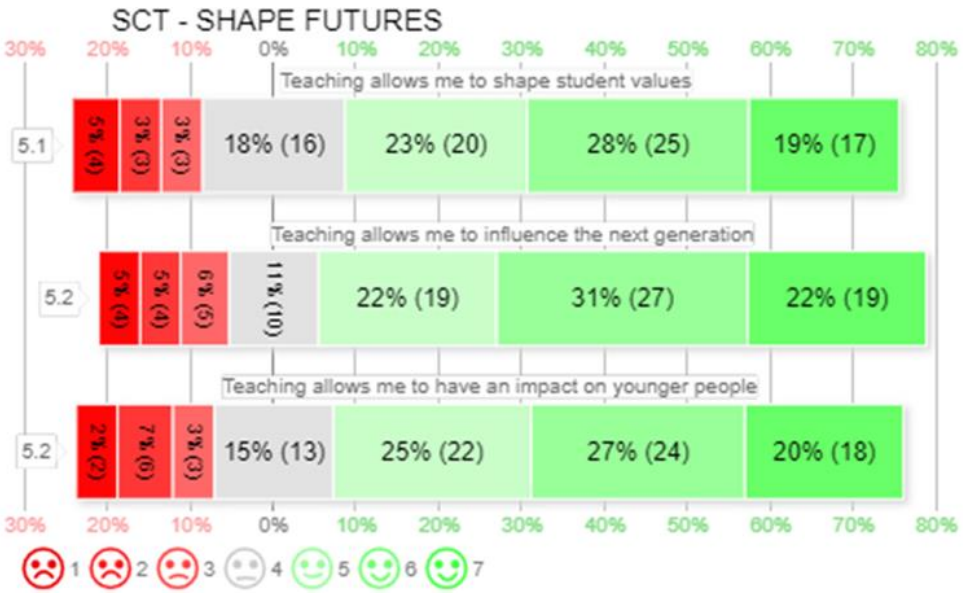
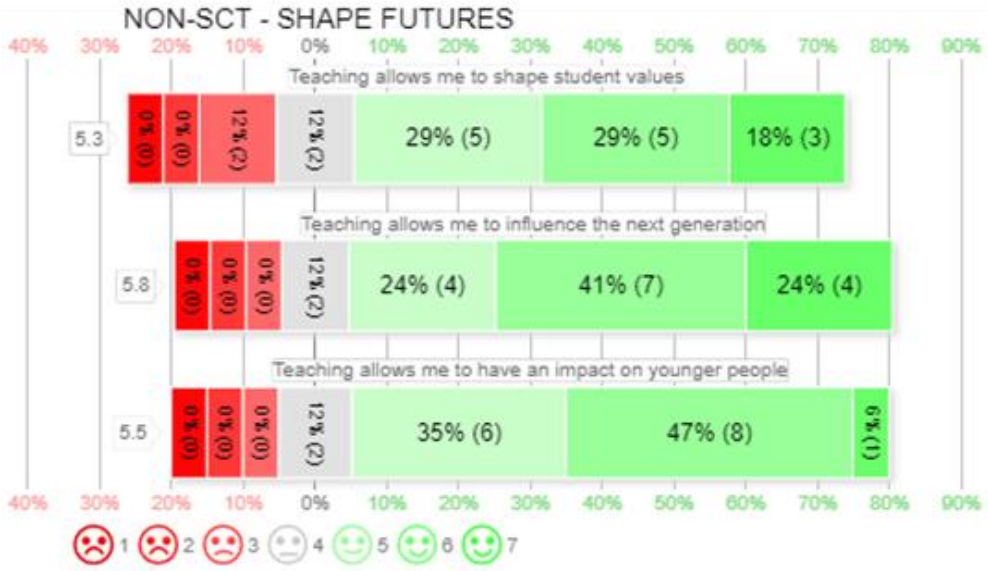


Figure 5.10. Non-SCT Shape Futures.



Both groups gave positive responses to the three statements about shaping futures. SCTs rated statements two and three the highest (M = 5.2), showing they highly value their role in shaping futures. For non-SCTs, statement two had the highest score (M = 5.8). Statement one received the lowest scores for both groups (M_{SCT} = 5.1; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 5.3).

Within the literature the importance of social utility values in the teaching profession is frequently repeated. These values, which foster a sense of connectedness with students, may meet the need for relatedness and are closely linked to altruistic-intrinsic motivations (Deci and Ryan, 2000). In the context of the City of Dublin ETB, these social utility values are particularly relevant as teachers often engage with adult learners who benefit significantly from these relational and motivational aspects. For Penny (2011), shaping the futures of the young is an opportunity to positively influence individuals and to promote equity of opportunity in the learning process, which is a concept which extends to adult education in the City of Dublin ETB, where the ability to shape futures through equitable learning opportunities is a strong motivator for teachers (Corcoran, Whitburn, and Rice, 2023).

5.4.6. Working with Young People.

Figure 5.11. SCT Working with Young People.

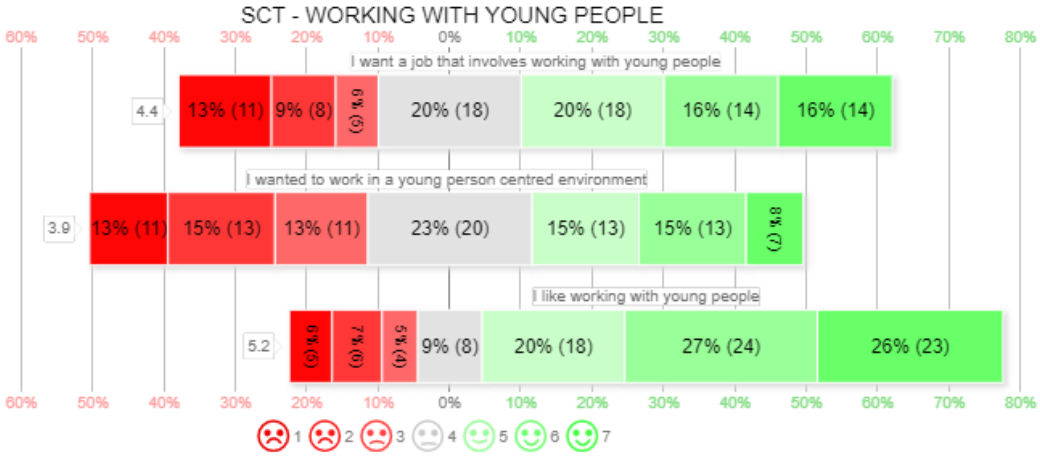
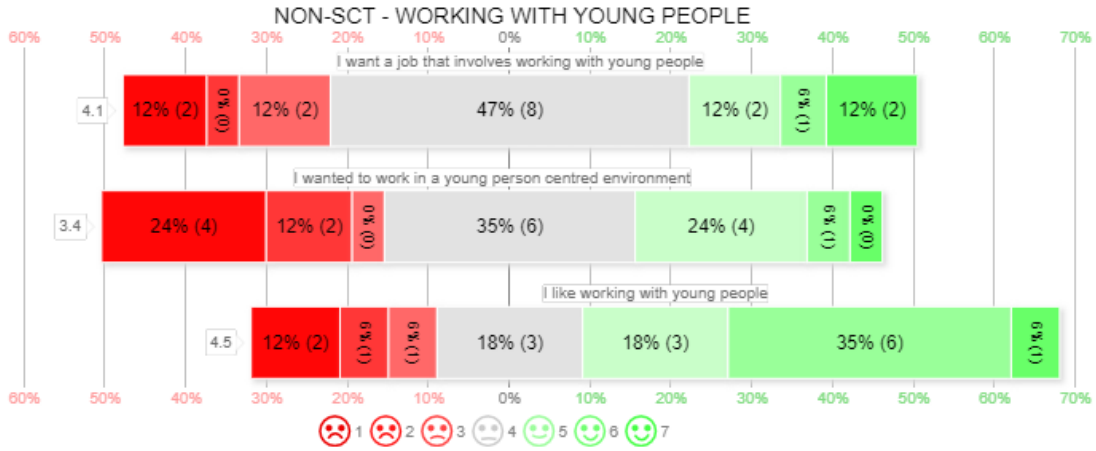


Figure 5.12. Non-SCT Working with Young People.



Responses to these three statements are broadly similar for both SCT and non-SCT respondents. For both groups statement three has the highest score (M_{SCT} = 5.2; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 4.5). Statement two has the lowest score for both (M_{SCT} = 3.9; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 3.4). These results indicate that within the City of Dublin ETB, both SCT and non-SCT teachers share similar perceptions about their motivations and experiences. Comparing the responses for the previous section to this one, a desire to work with young people is not the dominant motivator in choosing teaching as a career. Respondents clearly differentiate between choosing teaching because it allows them to work with young people and choosing teaching as it provides them the opportunity to positively influence young people. This subtle distinction highlights that the choice to teach is not driven primarily by a preference for working with younger individuals but is more closely connected to interests regarding the students' outcome.

While other intrinsic motivators are strongly positive, this research indicates that working with young people is not a high priority for participants. In the context of the City of Dublin ETB, this finding aligns with the nature of the FET sector, which predominantly involves teaching adults. This contrasts with Wang and Houston (2023, p. 940) who identify a desire to work with young people as a "dominant" factor in career choice (*M* = 6.3). Similar positive responses are found by Kristmansson and Fjellström (2022) (*M* = 5.65) and Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė (2023) (*M* = 6.10). From an Irish context, Clarke (2009) and Heinz, Keane, and Foley (2017) also report positive mean values (*M* = 5.08 - 5.29). In this research, the desire to work with adults stands out as a significant motivator in both the focus group and interviews (See Section 6.3.1). Comparing social utility values (enhance social equity: *M* = 5.3; social contribution: *M* = 6.0; shaping futures: *M* = 5.4; work with young: *M* = 3.8), and task return elements (salary: *M* = 4.3; social status: *M* = 4.2), reveals that social utility values hold greater significance than task return in choosing teaching as a career, aligning with the results from Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė (2023).

5.5. Extrinsic Motivators.

The following section examines personal utility factors, considered as the extrinsic motives for career choice. Here and in Sections 6.4 to 6.4.5, extrinsic motivators are presented in line with the categories of extrinsic motivations identified by Kristmansson and Fjellström (2022). The first grouping relates to working conditions, including job security and salary. These are followed by elements which relate to lifestyle outside work and include work/life balance and job transferability.

5.5.1. Job Security.

Figure 5.13. SCT Job Security.

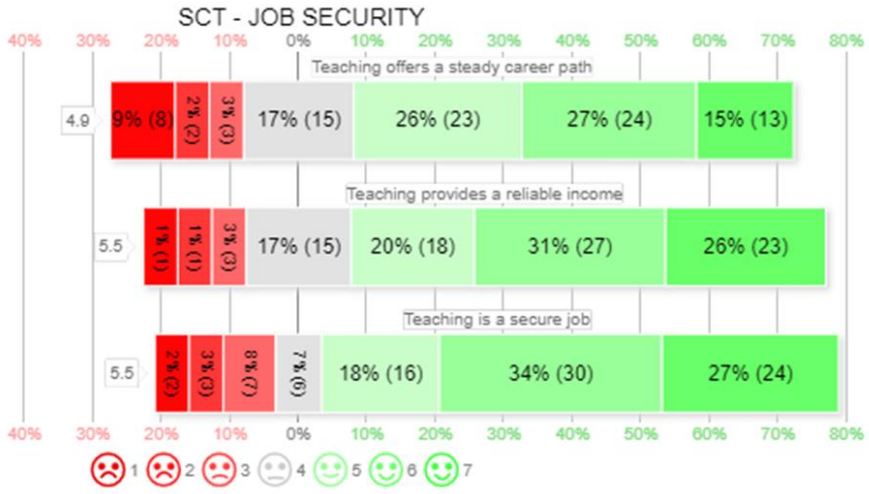
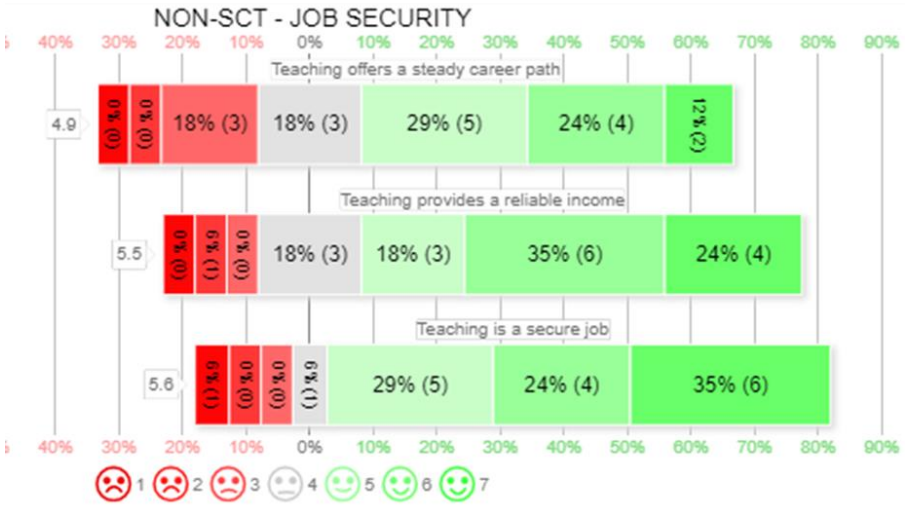


Figure 5.14. Non-SCT Job Security.



Job security can address the basic need for safety and stability. For both groups job security is strongly positive as a motivating factor. For SCTs the highest mean is for statements two and three (M = 5.5), while for non-SCTs the highest mean is statement three (M = 5.6). Statement one has the lowest score for both groups (M_{SCT} = 4.9; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 4.9).

The positivity regarding job security in this survey is in sharp contrast to the findings from the focus group (See Section 6.4.1). Although novice SCTs may value job security, frequently they must leave secure employment to enter a sector that initially offers limited job security. Leaving the stability, financial, and emotional safety of a secure position and the peace of mind this brings can be an unsettling experience, potentially impacting higher level needs (Maslow, 1970). Among that group the desire for a better quality of life and the social utility value of education appears to be stronger motivators (See Sections 5.5.1 to 5.5.3, and 6.4.1). Data from the qualitative elements shows that motivation for job security become more relevant in times of economic uncertainty, but in the current economic climate it is evidently more problematic, particularly when raising a family and with the need to pay bills (See Section 6.4.2).

Many authors including Geoghegan (2023) recognise the importance of security regarding employment when making decisions relating to career change (See Section 3.11.3). For many SCTs the attraction of a secure position and additional time for family takes precedence over salary (Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003). This need for security is especially critical in the Irish context, given the initial lack of permanent contracts for new teachers. Goller *et al.* (2019, p.237) recognise that for some respondents, job security, and the financial security it brings represent a "paramount motivation to choose teaching as a career" (M = 4.56 - 4.71). This need for security, when satisfied, may support intrinsic

motivators such as the social utility value of teaching by allowing SCTs to focus on work which aligns with their values (Ryan and Deci, 2000) (See Sections 5.3, 5.4.4, 5.4.5 & 6.3.2). This research shows that the attraction of job security and a steady income are highly positive with survey responses differing from Heinz (2003) who finds job security as being of relatively low importance ($M = 4.3$) (See Sections 5.5.1 & 6.4.2).

5.5.2. Salary.

Figure 5.15. SCT Salary.

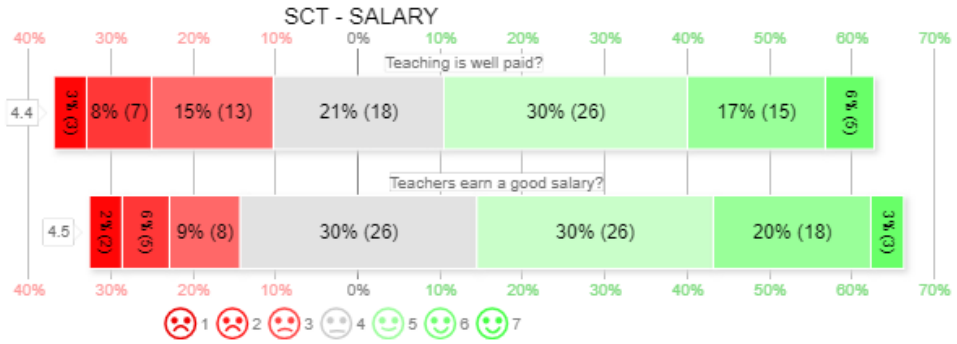
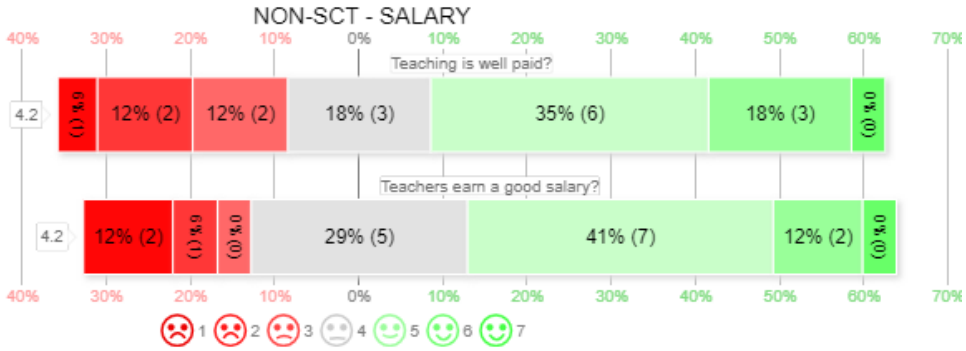


Figure 5.16. Non-SCT Salary.



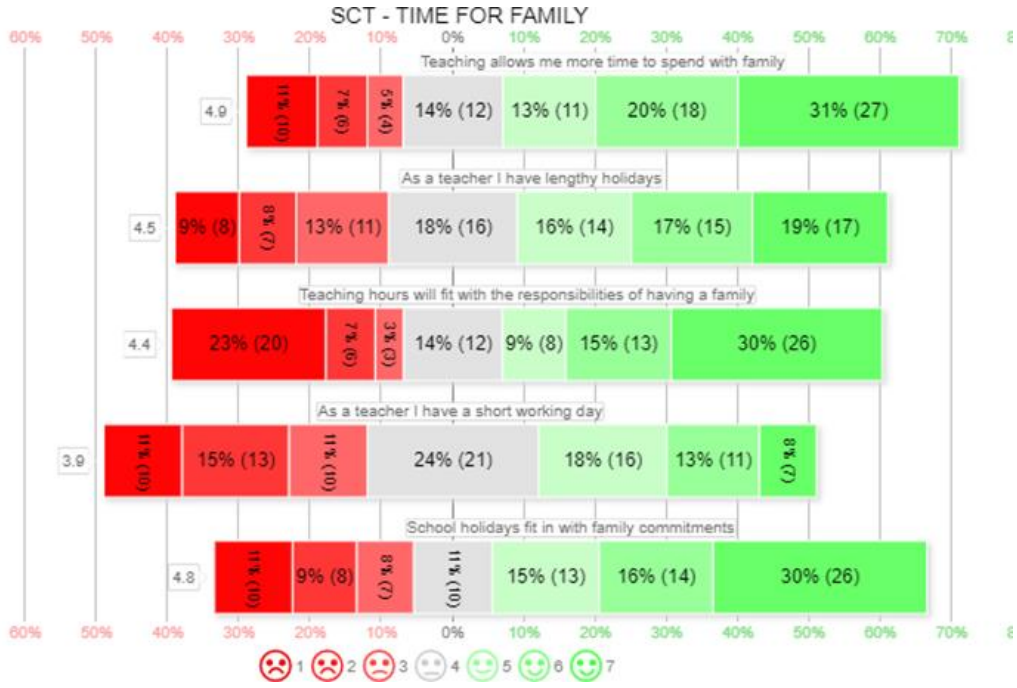
Responses from both groups are largely similar, revealing a belief that teachers receive a relatively low salary. For SCTs, statement two has a slightly higher mean ($M = 4.5$) than statement one ($M = 4.4$). Responses from non-SCTs to both items are almost identical ($M = 4.2$). These findings reflect a common perception amongst teachers that their salary is modest.

Salary often scores close to the mid-point of the scale in reported research (Heinz, 2013: $M = 3.94$; Akpochafo, 2020: $M = 3.48$; Eghtesadi Roudi, 2022: $M = 3.13$). Both groups in this study returned broadly similar results with responses scoring just above the scale midpoint of 4. In the context of this research, this suggests that while salary is acknowledged as important, it is not viewed as the primary motivator for career choice. Perceptions relating to teachers' income can be highly influential in career-choice. They have the potential to

positively motivate an individual or they may lead an individual to shun teaching as a career (Geoghegan, 2023). This dual potential impact is relevant within the City of Dublin ETB, where salary considerations may influence decisions to enter the FET sector as a teacher. The context for each piece of research is recognised as being influential as teacher salary can vary greatly (Watt *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, salary in some countries is a more prominent element in terms of career choice than in others (Wang, Wang, and Lin, 2023). For the City of Dublin ETB, where salary scales are relatively standardised, other factors such as job security and altruistic-intrinsic motivations often take precedence. In addition, salary may not be viewed as a strong motivator because achieving a higher salary in teaching is potentially a long-term prospect (Carless and Arnup, 2010).

5.5.3. Time for Family.

Figure 5.17. SCT Time for Family.



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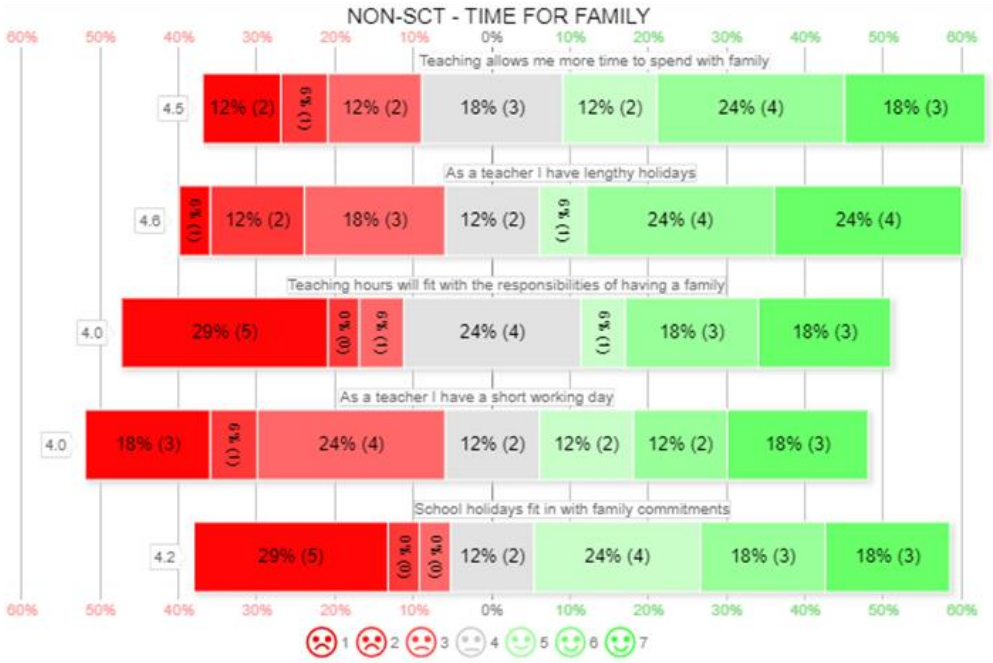
igure 5.18. Non-SCT Time for Family.



Among SCTs, responses to all items are positive with the highest mean for statement one ($M = 4.9$). For non-SCTs the highest mean is statement two ($M = 4.6$). For both groups the lowest mean is statement four ($M_{SCT} = 3.9$; $M_{non\text{-}SCT} = 4.0$). These results suggest that while additional time off is valued, it is not the primary motivator for teachers. The benefit of additional time off may result in a better quality of life and is the stereotypical motivation of becoming a teacher. In this research, altruistic-intrinsic motivations outweigh the appeal of extrinsic rewards as additional time off is less valued when compared to motivators such as social justice (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Results of research often illustrate that vocational teachers are less concerned with personal utility values and more concerned with social utility values indicating strong altruistic-intrinsic motivation. This trend is evident among respondents to this research, where a strong commitment to social justice and making a positive impact through education is demonstrated. Consequently, the ability to balance work and family commitments appears to be among the least important elements when considering teaching as a career, frequently scoring below the scale mean (Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, 2012a). This may be attributed to a strong alignment with altruistic-intrinsic motivations, with fulfilment gained from work being a priority, resulting in SCTs accepting personal sacrifices. In the context of this research, this suggests that teachers are more driven by the impact they can make on adult learners and the broader community than by personal benefits. While holidays may be important, they are not the main motivator to choose teaching, but are instead viewed in terms of being a ‘bonus’. Portraying teaching as attractive primarily for time off does a

disservice to the profession which is more fundamentally aligned with aspirations of social justice and job security (Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė, 2023; Wang, Wang, and Lin, 2023).

5.5.4. Fallback Career.

Figure 5.19. SCT Fallback Career.

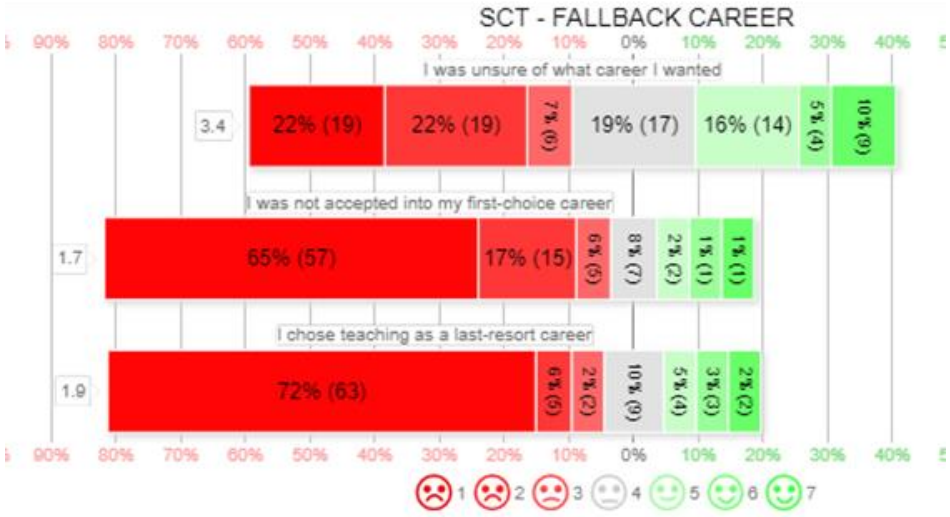
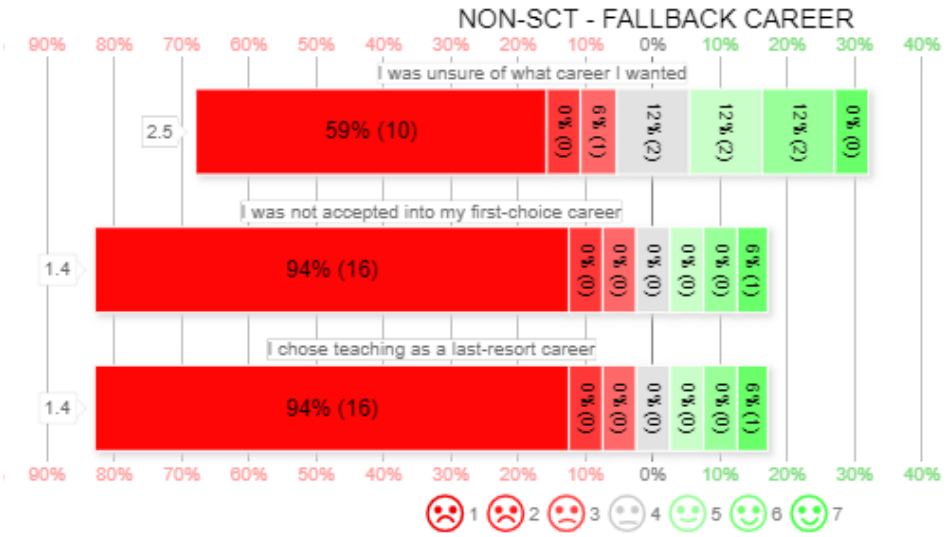


Figure 5.20. Non-SCT Fallback Career.



Responses to items in this section are largely negative, with some variance in the means of the items for both groups. The highest score for both groups is statement one (M_{SCT} = 3.4; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 2.5). The lowest mean for SCTs is statement two (M = 1.7). For non-SCTs, responses to statements two and three are identical (M = 1.4). These findings suggest that the perception of teaching as a last-resort career is not prevalent among teachers who participate in this research.

Choosing teaching as a last resort career is another stereotype disproved (See Section 6.3.5). Results in this research indicate that for both groups, despite there being some

uncertainty about what career to pursue, teaching was not a last resort (Richardson, Karabenick, and Watt, 2014). Highly positive results in relation to satisfaction with career choice (See figures 5.3 and 5.4), prior teaching and learning experiences (See figures 5.27 and 5.28), and perceived teaching abilities (See figures 5.29 and 5.30) appear to support the responses provided here regarding teaching not being a fallback career, but instead being a deliberate career choice, reflecting a strong sense of agency and autonomy. Within the City of Dublin ETB, the deliberate choice to enter the teaching profession, particularly within the FET sector, highlights the commitment to, and intentionality of, the career choice. As such they are strong indicators that job satisfaction is positively related to professional identity formation (McKevitt, Carbery, and Lyons, 2017). Viewing teaching as a fallback career suggests a lack of altruistic-intrinsic motivation. This can seriously diminish teacher effectiveness and undermine the satisfaction gained, challenge feelings of competence and professional growth, which negatively impact identity (trans-)formation (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Saito, 2024).

For Watt and Richardson (2012), fallback career relates to individuals who were unable to pursue their first-choice career. Neither group in this research indicated that teaching was chosen as a backup career, which is reflected in the high levels of satisfaction and commitment to career choice (See Section 5.4.2). The satisfaction of respondents regarding their career choice enhances the altruistic-intrinsic value of the work and potentially contributes to a stronger, more resilient, professional identity (trans-)formation. Heinz (2015) highlights that context was significant in comparing the results of international studies for these factors. Heinz, Keane, and Foley (2017) notes differences in responses based upon gender and age of respondents, but neither of these elements are gathered in this research.

5.5.5. Social Status.

Figure 5.21. SCT Social Status. Figure 5.20. Non-SCT Social Status.

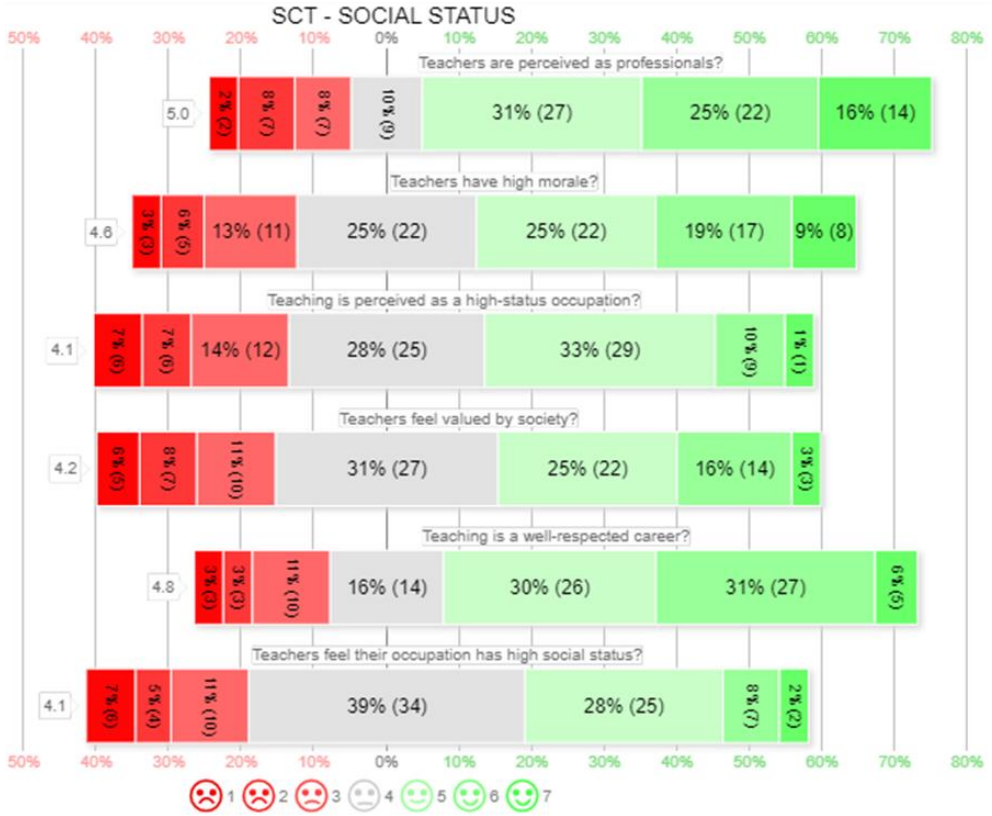
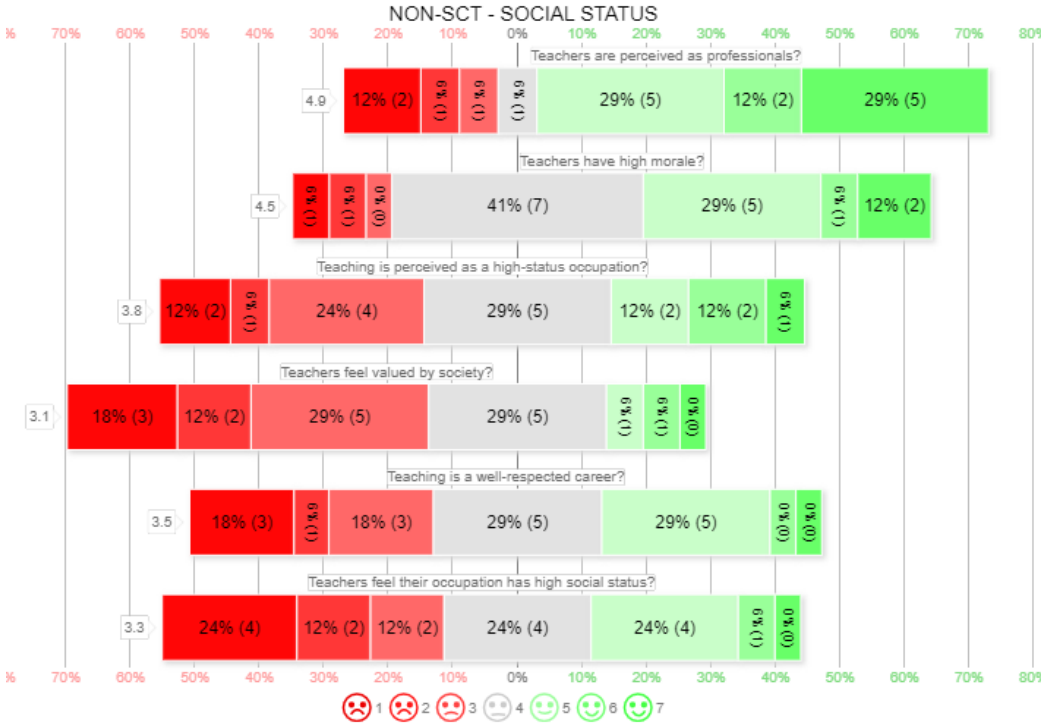


Figure 5.22. Non-SCT Social Status.



Six items relate to perceptions regarding the social status of teachers. For both groups statement one has the highest score (M_{SCT} =5.0; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 4.9). For SCTs statements three and six are the lowest (M = 4.1), while for non-SCT respondents, statement four has the lowest (M = 3.1). Responses from non-SCTs show a higher degree of variance when comparing the means, illustrating the varying perceptions of social status among teachers in FET.

Perceptions regarding the social status of teachers are largely negative. Despite this, individuals continue to pursue teaching careers, indicating that altruistic-intrinsic motivations are more significant than extrinsic motivations in career choice (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Hennessy and Lynch (2017, p. 116) observe that pre-service secondary school teachers report "relatively high" for social status (M = 5.1). This discrepancy potentially highlights the perceived undesirable status of the FET Sector. This perception may be influenced by the focus of the FET sector on teaching adult students, which may be less visible than mainstream secondary education.

Salary and perceived social status are frequently linked in the literature as higher order task returns (Goller *at al*., 2019). While the results to both sets of responses are close to the scale mid-point the results for non-SCTs are repeatedly lower, reflecting what was found by Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2012b). If respondents are altruistically-intrinsically motivated, concerns regarding social status and salary may not diminish their personal fulfilment. This reflects the belief that altruistic-intrinsic motivations can mitigate the effects of negative elements (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Wang, Wang, and Lin, 2023). For teachers in the City of Dublin ETB, altruistic-intrinsic motivations, such as a desire to contribute to social equity are likely to outweigh and mitigate concerns about lower social status and salary.

5.5.6. Job Transferability.

Figure 5.23. SCT Job Transferability.

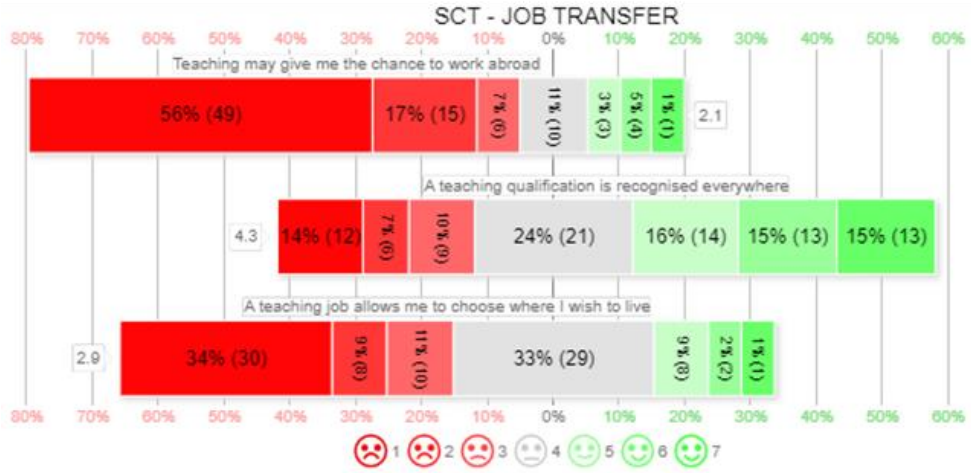
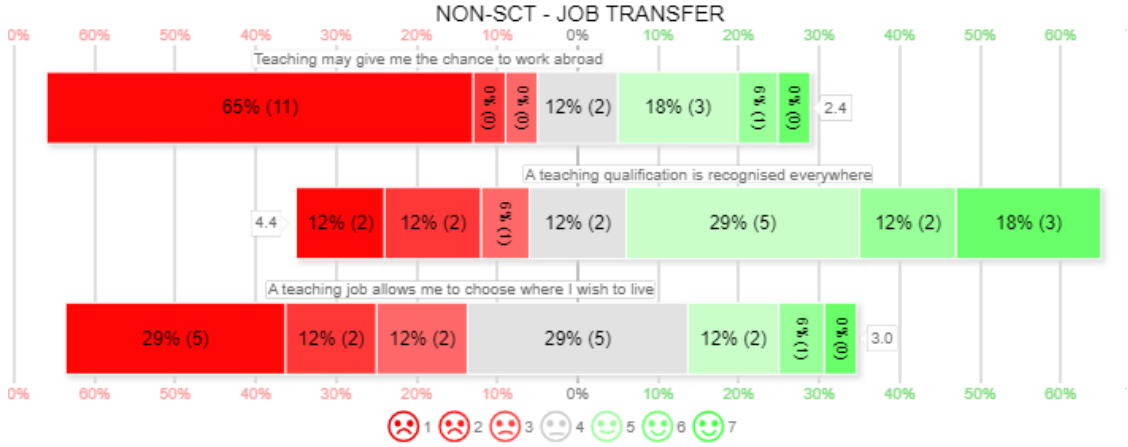


Figure 5.24. Non-SCT Job Transferability.



Job transferability appears to have a minimal impact on career choice, as the autonomy to work abroad or choose different living locations is largely insignificant (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The responses from both groups while showing variance in the means, are similar. Statement two has the highest score (M_{SCT} = 4.3; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 4.4), with the lowest being statement one (M_{SCT} = 2.1; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 2.4). The flexibility to work in various locations, including internationally, may enhance the appeal of teaching by offering flexibility, security, and financial benefits. This research suggests that the flexibility to work in various locations, including internationally, is not a significant motivator for teachers in the City of Dublin ETB.

Within this research the minimal effect of this autonomy reflects the low ratings found in the literature (Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis, 2020; Simonsza, Leeman, and Veugelers, 2023). After achieving similar results Celik (2020, p.166) held that job

transferability "did not demonstrate meaningful value as motivational factors". Potentially the career path chosen by SCTs may provide a sense of purpose and in the long-term a sense of security. Job transferability implies changes which may conflict with the desire for stability and a cohesive professional identity (Borman and Dowling, 2008; Jackson, 2016).

5.6. Influences on Career Choice.

Social influences can directly or indirectly impact decision making processes relating to career choice. Some of the influences explored in the survey are prior experiences in teaching and learning in addition to individuals being encouraged or discouraged by those around them to pursue alternate career paths.

5.6.1. Social Influences.

Figure 5.25. SCT Social Influences.

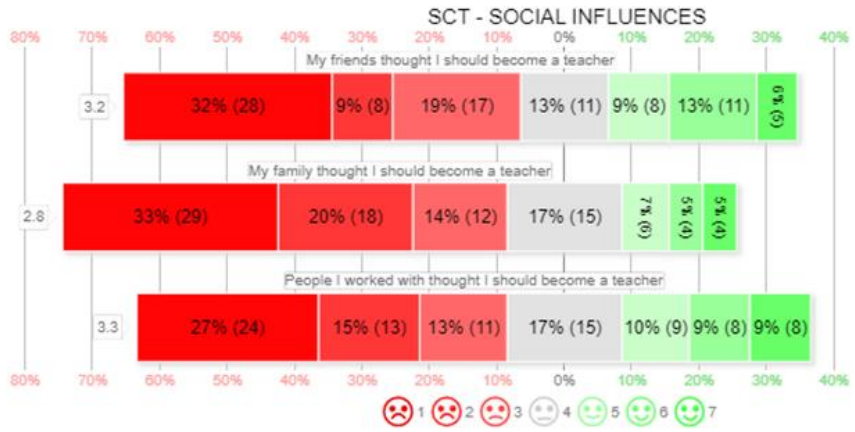
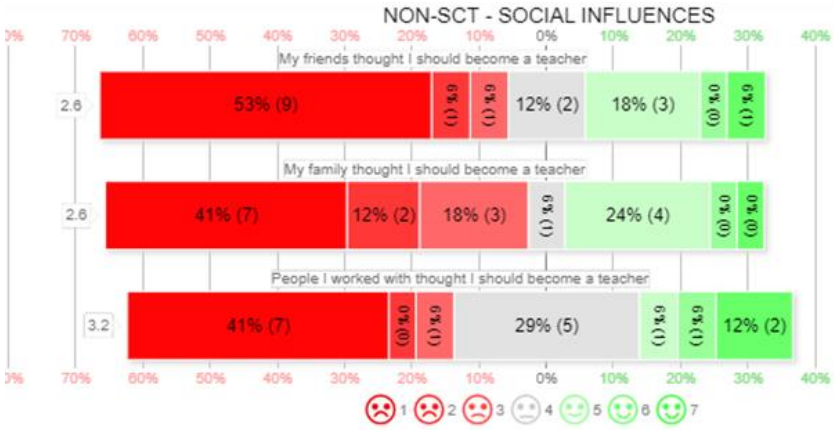


Figure 5.26. Non-SCT Social Influences.



Statements regarding the positive influence of family, friends and work colleagues in career choice received strongly negative responses for both cohorts, with all statements scoring well below the scale midpoint. For both groups, statement three is the highest (M_{SCT} =3.3; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$=3.2). For SCTs statement two has the lowest (M = 2.8), while for

non-SCTs statements one and two scoring the same ($M = 2.6$). These findings suggest that social influences are not significant factors in career choice amongst participants.

Social influences on career choice refers to significant others encouraging the choice of teaching as a career (Watt and Richardson, 2012). The results of this study appear to agree with previously conducted research, with opinions of those close to respondents regarding teaching exerting a relatively low level of influence on career choice (See Section 6.5.2.3). This trend is consistent with findings of this research, where career choice seems to be largely independent of the opinions of others. Rosyid (2016) and Hennessy and Lynch (2017) observe that social influences were among the least significant motivators, having only minor influence on career choice.

SCTs may have transitioned from secure, non-teaching roles into teaching, and a change was likely unexpected by family and friends. To avoid pressure to stay in their previous career they might have delayed discussing their career change (Tan and Kramer, 2012). This delay may reflect a need to maintain autonomy in career choice (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and potentially accounts for the results related to dissuasion (See Sections 3.10, 5.6.2 & 6.5.1).

From an Irish perspective Drudy *et al.* (2005) observes that while the influence of others plays only a minor role in career decision making those who had a relative who is a teacher were more likely to consider teaching as a career. Heinz (2013) found that respondents have received little encouragement from others to become teachers, and notes that, contrary to Drudy *et al.'*s findings, 'only 3 respondents (1.4%) mentioning the positive influence that family members who are teachers had had on their decision to choose a teaching career' (p. 8). This aligns with the findings that social influences are not significant motivators, further emphasising the importance of altruistic-intrinsic motivations and personal decisions in career choice.

5.6.2. Social Dissuasion.

Figure 5.27. SCT Social Dissuasion.

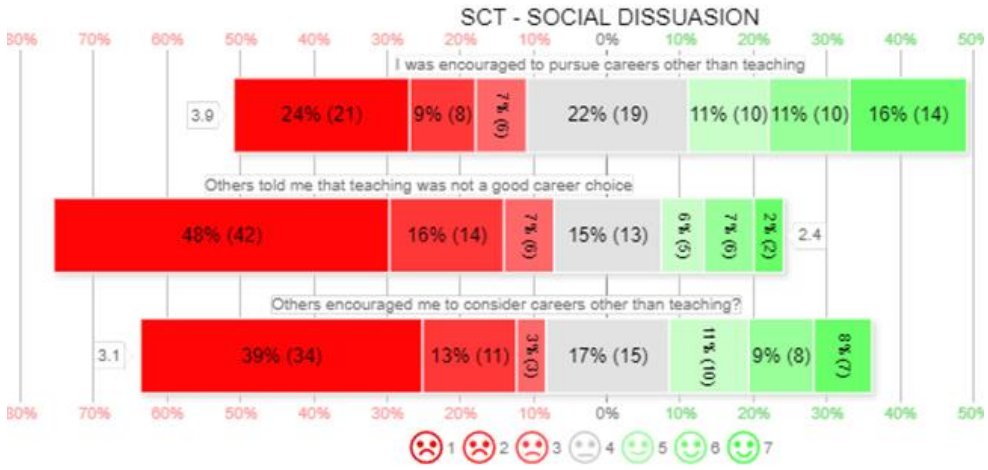
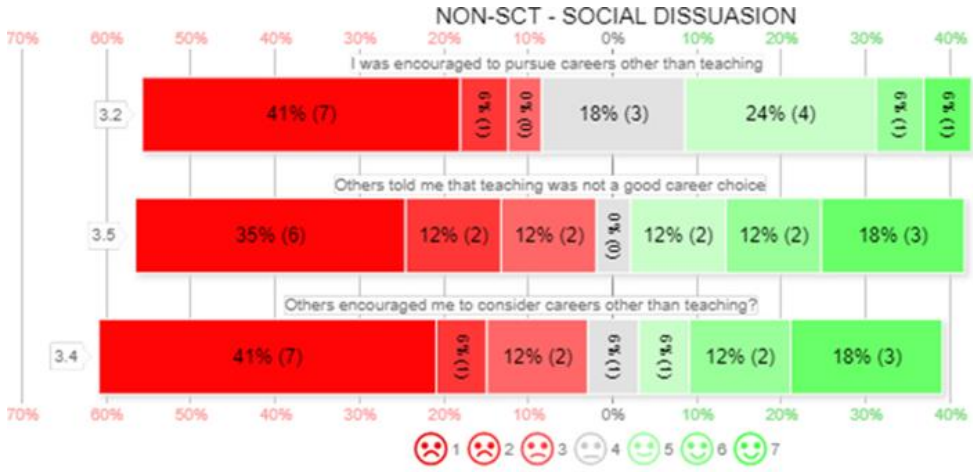


Figure 5.28. Non-SCT Social Dissuasion.



Social dissuasion refers to discouragement individuals may experience regarding career choice (See Sections 3.10 & 5.6.2). Both groups deny the impact of the negative influence of others in career choice, with all statements scoring below the scale midpoint. SCT responses show a higher degree of variance in the means of the items than non-SCT responses. SCT responses to statement one has the highest mean ($M = 3.9$), while statement two has the lowest ($M = 2.4$). Among non-SCTs the results are inverted, as statement two has the highest mean ($M = 3.5$) and statement one the lowest ($M = 3.2$). These findings suggest that social dissuasion is not a significant factor affecting decisions to enter the teaching profession. The results for social dissuasion in this study are below the scale midpoint (See Section 6.5.1). This indicates that despite perceptions of teaching as a low status career participants had not experienced attempts to dissuade them from entering the teaching profession. This agrees with the findings of authors including Heinz (2013), Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis (2020) and Shang *et al.* (2022).

Dissuasion may lead to decreased satisfaction and disrupt alignment with personal values, hindering fulfilment and engagement, negatively affecting the identity (trans-)formation process.

5.6.3. Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences.

Figure 5.29. SCT Prior Teaching & Learning Experiences.

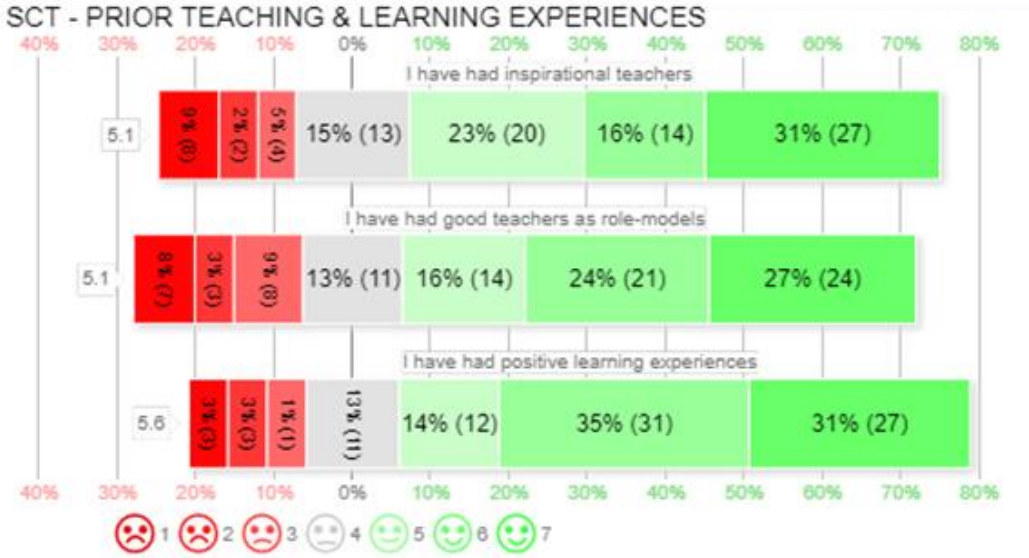
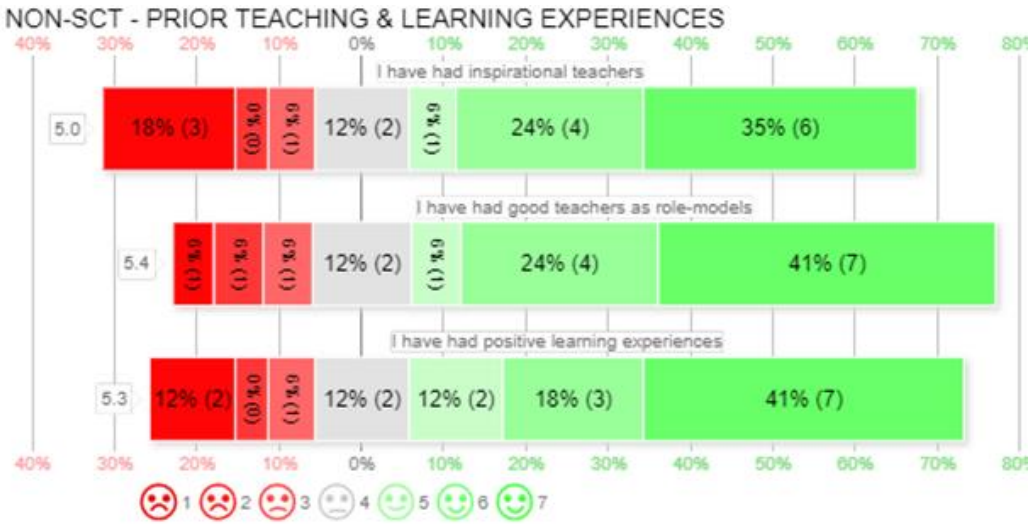


Figure 5.30. Non-SCT Prior Teaching & Learning Experiences.



Prior teaching and learning experiences are strongly positive for both groups of respondents. SCTs responses to statement three are the highest mean ($M = 5.6$) while for non-SCTs statement two is the highest mean ($M = 5.4$). For SCTs statements one and two are the lowest ($M = 5.1$) with statement one being the lowest for non-SCTs ($M = 5.0$). These findings suggest that positive prior teaching and learning experiences significantly influence career choice.

Richardson and Watt (2006) highlight how previous learning experiences significantly shape teaching career motivations. Chang-Kredl and Kingsley (2014) suggest that motivation often stems from admired teachers. Heinz (2013) found 78% of Irish student teachers encountered inspirational teachers and 80% had positive learning experiences, aligning with SCTs in this research. Positive educational experiences and achievements as shown in this research foster interest and may enhance commitment to teaching (Hennessy and Lynch, 2017). These positive experiences contribute to a strong foundation for professional identity (trans-)formation and supporting long-term career satisfaction.

5.6.4. Self-perceived Teaching Ability.

Figure 5.31. SCT Perceived Teaching Ability.

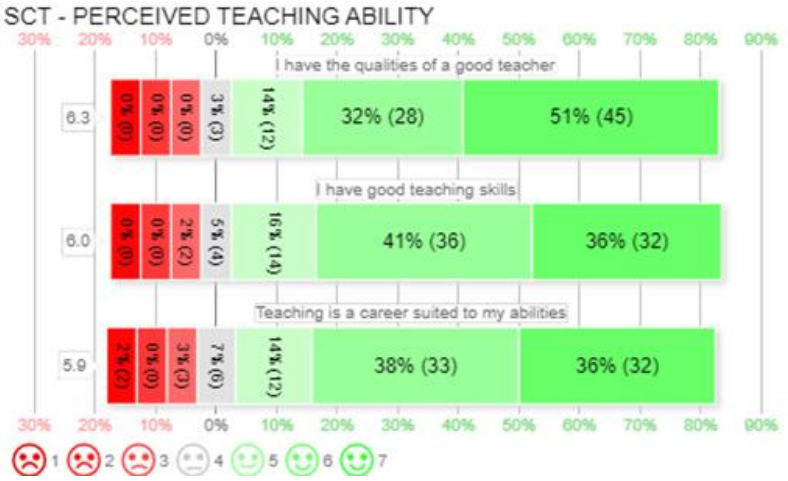
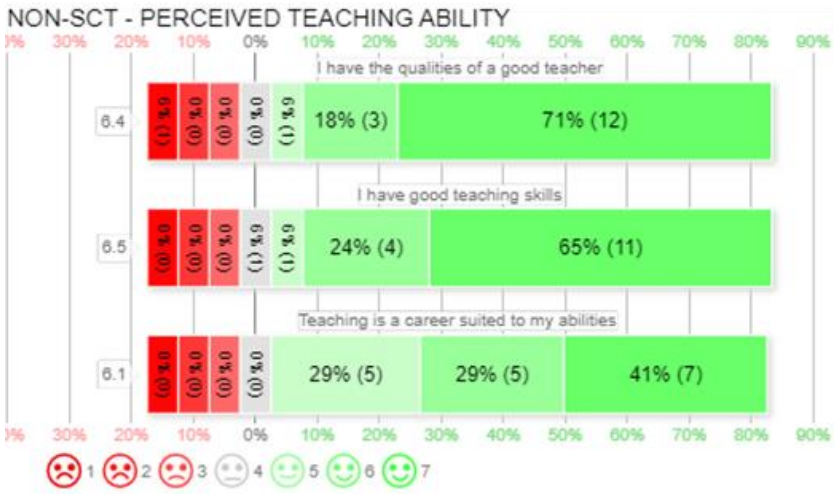


Figure 5.32. Non-SCT Perceived Teaching Ability.



Self-perceived teaching ability is strongly positive for both cohorts of respondents indicating they believe they possess the abilities and qualities to teach. Among SCTs, responses to statement one is the highest (M = 6.3), and for non-SCTs responses to statement two are the highest (M = 6.5). For both groups responses to statement three the

lowest (M_{SCT} = 5.9; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 6.1). These findings suggest that both groups have high confidence in their teaching abilities.

Within the literature perceived teaching ability is recognised as one of the greatest influencers of career choice and may be a strong indicator of identity (trans-)formation (Heinz, 2015; McKevitt, Carbery, and Lyons, 2017; Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis, 2020; Celik, 2020; Simonsza, Leeman, and Veugelers, 2023). For teachers within the City of Dublin ETB, this confidence in their teaching abilities is likely to enhance the process of professional identity (trans-)formation and their overall commitment to teaching.

This factor and beliefs about the intrinsic value of teaching are recognised by Watt and Richardson (2007) as being closely correlated to overall career satisfaction. Ryan and Deci (2000) posit that perceived competence significantly influences career choice, as teachers with higher perceived ability are more likely to pursue a teaching career, motivated by relatedness.

Interestingly, there is a contradiction between the data provided by the quantitative and qualitative elements of this research. Self-perception regarding teaching ability is high in the survey results and is also evident in the qualitative data (See Sections 6.3.3 & 6.3.4) however there is also evidence of self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy (See Sections 6.6.1 to 6.6.3). Potential explanations could be a limitation of quantitative research methods in that it provides a broad overview but is unable to reveal the nuanced experiences and emotions of participants. Another explanation may be that previous confidence born in the more familiar contexts of work or other interests was challenged by the realities of teaching a new subject in an unfamiliar FET setting. These changes may have destabilised their belief in their ability giving rise to feeling of inadequacy, evidenced in the frequent references to imposter syndrome (See Section 6.6.2). This suggests that while teachers generally have a high confidence in their teaching abilities, the transition to teaching within the FET sector can challenge their self-perception and lead to feelings of inadequacy. Addressing these challenges through supports and professional development may enhance their overall career satisfaction.

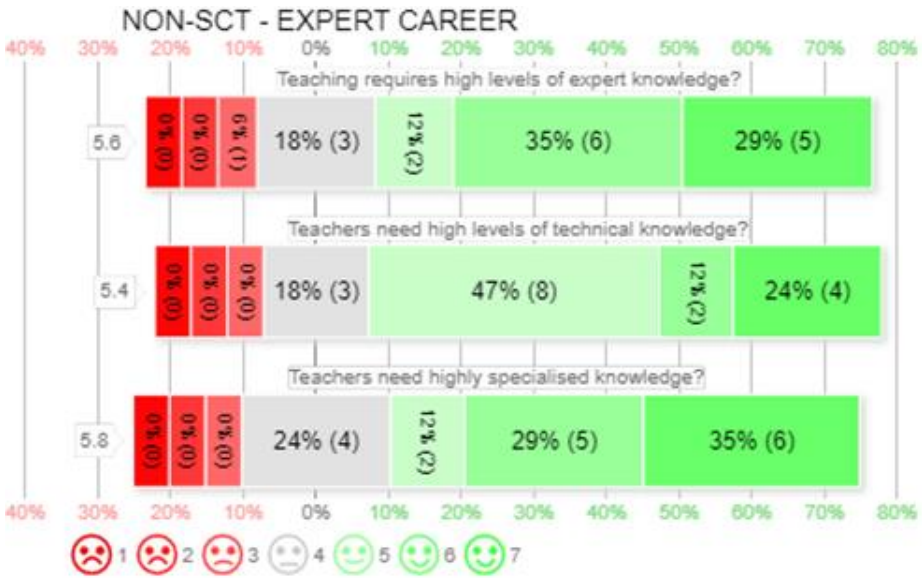
5.7. Perceptions Regarding Teaching as a Career.

Perceptions of teaching are multifaceted and influenced by a wide array of factors including perceived task demand and experiences of teaching as an expert career. Motivations for career change are recognised as being closely related to, and consequently affecting, how SCTs deal with the reality of teaching (Bergmark *et al.,* 2018).

5.7.1 Expert Career.

Figure 5.33. SCT Expert Career.

Figure 5.34. Non-SCT Expert Career.



Responses to this section are strongly positive from both SCTs and non-SCTs. The highest mean responses for both groups are the statement three (M_{SCT} = 5.9; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ =5.8). The lowest for both is statement two (M = 5.4). Most respondents from both groups perceive teaching to be a highly skilled occupation and are satisfied with their career choice. These findings suggest that respondents recognise the high level of expertise and skill required for teaching. All participants in this study perceive teaching to be a challenging career that requires significant levels of expertise, subject knowledge, and robust pedagogical skills reflecting the findings of numerous studies (Heinz, 2013; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017). This perception highlights the importance of professional development and

continuous learning in maintaining high standards of teaching within the FET sector. It should again be noted that responses to perceptions about required expertise and career demand are context and culture dependent, as reflected in the research of Shang *et al*. (2022) and Simića, Marušić Jablanović, and Grbić (2022).

5.7.2. Teaching as a Demanding Job.

Figure 5.35. SCT High Demand.

Figure 5.36. Non-SCT High Demand.

Responses to these statements are once again strongly positive. For both groups responses to statement three are the highest (M_{SCT} = 5.8; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 6.1). Responses to statement one are also the lowest for both groups (M_{SCT} = 5.2; $M_{non\text{-}SCT}$ = 5.7). These results show that participants from both groups perceive teaching as being highly demanding but are still willing to pursue a career in teaching.

The results for task demand and task return show a slightly unfavourable ratio, with task return (salary: $M = 4.3$, social status: $M = 4.2$) being rated lower than task demand (expert career: $M = 5.7$, demand: $M = 5.7$). This means teaching staff perceive teaching as a demanding career which has relatively low pay and status in society. This perception reflects the reality that, while teaching in the FET sector requires specialist knowledge and is highly demanding, the financial and social rewards are not commensurate with the demands.

Task demand and perceptions of teaching as a career that requires specialised knowledge are grouped together to form the higher-order construct of 'demand' (Watt and Richardson, 2007). Task demand for Simić, Marušić Jablanović, and Grbić (2020) scored $M = 5.82$, reflecting the results found in this research. This emphasis on non-material reward is indicative of strong altruistic-intrinsic motivation among participants.

Teaching may be seen as a stressful career. Challenges faced by teachers are not just around workload but may be due to responsibilities or demands of the profession, which are compounded by social status and low pay. This research supports the view that teaching is demanding and yet survey participants still find it satisfying (See Section 5.4.2). This finding highlights the strong altruistic-intrinsic motivation of teachers, who gain satisfaction from the altruistic-intrinsic rewards of teaching despite the high demands, low sectoral status, and relatively low extrinsic rewards. In addition, these findings may be indicative of a strong teacher professional identity, evident in the deep connection teachers have with their work, making the demands more manageable.

5.8. Summary

Quantitative data is presented and discussed, showing that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence teachers' career choices. Strong intrinsic motivations, such as contributing to social equity and shaping students' futures are common among both SCTs and non-SCTs, leading to high career satisfaction despite low societal recognition and modest salaries. Extrinsic motivators, such as job security also play a role, but are secondary. The appeal of working with young students is less significant, reflecting the FET sector's focus on adult learners. Social influences minimally impact career choice, with participants largely deciding independently. Positive prior teaching experiences are linked to career choice. Participants view teaching as a demanding, skilled profession, and are driven by altruistic-intrinsic motivations that outweigh low extrinsic rewards. Results appear to reject stereotypes that suggest teaching is chosen primarily for holidays or as a fallback career. These findings allow for identification of significant patterns and

correlations, which informed and shaped the focus of the qualitative data gathering process. The use of quantitative data provides a broad context within which the qualitative findings can be interpreted. Furthermore, the quantitative data strengthens the overall validity and generalisability of this research, contributing to a more robust understanding of the factors motivating SCTs. It is however important to acknowledge the limitations of the survey results, such as potential biases in self-reported data and a lack of representativeness due to sample size and the constraints of predefined response options, which limits the opportunity for participants to elaborate on nuanced or complex aspects of their experiences. The sample size, while producing valuable data, may not fully represent the diversity of SCTs across different institutions.

Chapter six now moves to explore the qualitative data gathered from the focus group and semi-structured interviews. This offers a deeper understanding of the patterns identified by the quantitative data through the personal experiences and perspective of the participants. An overall discussion of the findings is provided, which connects the two data types.

Chapter 6: Qualitative Analysis and Overall Discussion

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the focus moves from the broad patterns identified through the quantitative data to a deeper exploration of these findings. The quantitative data has provided a foundation by identifying key trends, qualitative data in this chapter provides context and personal experiences. These insights serve to enrich and explain the numerical results. By integrating and providing an overall discussion, this chapter aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the data gathered. This bridges the gap between statistical patterns and lived experiences, with the data sets reinforcing and validating each. The qualitative data has been gathered from a focus group (See Appendix K) conducted with 5 novice SCTs (those with less than two years' experience teaching in the FET sector) and 26 semi-structured interviews (See Appendix L) with more experienced SCTs, to answer the research question:

> What motivates second-career teachers to teach in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB?

and the secondary research question:

> What challenges do second career teachers face in developing their professional identity within this educational sector?

This chapter begins with an overview of the process for data gathering and analysis. Four themes have been identified in the survey, altruistic-intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, dissuasion, and support in career transition. These are used to provide a framework for exploring the qualitative data. By using these survey-generated themes as a guide, the qualitative analysis delves deeper into the specific experiences and perspectives of participants, providing a richer understanding of the patterns observed in the quantitative data. This approach ensures that the qualitative insights are directly linked to the survey findings and allows for a more integrated analysis and discussion. Professional identity (trans-)formation is considered both as a theme which is explored separately, and a transversal theme running through many of the themes and subthemes. Findings are presented and discussed under these headings, in the context of existing literature. The use of an online survey, focus group and semi-structured interviews provides a more comprehensive understanding of participant experiences and motivations while facilitating crystallisation, enhancing reliability, and mitigating the biases associated with insider research by offering a variety of perspectives and ensuring that the findings are robust.

Each grouping reflects how individual motivations, experiences, and the perceived benefits and challenges of the FET sector impact the career decision making and identity (trans-)formation processes among SCTs. Quotes from participants in the focus group are identified by letters (A-E) and interview participants are identified by numbers (1-26). A brief profile of participants is provided in Tables 6.2 and 6.3. The majority of participants in both the focus group and interviews were female (See tables 6.2 & 6.3). A potential reason for this may include alignment with the broader demographic trend in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. This demographic is considered as not skewing the results but accurately representing the experience of SCTs in this context. The studies validity is supported by its aims to capture diverse perspectives. Additionally, the use of multiple data collection methods helps to ensure that the findings are robust and generalisable, even with a predominantly female sample.

Invitations to participate in both the focus group and semi-structured interviews were sent to all 971 email addresses, however, despite the invitation no participant took part in both qualitative elements of this research. Potentially this was due to time constraints, with participation in both being viewed as a significant time commitment. Participants may also have felt that involvement in one was sufficient to provide their insights, or some individuals may have felt more comfortable participating in one environment and not in the other.

Table 6.1. Thematic Representation of Findings.

Theme 1: Altruistic-Intrinsic Motivations
Sub-Themes:
i. The Appeal of Teaching Adult Learners
ii. Desire to Positively Impact Society through Education
iii. Passion for Teaching
iv. Previous Exposure to Teaching and Learning in FET
v. Teaching as a Preferred Alternative Career
Theme 2: Extrinsic Motivations
Sub-Themes:
i. Desire for Better Work/Life Balance
ii. Employment Precarity and Financial Concerns
iii. Career Progression Opportunities
iv. Teaching as a Fallback Career
v. Motivational Influence of Personal Networks
Theme 3: Dissuasion and Supports in Career Transition
Sub-Themes:
i. Social Dissuasion
ii. Supports
Theme 4: Professional Identity (Trans)formation
Sub-Themes:
i. Identity Uncertainty
ii. Explicit Imposter Syndrome
iii. Implicit Imposter Syndrome

Table 6.2. Profile of Focus Group Participants.

Participant	Age Range Years	Years Teaching in FET Sector	Gender	Previous Career
A	41-50	Novice	Female	Healthcare
B	31-40	Novice	Female	Community Development Supervisor
C	31-40	Novice	Male	Fitness Coach
D	41-50	Novice	Female	Social Care
E	41-50	Novice	Female	Healthcare

Table 6.3. Profile of Interview Participants.

Participant	Age Range Years	Years Teaching in FET Sector	Gender	Previous Career
1	51-60	31	Male	IT
2	31-40	4	Female	Healthcare
3	61+	26	Female	Healthcare
4	41-50	8	Female	Legal Industry
5	41-50	15	Male	IT & Business
6	41-50	6	Male	Coaching
7	51-60	2	Female	Childcare & Montessori Teacher
8	61+	3	Female	Journalism
9	51-60	2	Male	Business
10	51-60	20	Female	Childcare & Montessori Teacher
11	41-50	3	Female	Social Care
12	61+	22	Female	Performing Arts
13	61+	20	Male	Entertainment Industry
14	51-60	15	Female	Science & Technology
15	51-60	15	Male	Business
16	51-60	20	Female	Childcare
17	51-60	13	Male	Theatre
18	61+	34	Female	Theatre
19	51-60	17	Female	Healthcare
20	51-60	9	Female	Healthcare
21	51-60	14	Female	Business
22	41-50	10	Female	Social Care & Teaching
23	41-50	17	Female	Interior Design
24	51-60	4	Male	IT
25	61+	23	Female	Insurance
26	61+	24	Female	Classroom Assistant - Primary Education

6.2. Catalysts for Teaching in FET

Motivations for entering teaching as a second career stem from complex, interconnected influences. The literature highlights several key factors that are evident in the research, including a strong interest in working with adult learners, passion for teaching, desire to make a positive social impact, the desire for a better work/life balance, and the need for secure employment (Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Passmore and Prescott, 2020). These factors are clearly reflected in the data, with participants often highlighting these motivations as important to their decision to pursue teaching as a second career.

6.3. Altruistic-Intrinsic Motivations

Intrinsically motivated individuals experience work activities as inherently rewarding, heightening interest and satisfaction, while altruistic motivations inspire efforts to positively impact others and advance the greater good. For teachers, such motivations potentially enhance professional learning as they seek to create appropriate, meaningful relationships, which provide support, confidence, adaptability, and a sense of belonging (See Section 3.8.1) (Deci and Ryan, 2000, 2013; Tang *et al.,* 2020).

6.3.1. The Appeal of Teaching Adult Learners

Available literature frequently states that due to potential issues regarding discipline and student engagement, SCTs did not wish to work in primary or secondary education (See Section 3.11.1). Participant 15 speaks about their decision to work with adults in FET:

> … I teach the willing. … you're working with adults, and it's a lot more focused on the teaching than on the discipline, [in] second level, there's a lot more discipline, and a lot more classroom management.

Participant 23 is emphatic in their choice to work in the FET sector:

> It's always going to be adults … I didn't want to have to discipline. That was one thing I didn't want to have to put up with…[discipline] was one of the big turnoffs for me.

Participant 9, like many other respondents, clearly expresses a sincere interest in working with adult learners:

> I said, right, I'm not going to teach young people, I'm going to teach adults.

This research indicates that working with young people is not a high priority amongst participants, contrasting with findings by Kristmansson and Fjellström (2022) and Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė (2023) who identified it as a key factor in teaching in the VET sector. Participant C's decision to teach in the FET sector was influenced by their previous experience studying at QQI level 5:

> I felt that this is kind of the area I'd rather go into, and probably feel more confident…in. Working with adults is something that I prefer rather than going into the younger age group.

Teaching individuals who have chosen education is frequently perceived as more fulfilling than teaching younger students, requiring less emphasis on classroom management (Biney, 2015; Bar-Tal and Gilat, 2019). However, focusing on a reduced need for discipline, or believing that less andragogical skills are required in the FET sector may highlight a possible oversimplification and misconception regarding the nature of teaching in FET. Teachers within the City of Dublin ETB must navigate complex personal circumstances

and diverse learning needs among adult students. Older students may however be self-motivated allowing teachers more autonomy and an environment in which to foster meaningful connections which enhances teacher motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Nonetheless, effective classroom management is still necessary as older learners may bring challenges stemming from their complex personal circumstances (Higgins and Misawa, 2022). This preference for working with older students makes the FET sector a more attractive environment.

6.3.2. Desire to Positively Impact Society Through Teaching

Literature identified in Section 3.5.2.1 shows societal contribution and the desire to teach as motivators for pursuing teaching as a second career (Hunter-Johnson, 2015). Corcoran, Whitburn, and Rice (2023) note that education enables positive influence and promotes equitable learning opportunities. SCTs often prioritise social contribution and equity, considering them as fundamental values (Hartung and Blustein, 2002; Salyer, 2003; Heath *et al*., 2013; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017). This desire may increase job-satisfaction and significantly influence career choices; however, it may paint an overly idealistic view of motivations for entering teaching, oversimplifying the complex diversity of motivations. In this research, several participants express deep empathy for the needs and challenges of adult learners, aiming to positively influence them through education. Participant 11 illustrates a deep-seated commitment to education and a strong belief in its transformative power:

> I always wanted to work with people that wanted to learn, that wanted to be there. I wanted to help people that had a tough time.

Participant 8, highlights the fulfilment they experience from student success:

> …I really enjoy seeing people achieve things they didn't think they would achieve.

Participant 9's enthusiasm for teaching is summed up in them saying:

> I love all that stuff... I wouldn't see it as a chore at all…I get a kick out of the bit of learning from them... when someone sparks up with a recognition that that's what you do with that thing you know... I'm as delighted as they are.

Finally, participant 13 is inspired by the positive influence of one teacher which drives their desire to provide better opportunities for students:

> I've always realised the value of teaching, just what it contributes, how important it is in society, and to individuals. Imagine, one teacher could make such a massive difference to my life. I've always seen [teaching] as such an important thing. So, it was always… just my way of paying back, it was payback time, so to speak.

6.3.3. Passion for Teaching

Many participants enjoyed the educational aspects of their previous careers, facilitating them in acquiring relevant knowledge and skills, reinforcing their belief that teaching is a career they should pursue (Mezirow, 1978b). The personal satisfaction they derive (See Section 3.5.2.1) motivates their pursuit of teaching as a means of focusing on this passion. This transition is often seen in the FET sector, where teachers bring valuable industry experience into the classroom, For participant 13:

> There's no other job I would rather have in terms of going out of the house to earn money. Teaching satisfies me in a way that nothing else does.

SCTs are recognised in the literature as bringing experience, expertise, and a unique perspective into the FET sector (See Sections 3.11 to 3.11.3), enriching the learning experience (Storey, 2000). Confidence in career choice and teaching ability impact's identity (trans-)formation and consequently how SCTs engage with students and their wider professional responsibilities (See Section 5.4.2). Participant 15 displays this confidence, fuelled by a deep-seated passion for teaching. The move into teaching aligned their professional career with their innate abilities:

> At a very sort of profound visceral level, I like explaining stuff to people, that's the kind of problem-solving thing I do - explaining things to people. So, I get a kick out of that. It just doesn't seem like a job. It just seems like this is who I am. That's what I do, how I explain things to people…

Personal belief in teaching ability may be enhanced by the confidence provided by previous career experience. Real-world insights and diverse skills provide a solid foundation for a new career, however over-reliance on achievements from a previous career could result in novice SCTs being under-prepared for the realities of teaching. Participant D when discussing their entry into teaching shares how students were eager to gauge their professional experience:

> …they were happy enough that I was new, but they wanted to know what my background was, that I wasn't just coming from nothing, and I wasn't gonna just teach them [something] that I knew nothing about… they are just as interested in what we have and we're willing to give them.

This research reflects the impact of intrinsic career value on career choice as found in the literature (Watt and Richardson, 2012; Heinz, 2013; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017; Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis, 2020). Teaching in the FET sector however can be complex and challenging. Enjoyment of educational tasks or a passion for education does not guarantee teaching competence or a successful teaching career. Such aspirations, while commendable, require systematic support and adequate resourcing and reliance on

such motivations could lead to challenges including imposter syndrome (See Sections 6.6.2 & 6.6.3) or burnout, particularly if required supports are slow to materialise (Eder and Meyer, 2023).

6.3.4. Previous Exposure to Teaching and Learning in FET

Career choice may arise from a passion for education or personal belief borne from previous educational experiences (See Sections 3.5.2.1 & 3.11.1) which allow for the acquisition of pertinent knowledge and skills which allow career change to take place (Mezirow, 1978b). Participants note that completing a QQI level 5 course or helping other students motivated their teaching pursuits. Participant A recalls:

> Last year I did a QQI level 5 in Childcare Education … and I loved it… I really enjoyed working with the other people in the class… I spent a lot of time sitting with them, and showing them how to do essays or reference…And then it just kind of clicks… This is what I want to do.

While for Participant B:

> I then done my QQI level 5 in Community and Health Services…that was life changing for me…I think when people think QQI level 5, they think that's only a little Mickey Mouse qualification. But actually, that was life changing for me.

Participant 3 speaks of their experience and highlights that they had not previously considered teaching in the FET sector:

> …having done a year was, you know, was a really great idea. … I didn't make the change with the idea that I'm going to be working in further education.

Participant 6 speaks of the influence of personal experience. They highlight the impact of positive relationships with staff on their career journey:

> I'd come back as a mature student in 2010 / 2011. And I built up a really good relationship with the staff in [name] College when I was a student there. I went on to do my undergraduate in sports science. It was an ex-principal…that asked me would I be interested in going on and doing a post-grad. in teaching…

Participant 23 speaks of the transformative impact of their time as a student in FET. They recall their enjoyment of the experience which helped them develop a deep appreciation of the sector, and has impacted their career path:

> … it was just great. I connected really well with the tutors, and I just really loved it…I really enjoyed it, and the benefits of it are amazing. And so, I went into further education myself…

Previous experience as an FET student provides first-hand experience of the sector and the challenges that students may face, allowing SCTs to develop a supportive educational

atmosphere. Furthermore, prior experience can contribute to the development of competence, as SCTs may have gained knowledge, skills, and insights. This sense of competence can act as a motivation as SCTs seek to apply and further develop their abilities (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This first-hand experience is invaluable as it equips SCTs with a deep understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by adult learners, thereby fostering a more empathetic and effective teaching approach. There is however a risk that students transitioning into teaching may rely heavily on their own experiences instead of adopting newer teaching methods, and having witnessed only one element of teaching, may be disappointed by the reality of the profession (Conway *et al.,* 2012). This potential disillusionment highlights the importance of specific teacher training programmes that provide realistic and holistic views of the teaching profession, ensuring that all teachers are well-prepared to teach in this unique teaching environment (See Section 3.6).

6.3.5. Teaching as a Preferred Alternative Career

While external factors and not personal aspirations may necessitate considering career change, teaching within the literature is identified as a preferred alternative and not a second-best, last resort career (See Sections 3.5.2.1 & 3.5.2.2). Teaching may offer elements of stability but initially there is precarity. This research identifies teaching as a preferred career choice for most participants rather than a means of escaping a career where participants were not accepted, or a last resort option. In terms of autonomy, opting for a career in teaching indicates a choice aligned with an individual's values, interests, and a strong commitment, demonstrating genuine interest in the profession (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Comparing data relating to satisfaction with career choice (See Section 5.4.2), and social status (See Section 5.5.5) inverse relationships are evident, reflecting the results found in previous research (Sexton, 2007; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017). Participants in this research speak positively of ambition to teach, passion for education, and a desire to make a positive social contribution (See Sections 5.4.1 to 5.4.6), and yet many experience uncertainty (See Section 6.6.1). This may be explained by individuals underestimating the challenges of teaching, or experiencing strain from the demands of their new profession which could be alleviated through both formal and informal support systems (See Sections 6.5.2 to 6.5.2.3).

Not all career change choices are made freely, and this research provides evidence of "choice by opportunity" (Berger and D'Ascoli, 2012a, p.321). Choice by opportunity may occur when SCTs pursue teaching not because of an inherent passion for education but out of convenience. Consequently, they may experience lower levels of intrinsic motivation

and job satisfaction. Several participants lack a deliberate plan, considering teaching as a potential career early in their life but not pursuing it, seeing it as a career move to be achieved in the distant future. Participant 11 was inspired by a teacher whom they wished to emulate:

> I had one fantastic teacher…I just remember sitting there saying to myself, 'I'd love to do her job. I'd love to do that someday', but I thought it was so far in the future that I'd probably be old and grey ...

Two participants with backgrounds in the creative arts speak about teaching as their way of repaying society for the benefits they have received. Participant 13, a writer, views teaching as a form of payback for the positive influence teachers had on their own life. When they first began to teach, they worked one day a week:

> …the money didn't matter. It was going to charity, anyway. I was doing it just for you know, it gave me a satisfaction… I had a debt to repay…

In a similar way participant 18, with a background in theatre, believes:

> I owe this because I have a super specialised skill… I owe it to the creative legacy of Ireland…I owe destiny because I was lucky. I was lucky because of [name] making me go and see Marceau. It changed my life…

For some participants the thought of being a teacher began in early life but was rejected (Verbruggen and De Vod, 2020). Participant 5 has an interest in teaching dating back to their childhood:

> I wanted to be an English and maths teacher… that always stuck in my head and in my mom's head that teaching was a profession I'd want to do… in college that had gone away, but I suppose it was always in the back of my mind.

Participant 23 describes a desire to help others learn:

> I was always going to teach, … I was teaching first aid from the time I was about 15, and I had done that for many years, …. I ended up teaching my classmates in secondary school art history … Then when I got to college… I started teaching everybody CAD (Computer-Aided Design), … so I knew it was in my future.

Participant 21 recalls their longstanding passion for education:

> I always wanted to do it, because even when I did work in HR (Human Resources), training was my favourite element…they knew that I really wanted to do it.

Teaching as a preferred alternative career offers fulfilment and a sense of purpose, drawing many SCTs. However, alongside the altruistic-intrinsic rewards, extrinsic motivators also play a role in the decision-making process, which will be explored in the next section.

6.4. Extrinsic Motivations

Extrinsic motivations for career change are evident both in the literature (See Section 3.5.2.2) and in this research and include job stability, career stagnation, and seeking a better work/life balance. For many SCTs the attraction of a secure position and additional time for family takes precedence over salary (Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003). Frequently the decision to change career is the result of what Mezirow (1978b, p.101) refers to as a dilemma, which he considers as being:

> …commonplace in adult lives, but some are more dramatic than others… referred to as "life crises".

Interview data indicates that unstable economic conditions significantly influence career change decisions, acting as both push and pull factors (Watt and Richardson, 2007). Carrillo-Tudela *et al*. (2016, p.18) recognise that the "extent of worker reallocation across occupations or industries (a *career change*…) is high and procyclical". Discussion regarding labour market dynamics and the impact of recession is notably absent from the focus group discussions with novice SCTs who have made the transition in the significantly altered economic landscape following the 2008-2013 recession (Savage, 2018). Participants in this research come from various initial careers indicating that career transitions are not confined to any single profession (See Tables 6.2 and 6.3). The disparity in strength and volatility between sectors and the draw of alternative professions suggests that adverse economic conditions have the potential to impact the availability of qualified candidates from volatile sectors.

6.4.1. Desire for a Better Work/Life Balance

Literature recognises the desire for an "ideal lifestyle" (Tang *et al*., 2020, p.10) as a factor in considering a teaching career (See Section 3.5.2.2) (Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, 2012a). This research shows teaching is favored for potentially enhancing work/life balance (See Section 5.5.3). Participant 3 speaks of a desire to escape the demands of their role as a manager in healthcare:

> [I was] looking at a kind of work/life balance. You know, moving away into something that doesn't have the same emotional kind of demands, and the hours, and weekends, and responsibilities… as a manager, I was doing a lot of administration, paperwork, etc., was taking away from working with kids and their families, which is what I enjoyed...

The desire for participant E grew from the wish to maximise family time:

> … coming home, family is at home, my husband is a secondary school teacher. So, it's like… maybe it would give me a better quality of life.

This resonates with Participants C:

> The quality of life, the quality time I'll be able to spend with [family] is much better… I'll actually have a home life apart from a work life. I suppose it kind of made it an easy decision then.

The notion of teaching providing a better work/life balance may be misleading and over simplistic, failing to fully understand the complexities and demands of the profession (Roness, 2011). Such unrealistic expectations may make adjustment and identity (trans-)formation more difficult (Suzanne, 2012). SCTs are entering a profession that Watt and Richardson (2008) acknowledge as inherently challenging and stressful. Teachers working in the City of Dublin ETB often encounter these challenges, as the realities of teaching adult learners can be more demanding than originally anticipated. These challenges can be intensified if real-world teaching does not meet their expectations, proving to be more difficult than anticipated (Keane, Heinz, and Lynch, 2023). Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010) see the sudden move from idealised expectations regarding teaching into the reality of a classroom as having the potential to cause a "culture shock" (p.169) or "reality shock" (p.176) which may potentially lead to feelings of disenchantment. Within the FET context, the reality of teaching, particularly as a novice teacher, is often contrary to what was expected, and teachers must adjust to the specific dynamics and challenges of working in the FET sector (See Sections 3.5.2.2, 3.11 to 3.11.3, and 5.6.3). Bar-Tal *et al.* (2020, p.666) note that one of the biggest stressors for novice teachers is "the discrepancy between working as a teacher as it was imagined and the harsh reality in school." Participant E, as an example finds:

> The workload is what I am trying to get used to. In nursing, I come in, I put my bag in the corner, and that's it. I don't think about it until I'm back on shift again. But now you have other work that you bring home.

Participant 21 speaks of the extensive workload:

> I would have been working definitely 70hrs for the first few years… it's all new subjects… You are prepping more or less the night before for that week or that day. And so, it was massively demanding and massively exhausting… the first few years were so stressful.

Finding a balance between family life, work, and study can be extremely difficult. Participant 22 speaks of their rigorous schedule:

> I had to teach 5 mornings a week and I was teaching before I started the college course … So, I was in a classroom teaching before I knew how to. Then I had to… drive out to UCD at like 12 o'clock, 3 days a week. Stay there until 7:30 pm, doing lectures… then I was coming home at night, and I was preparing lessons fresh for the following day, because I have no resources, and then on weekends doing assignments for the college course. So, I just found it relentless, just relentless, you know. I was exhausted.

The heavy workload is not just the preserve of novice teachers. Participant 1, an SCT who has over 30 years teaching experience, is still acutely aware of the challenging workload:

> …it's quite demanding during the school term. But the holidays are great. But don't go into it for the holidays because there are 26 hard weeks work alongside the holiday. So, you need to be ready for that.

The desire for a better work/life balance is a significant motivator for many SCTs. The pursuit of balance often intersects with challenges related to employment precarity and financial concerns.

6.4.2. Employment Precarity and Financial Concerns

As shown in Section 3.11.3, many authors recognise the importance of employment and financial security when making decisions relating to career change (Geoghegan, 2023). Goller *et al.* (2019, p.237) note that for some respondents' job security and the financial security it brings represent a "paramount motivation to choose teaching as a career". While these factors may provide short-term relief from financial stress they may not align with their intrinsic values and long-term career goals, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement in the new career.

Focus group participants may be undergoing a "period of liminality" (O'Neill and McLoughlin, 2023, p.849), encountering feelings of instability and confusion. In contrast, interview participants have navigated their career transition, and several cite insecurity in previous employment as a key factor in their decision to change career. They discuss their disorientation, revealing a link between working in sectors susceptible to economic downturns, such as the performing arts, IT, interior design, and the legal profession, and a desire to move to more secure careers, consistent with earlier studies (Mezirow, 1978b; Richardson and Watt, 2005, 2010; Olsen, 2008). For Aum, Lee, and Shin (2017), individuals employed in more stable professions such as healthcare are less concerned with job security and often report experiencing dissuasion due to teaching's lower income potential. This reflects the findings of Richardson and Watt (2005, p.485) who recognise that for individuals working in insecure sectors, "security and stability of employment are of pressing interest". Transitioning from a secure position into the precarity of teaching may be indicative of the presence of strong altruistic-intrinsic motivations. Such motivators translate into stronger resilience, potentially resulting in stronger identity (trans-)formation and commitment (Sharma and Akram, 2024).

Data from the focus group and interviews appear to contradict the positivity found in the survey data (See Section 5.5.1). The noncompetitive pay scale and lack of security in FET teaching are referred to by participants as being used dissuasively when they are discussing

their plan to change career. Geoghegan (2023) recognises that poor pay may lead an individual to shun teaching as a career. Participant A for example notes that:

> … [my sister] rang me the other day to tell me of this job going in the courts… it starts off at 72 grand …

Grier and Johnston (2008, p.58) recognise the prevailing belief that giving up a successful career to pursue a career in teaching is unwise. Participant 20 has first-hand experience of this:

> I think when I initially left…people were absolutely horrified. I was giving up a secure pensionable job. And that's not what you hear every day.

This research however reveals a paradox, with novice SCTs moving from secure careers into a precarious position. Participant A encapsulates the struggle:

> I find it very tough... [leaving] a full paid job, having a mortgage, having children. And yeah, I struggled…financially, it's terrible.

While participant E notes:

> …you still have to pay your bills…there is all that financial side of it that you really have to consider, particularly when you have family.

As previously noted, motivations for career change may be based upon expectations and not on sectoral reality (Kyriacou *et al*., 2003). For novice SCTs job security is a speculative ideal, only truly attained with employment tenure, the granting of a Contract of Indefinite Duration (CID). Without this they are employed on a *Pro Rata* basis, in precarious employment (Fitzsimons, Henry, and O'Neill, 2021; Spina *et al.,* 2022). Feelings of inadequacy may be heightened by the precarious nature of employment for novice SCTs. As noted by Fitzsimons and O'Neill (2024) the current situation regarding employment contracts (See Section 6.4.2) leaves individuals in an ongoing cycle of insecurity that may significantly affect their mental health and their capacity for meaningful professional growth. Teachers at the start of their career frequently "face precarity around employment" (Mellon, 2023, p. 388) struggling to get paid teaching hours. Consequently, teachers are left in a financially precarious position.

Novice SCTs facing employment uncertainty may struggle with heightened feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy, negatively impacting the development of a strong professional identity. Participant D notes:

> I don't have the security of knowing that I have the hours teaching next year. I have to make sure that I have some backup and safety net in place.

Furthermore, employment precarity may feed into perceptions of being an outsider or of being of lesser importance in the FET sector. Participant B speaks of this fundamental insecurity:

> …not know when you'll get a permanent contract like there's a bit of insecurity there…hopefully, down the road, this will have been the right decision to make.

Employment precarity and financial concerns present significant challenges for SCTs, often exacerbating the difficulties of transitioning to a new career. The experiences of SCTs should be contextualised within broader socio-economic conditions. Dublin's high cost of living, driven by increasing accommodation expenses and limited affordable housing, places significant financial pressure on new educators transitioning into the profession. Simultaneously, the prevalence of precarious work arrangements in the wider 'gig' economy reflects a labour market trend towards flexibility and insecurity, which can also permeate the FET sector. For novice SCTs, these external factors condition their ability to establish stable careers, amplifying anxieties about temporary contracts, inconsistent hours, and the sustainability of their professional aspirations. These challenges highlight the complex interplay between individual career development and structural economic realities, shaping SCTs' pathways and professional identities (Riverin-Simard, 2000; Croll, 2008; Clancy, 2022)

6.4.3. Career Progression Opportunities

Career progression or development can vary significantly in meaning. For some, it may involve upward mobility, such as promotions, increased responsibilities, skills progression, wage growth, or achieving permanent contracts. For others, it may centre on personal fulfilment, finding stability, or making a meaningful impact in their chosen career field. The variety of interpretations highlight the subjective nature of career success, which is influenced by an individual's values, their goals and the socio-economic context in which they operate (Bown-Wilson and Parry, 2013; Sissons, 2020).

A lack of career progression opportunities, or stagnation within a previous career are identified as motivations for changing career into teaching (See Section 3.5.2.2). Participant 1 speaks about their desire for personal and professional growth, seeking personal development over climbing the corporate ladder:

> I was trying to get out of the other company, and I needed to earn more money, and I needed to move on with my life. I was looking for this sense of moving on, not necessarily moving up, but moving on and things improving.

Participants discuss their process of self-examination and recognition of discontent (Mezirow, 1978b). Participant 3's desire for a change of career direction entails moving from a well-established career in healthcare:

> …the pivotal point wasn't that I was unhappy…, but I was thinking, if I want to continue in paediatrics, which I did, and continue in my career, there were very few openings, you know, to move on.

Participant 20, when talking about enjoyment of their previous career in healthcare has this to say:

> Yeah, up to a point. I enjoyed it, except as the higher you go through the grades, you kind of get into more of the business side of it…you don't talk about patients anymore, you talk about cases and numbers, and I didn't like that. That wasn't for me.

Experiencing a sense of career stagnation is a common catalyst for career change.

Participant 1 for example describes feeling that their career had stalled in the IT industry:

> If there were better options…in the IT industry, I would probably stay…but they weren't there. Teaching looked interesting… because I felt that my career had stalled, and if I stayed in that company, I wasn't really going anywhere… and then there were very few opportunities in the IT industry.

Participant 7 expresses feelings of dissatisfaction, seeing their career development as limited:

> I did Montessori, and then I'm actually kind of getting a little bit fed up with it and thinking what I'm going to do next.

Participant 24 acknowledges their dissatisfaction with their career in IT due to lack of career progression, isolation, and repetition within their role:

> I never enjoyed it...it was just repetitive. It was a dead-end job...pretty much the same salary. So, there's also unsocial hours...it's also a bit lonely there.

Not all participants have experience of career stagnation. Two participants discuss changing career several times before finally settling into teaching, suggestive of seeking fulfilment rather than experiencing stagnation. Participant 15 shares:

> I worked in the intersection of finance and technology...I tend to get, you know, bored with things, and then want to move on.

Participant 19 describes a varied career with continuous movement between different roles and studies, as they seek out new challenges and opportunities for growth:

> I've had a very varied career. So, I started nursing in 1983, and then I would have worked in social care, and then I went back into nursing… I decided I do my midwifery training…I did my secretary course… I thought, I'm going to do a foundation year in psychotherapy… So, then I did my degree… then started my masters in psychotherapy… I ended up teaching on nursing studies [courses].

Participants A and D recall similar experiences, with both feeling their career had naturally reached its conclusion. Participant A:

> I was turning down promotions…and I was just like I can't and don't want to work anymore… there was nothing really left for me to do in the in the organisation and I felt like my time there kind of came to a natural end.

While for Participant D:

> I felt like I was outgrowing my job as I was growing my academic career…I just wanted something more that I felt kind of worthy, that my degree or my masters was kind of worthwhile. So, after my master's, I says, it's only one year I can do one more year to get the post-grad in teaching.

All participants have explored different career paths prior to moving into teaching. The decision to change career may be driven by positive motivations and recognising that the FET sector requires teachers with a diverse mix of expertise. Nonetheless, legitimate questions regarding whether SCTs are entering the teaching profession as a fallback career may be asked.

6.4.4. Teaching as a Fallback Career

For Watt and Richardson (2012), a fallback career relates to a career chosen because an individual was unable to pursue their first-choice career, in contrast to a preferred career change (See Sections 3.5.2.2 & 6.3.5). Responses to the survey clearly indicate that teaching is not viewed as a fallback option (See Section 5.5.4), with responses showing that it is the least influential motivation for career choice. Entering teaching as a fallback career due to volatility in the labour market can underestimate the profession's challenges and the skills required, potentially having a negative effect on both effectiveness as an educator and the process of professional identity (trans-)formation (Klassen *et al*., 2011). Viewing teaching as a fallback career also has implications for the FET sector and teachers therein, perpetuating societal undervaluing of the profession and suggesting that teaching is a less desirable career. For some participants in this research, teaching appears to have been chosen because their initial career was negatively impacted by financial insecurity, resulting in a severe disorienting dilemma. As a result, they were unable to pursue their chosen career, consequently teaching is a fallback career for them. Given their engagement with and commitment to their new career, it appears that this group are examples of what Wong, Tang, and Cheng (2014, p.85) classify as "Fallback career: Teaching as an alternative". Despite their initial motivation for choosing teaching, the length of time spent in the profession indicates that it is not a short-term uncommitted option. Participant 1 (31 years teaching) speaks about the influence of labour market economics on their career

choice. When discussing the decision-making process, the appeal of teaching over remaining in the IT sector was increased by the need for a stable income:

> I would probably stay in that industry, but teaching looked interesting, and there was work, and there was money, and there was potential to develop a career…

Participant 3 (26 years teaching) expresses initial uncertainty and feelings of fear regarding their career change. Consequently, they wanted to tentatively explore this new career, using a leave of absence as a safeguard (Mezirow, 1978b). This approach could hinder the transitionary process and the formation of a new professional identity:

> I wanted to take a leave of absence as a security... you could take up to 5 years leave of absence... So that was a safety net…It was a big concern that I would fail. That I wouldn't successfully make the transition that I wouldn't get a job. I'm risk averse.

Over time they built self-confidence in their new role:

> I think I finally feel…ownership. … I feel confident I feel like I've transitioned on, that I am now a teacher … I think it was more about …my self-confidence as a teacher…

Participant 4 (8 years teaching) changed career because of the impact of the recession on the legal sector:

> I kind of realised how vulnerable the legal industry is...a lot of law firms closed … having a young family, and…realising how vulnerable it was, I just said, 'I think it's time for a change'.

Participant 5 (15 years teaching) moved into teaching due to restructuring within the business in which they worked:

> They were closing down [my] team…So, I had the option of staying in [name of business] and going to Switzerland, to the UK or finding a new job.

Viewing teaching as a fallback career overlooks the complexity and intentionality behind the decision to change career. Teaching for many is a deliberate choice driven by altruistic-intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. However, personal networks play an important role in shaping and supporting career change decisions.

6.4.5. Motivational Influence of Personal Networks within the FET Sector

Personal or professional networks may directly shape career outcomes by controlling access to employment opportunities (Ibarra and Deshpande, 2004). The role of personal networks in career change is evident in the literature (See Section 3.3.1) and is explored in the survey (See Sections 5.6.1 & 5.6.2) which investigate positive influence and dissuasion on career choice. The importance of networks is implicitly evident in the focus group

discussion and is explicitly discussed multiple times during interviews. This difference between the two cohorts may stem from changes in entry requirements in relation to Teaching Council Registration (See Section 3.6) or the strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in the focus group participants. They are not relying on an invitation to teach, instead they are committed to their decision and have undergone an Initial Teacher Education programme. Consequently, the significance of career networks might be diminished.

Half of the interviewees refer to being directly contacted by personal or professional connections working in the FET sector inquiring about their availability to teach. These connections provide unexpected career opportunities representing pivotal moments in participant career paths. Three focus group participants (C, D, and E) have partners who are teaching, indicating access to a personal network. These relate to Higgins (2001, p.599) who highlights the diversity of helping relationships who provide "instrumental" or "informational" advice on career development. While numerous examples are evident in the interviews, three are provided here for illustrative purposes. Participant 12 is a choreographer who was approached by a colleague:

> … I think I was the first person she approached as a teacher to come on as a contemporary dance teacher. And that's how it happened… I see that time that [name] rang me as an absolute gift, and I thought nothing of it at the time.

Participant 17 was also contacted with an unexpected career opportunity:

> … [name], who's the course coordinator of the drama course came to me and said, look, do you want to? And she didn't even know what situation I was in. But she approached me that summer and said, do you want to do this?

An opportunity was provided to participant 18, when a mutual connection reached out with the offer of work:

> …at the same time [name] contacted me and because of another Abbey player actually, … and asked me would I be able to do a few mime classes with the new course that was starting in [College name].

The influence of personal networks in career change highlights the importance of relationships in facilitating and shaping career change. These networks potentially provide encouragement, resources, and support. Individual also encounter a broader range of dissuasion and supports when considering a career change.

6.5. Dissuasion and Supports in Career Transition

Social and professional supports are important factors in providing clarity and direction during a career transition (Dutton *et al*., 2024). This is particularly true for inter-industry career change, where an individual may face additional challenges and uncertainty regarding ability and confidence (Wilson *et al*., 2014). Not every career change is supported. Dissuasion, or discouragement, may arise from a variety of sources based upon societal expectations and uncertainties (Mičiulienė and Kovalčikienė, 2023).

6.5.1. Social Dissuasion

Not all reactions to career change are favourable (See Sections 3.10 & 3.11.3). In some cases, participants recall experiencing social dissuasion, or pressure not to change career to become a teacher. Reasons cited by participants in this research include concerns over low pay and insufficient job security. Survey data relating to social dissuasion falls below the scale's midpoint suggesting that although teaching is perceived as a career of relatively low status (See Sections 5.5.5 & 5.6.2), participants do not face discouragement from pursuing a career in teaching. This agrees with the findings of Heinz (2013), Alexander, Wyatt-Smith, and Du Plessis (2020), and Shang *et al.* (2022). Data from the focus group and interviews reveals that social dissuasion is evident in only a minority of cases, and resilience to social dissuasion suggests strong altruistic-intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Participant 20 faced dissuasion from colleagues who commented on the financial consequences of their decision:

> I think when I initially left [name], people were absolutely horrified… because I was giving up a secure, pensionable job. And that's not what you hear every day…They were horrified, and I actually was told on more than one occasion that I was making the wrong decision.

Two participants discuss familial dissuasion. Participant A's sister is offering high-salary, non-teaching roles:

> … [my sister] rang me the other day to tell me of this job going in the courts and it'd be really good. … it starts off at 72 grand … she puts the pressure on because I'm like should I be actually turning this down? … it would be life changing for us. But I have to try. I'm trying to stay focused.

Participant 24s siblings, who are primary school teachers, are not supportive of their decision:

> Even my sisters who are teachers didn't [support it]. They were saying don't, do something else…

Encountering negative opinions, especially while working within a commonly overlooked component of the Irish educational system may hinder professional identity (trans-

)formation (McGuire, 2014). SCTs transitioning from a recognised, well-established career into teaching may be especially prone to feelings of inadequacy and being undervalued (Sexton, 2007). These sentiments can lead to a sense of illegitimacy, with SCTs perceiving themselves as second class teachers in a second-class educational system. They are navigating a complex transition of roles and identity, attempting to integrate previous skills and experience into a new career. Participants recognise that the FET sector is markedly different from their previous workplaces and working in this new environment increases feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy (Suzanne, 2012). Navigating differences in workplace dynamics is potentially problematic, as illustrated by participant B:

> I find in Further Education, the dynamics in the centre are very different to dynamics in a work place I would be used to. …your principal and your deputy principal, who's my manager? They're both kind of my manager…the dynamic is bananas, like everyone is so different…

Participant A, also notes the difference in workplaces:

> I was very close to my team … we were kind of more like a family, really, because we'd do shifts together… you're spending the same amount of time with these people that you do your own family… It's strange to go into such a big environment.

This research reveals that self-perceptions regarding teacher social status are generally unfavourable but have not deterred participants from pursuing careers in teaching (See Section 5.5.5). This perceived lowly status may be exacerbated by negative perceptions regarding sectoral status and a belief that teaching is not a legitimate profession (Sexton, 2007). Participant 2 recalls that further education was never discussed as an educational option in secondary school:

> Growing up and in school, [FET] was never really an option talked about…

Frequent references are made by participants to confusion surrounding the title 'teacher', perhaps indicative of a lack of sectoral understanding and appreciation. Participant 10 explains that when they tell people they are a teacher:

> They do make an assumption…Are you in primary school? Are you a secondary school? I say no, I work in a college for Further Education, and a lot of people say, what's that?

Lack of sector awareness is not confined to the public, as participants also acknowledge their own awareness prior to making their career change. Participant E notes:

> …I actually didn't really know a lot about further education.

While the title teacher may cause confusion, participant 4 notes that their role is often expressly trivialised and undervalued, being treated in a dismissive tone:

> I could be out with my friends. One could be a solicitor, one could be an accountant and like, oh, you're an accountant. And oh, and you have all these big transactions…that's so important, and you're a solicitor and you've all these clients and you're a teacher. So you kind of really don't do anything.

Misunderstandings regarding the FET sector make the transition into teaching more challenging, negatively affecting confidence and the integration of past experiences into a new environment. Some interviewees, such as participant 22, admit that if asked about their career they have consciously decided not to elaborate on their specific role unless speaking with other educators:

> I just say I'm a teacher. I don't generally tell them what I'm doing…unless I meet another teacher…

Their choice to broadly identify as a teacher but not specifying the context to non-teachers exemplifies what Harold, Prock, and Groden (2021) refer to as code switching. Participant 22 is aware that they can "separate the two lives". This decision reflects a nuanced aspect of professional identity (trans-)formation among SCTs, the ability to strategically separate professional and personal identities. This behaviour impacts professional identity (trans-)formation, illustrating how SCTs may selectively engage with their teacher identity based on the social context. In environments where they anticipate a shared understanding and interest (e.g., with other teachers), they are more likely to discuss their work in detail, which can reinforce their professional identity through validation and shared experiences. Conversely, in settings where they anticipate little interest or understanding (e.g., with family or in social settings) they may minimize their professional identity to avoid disinterest or misunderstanding. Participant 23 admits:

> I am self-conscious in saying [I am a teacher] because I just accept that everybody who is not a teacher resents teachers.

Remarks made by participants highlight the complexity, diverse perspectives, and evolving self-perceptions related to the professional identity of teachers, and the meaning attached to the word 'teacher'. Participant 11 exemplifies professional identity evolution, initially identifying more as a social care worker and viewing teaching merely as an activity, before fully embracing their identity as a teacher:

> …now I would say I'm a teacher… If you had asked me that question last year, I would have said I'm a social care worker doing a bit of teaching.

Participant 15 reveals a conflict between their professional role and personal identity, hesitating to identify as a teacher, opting instead to say they teach, due to a stereotypical teacher image that clashes with their self-perception:

> I say I teach… I don't describe myself as a teacher. Somewhere in my mind that still generates the image of the tweed coat and the elbow patches and the institutionalisation that goes with that.

Stories of insufficient occupational recognition and respect recur through many of the interviews, potentially reflecting a broader undervaluation of teachers working within the FET sector. Perceptions of being underappreciated can lead to doubts regarding career choice, negatively impacting commitment, motivation, and ultimately professional identity (trans-)formation.

Professional identities are not static phenomena, being built on life experiences and interactions (Živković, 2021). Participant 11 initially sees themselves as playing teacher, they are potentially "experiencing teaching as a learner" (O'Neill and McLoughlin, 2023, p.849) and consequently experiencing "Imposter Phenomenon" (IP) (Živković, 2021, p.26). Over time they recognise that they took ownership:

> …I feel confident I feel like I've transitioned on, that I am now a teacher … I think it was more about my own self, and you know how I perceived myself and… my self-confidence as a teacher…

Insufficient recognition from friends, peers, or the wider community has the potential to diminish professional self-esteem. This may make it more challenging to fully embrace a new teaching role and leads to questioning of the value of teaching in FET. As noted in Section 2.3, the Irish FET sector is unique, complex, and misunderstood (O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020; Rami and O'Kelly, 2021). The apparent lack of understanding, interest, and acknowledgement of the FET sector, evident in the survey and interviews (See Section 5.5.5), in addition to trivialisation of the FET teaching profession can hinder the growth of a positive professional identity and result in a sense of isolation. Constant comparisons or being mistakenly identified with other educational sectors is frequently acknowledged by interviewees. This not only alters perceptions of the FET sector but may bring about a sense of professional isolation and embarrassment, where FET teachers are disconnected from the broader teaching community (Grummell and Murray, 2015). Illustrating this, participant 4 as previously shown has encountered career belittlement, while participant 10 observes a lack of understanding regarding the FET sector. Participant 22 deliberately chooses not to elaborate on their career when asked, participant 24 anticipates resentment, and participant 5 reveals that when explaining their occupation:

> Sometimes [I am] nearly embarrassed to say I work in Further Education.

While some individuals experience dissuasion, supports are also offered by peers in the FET sector and family and friends.

6.5.2. Supports

The support and opportunities offered by an individual's home and work environment are evident in this research, reflecting available literature (See Sections 3.10 & 5.6.1). Career change later in life, while potentially rewarding, can present a variety of challenges, particularly as novice SCTs are "learning the ropes" (Coppe, März, and Raemdonck, 2023, p.2). Supports are recognised as facilitating a smoother transition and positively influencing the continuing development of a professional identity (See Section 3.8 & 3.8.1) and may limit the impact and recurrences of IP (Luyckx, Goossens, and Soenens, 2006; O'Neill and McLoughlin, 2023). Mezirow's (1978b) theory notes the important part played by critical reflection in transformation. Critical reflection provides a space in which beliefs can be challenged, facilitating exploration of options and development of an action plan. Engaging in dialogue with others enhances this reflection, providing an opportunity to discuss reflections and options. These interactions have multiple benefits. Firstly, they allow an individual to gain new, broader perspectives by using the feedback from these discussions to refine their understanding and approach to career transition, and to develop a strategy for implementing change. In addition, these discussions assist in resolving any ongoing conflicts through openness and the willingness to consider well-informed views and conclusions of others (Christie *et al.,* 2015).

6.5.2.1. The Role Played by Formal Supports in Career Change

Within the literature, the importance of mentor/mentee relationships is recognised as a means of providing support and allowing SCTs to improve their abilities (Tigchelaar, Brouwerb, and Vermunt, 2010; Le Cornu, 2013; Van Lankveld *et al*., 2017; Agarwal, Brooks, and Greenberg, 2020). Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021) recognise instructional supervision as a means of both identifying concerns and offering support to SCTs particularly during the transitional period. Chambers (2002) acknowledges that the supports required by SCTs at the beginning of their teaching career are significantly different to those required by first-career teachers. She recognises the value of positive peer relationship but notes the importance of a reflective relationships between the newly qualified teacher and a mentor. Engaging in critical dialogue is an important element of transformative learning. Participating in such dialogues can help SCTs reconcile their previous experiences with their new role, fostering a robust professional identity that successfully integrates past and present perspectives (McCarthy and O'Brien, 2020).
The supports mentioned in this research appear to be more *ad hoc* in nature when compared to the formal supports referenced in the literature (See Section 3.10**)**. Le Cornu

(2013) emphasises the importance of a supportive school culture in developing confidence, resilience, and ultimately the development of professional identity (See Section 3.8). Sadly, novice SCTs in the focus group speak of an absence of support structures (See Section 6.5.2.2). Some novice SCTs, like participant A, previously worked in a supportive culture:

> I was very close to my team…we were kind of more like a family…

Participant B notes one struggle of being in a new career and environment:

> …nobody in your centre shows you …this is how we do it… [no one] tells me if I'm doing a good job, but like I could be doing a crap job, and I don't know.

When discussing supports participants refer to their positive experiences of informal, peer-to-peer support. Such support, however, is not guaranteed. When it is lacking novice teachers are left in a precarious position, feeling frustration and isolation as recognised by Bullough and Knowles (1990). Participant 21 describes an experience as a novice teacher where they encountered a situation that appears to lack professional respect:

> A college that I subbed in… they didn't appear very friendly… maybe they just recognise that you're just in for a couple of days… Even though the principal had said, I can teach whatever in the subject, when I was printing off …slides like 10 minutes before the lesson, another teacher came up and said I wasn't to teach that, she was gonna teach that the following week… And I said, well, that's not the way I teach. So, I just went and taught it anyway and she was not a happy camper…

Participant 26 addresses the issue of formal supports directly:

> It's a problem…I think in general, the support for teachers is, like teachers all seem to come last… I don't think there is support.

Within the precarity of the FET sector feelings of insecurity and a lack of status without the benefits of formal supports may result in novice SCTs experiencing increased feelings of marginalisation and irrelevance. Career change is difficult and facing such uncertainty without a formal support network may negatively affect their transition into teaching, resulting in a profound loss of confidence and disillusionment.

6.5.2.2. The Role Played by Informal Peer Supports in Career Change

As previously identified (See Sections 3.10 & 6.5.2), supportive relationships strengthen and assist in developing professional identity through inclusion. The disparity between the ideal and the reality of teaching can, according to Schwab (2002, p.165) result in novice SCTs experiencing a "tremendous culture shock". As noted by Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000), SCTs frequently leave a career in which they are expert and enter a world in which they are novices which may bring about a tension. There is on one side a loss of

control and on the other an unfair expectation that the skills of the novice SCT will directly translate into the teaching role. As an example, participant 21 worked in a business / HR role:

> I was a trainer in HR. You kind of do a bit of everything. I did a lot of training on computers and on general management development programs.

Despite their skill set there were elements of administration associated with teaching that they were never made aware of:

> I didn't even know about QQI. So I went through the whole year not knowing that I'd have to have all these folders and hard copies of every single assignment. So come May and people start talking about blue folders. I was in a major, major shock.

During such times, peer support and a supportive environment are incredibly important in building self-confidence and contributing to cohesiveness that assist in the process of career transition (Zimpfer and Carr, 1989; Coppe, März, and Raemdonck, 2023). Peer support fosters a sense of acceptance and belonging for novice SCTs, who may find themselves questioning their decision to change career and the legitimacy of their presence in the teaching profession. It allows more experienced SCTs to share their knowledge, offering a platform for individuals to learn behaviours, norms, and values in a process of "socialization" (Coppe, März, and Raemdonck, 2023, p. 2). This process provides validation in times of uncertainty and is crucial for identity formation as individuals often model themselves after peers they admire or relate to. Several respondents appreciate the value of peer supports during their career transition noting its role in easing integration into the teaching environment which may facilitate the process of professional identity (trans-)formation. Participant 15, for example says:

> I think it's very important to have good relationships with your peers in terms of learning from each other, moral support, and so on...it was a really supportive peer group.

Participants 21 echoes this:

> Teachers are just amazing, and they are so helpful and supportive.

Participant 6 speaks of the value of informal support networks especially for second-career teachers navigating their new roles:

> I call it the hidden supports. So just being able to sit down with somebody, have a coffee and say … 'I'm teaching this cohort of students. How would you approach it?'

While peer support plays an important role in facilitating career change, the influence of support from family and friends is also significant, providing a layer of encouragement.

6.5.2.3. Supports from Family and Friends in Career Transition

Sullivan and Al Ariss (2021) note that an individual's social network may positively assist in career change. Social influences on career choice refer to significant others promoting teaching as a career (Watt and Richardson, 2012). The impact of family, friends, and colleagues on career change are identified in all three phases of this research. In Sections 5.6.1 & 5.6.2, positive and negative influences of significant others in relation to initiating career change receive strongly negative responses. The survey results align with previous research (Drudy *et al.*, 2005; Heinz, 2013; Rosyid, 2016; Hennessy and Lynch, 2017), showing that the opinions of close associates have little impact on respondents' career choices. Participant C's partner is a teacher and understands the pressures of the career, and supports them:

> [They] understand it's a stressful day. So, if I need a bit of space, that's not a problem.

While significant others may not heavily influence career change decisions, their support appears vital for a successful transition. Participant 22 notes that while family may be supportive, they can also be apprehensive about career changes if their own job security is uncertain:

> Well, my husband he was supportive, but he was scared because we had 2 small kids, and he is self-employed.

Financial supports are frequently noted as allowing the transition to occur. Participant B recognises the supports offered by family members when they begin studying and in the early days of teaching:

> …I only have 8 paid hours a week and like it's very hard to pay a mortgage on that... I wouldn't be able to do it if I didn't have a partner who was working full time…That was the biggest thing like paying for college and losing your full wages because you need your time to do your placement.

To facilitate career change practical supports are also required, as Participant E illustrates:

> I never needed childcare. I worked evenings, nights, weekends, I was always able to bring the kids to school, to pick them up… I needed that support… to know family would be able to pick that up for me.

Participant 4 who left a well-paying job and has financial concerns due to a young family, acknowledges family support:

> I told my family initially …what I was planning on doing, and I was gonna give up my job and go back and do a 4-year degree with 2 young kids. They were all very supportive.

In comparison to the interviews, the focus group discussion highlights a greater need for financial support. This may be attributed to the fact focus group participants are novice SCTs, who are required to complete a Teaching Council approved initial teacher education for further education qualification to achieve full registration (Teaching Council, 2015a). In many cases this involves reducing working hours or leaving work completely, in addition to paying college fees, increasing the need for financial resources, as observed by Vogelsang, Shultz, and Olson (2018). Muthuswamy (2023) acknowledges the significance of financial supports in facilitating successful career transitions. In the interview process, it is primarily the more newly qualified teachers who mention their importance. More experienced teachers appear to have navigated career changes more freely, without the same financial burden.

Emotional support and professional encouragement are also identified, offering external validation of the decisions being made. Participant A recalls:

> My friends all said yeah, go for it, this is your thing… they were very, very supportive, and my husband same, very supportive.

Participant D endorses the supportive theme, and speaks of the pride felt by their family:

> I think most of what I've had from family and friends has been positive…I'm the first one to go to college in my family…they're all super proud of me, and my mother thinks I'm just like Super-woman.

Participant C amongst others mentions the financial supports offered by family:

> It's been really positive response from everyone…My other half is incredible…in terms of the fact that essentially becoming a lot more financially dependent on their income. It's kind of a relief to know that that support is there.

Some participants recall receiving a complex mixture of support and scepticism regarding their decision to change career, illustrating the diverse perspectives and values within their family. Participant 1 recounts:

> Some members of the family were very proud of me becoming the teacher, they thought it had a bit of status. Others were like what are you going into that for? Others were saying: 'The money's terrible you know'.

The decision to change career for some participants is recalled as being met with apparent apathy. Participant 19 recalls a lack of support or opposition to their decision:

> I don't remember anybody reacting...Nobody said it was good, bad, or indifferent… I'm not sure anybody really cared, which is interesting.

Employers also provide practical assistance, facilitating participants to change work arrangements to suit their requirements regarding classes and teaching placements. Two examples are Participant B who notes:

> I made an arrangement with my job that I would do my full-time hours over four days, so I wouldn't be down any wages, and then I could do college on the other day.

Participant C has a similar situation:

> I'm staying part time until I actually have a job somewhere else… currently I'm working like two shifts a week, just so that I still have some kind of an income while I'm doing this.

Supports play an important role in easing the challenges of career change. As individuals draw on these supports, they begin to navigate the process of professional identity (trans-)formation.

6.6. Professional Identity (trans-)formation

The transition into a teaching career involves professional identity (trans-)formation. This is the dynamic process through which individuals undergo a shift in their frame of reference and develop an understanding of themselves within the teaching profession (Vähäsantanen, 2015; Mezirow, 2000). The process of identity (trans-)formation may also involve both learning and unlearning, as prior career norms and practices may conflict with the demands of the FET sector. involves the integration of personal beliefs, values, and experiences from previous careers with their new professional roles and responsibilities. SCTs coming from fields with distinct professional cultures face both opportunities and challenges in career change. These opportunities can be transformative, offering both immediate and long-term benefits in terms of self-discovery and identity (trans-)formation. Career transition and the resultant self-reflection may lead the individual to a deeper understanding of their strengths and passions while providing a broader perspective on life and work, which enriches their worldview.

While significant personal and professional growth may occur, some SCTs may find adapting to a new profession and environment challenging, there also exists the opportunity for personal and professional growth (Terblanche, 2022). Previous roles may have required highly specialised skills and rigid ways of thinking. Such individuals may struggle to employ more flexible teaching strategies which may be necessary for the engaging diverse adult learners within the FET sector. Identity conflict and dissatisfaction may occur if there is a discrepancy between expectations set by a previous career and the realities of teaching.

Professional identity (trans-)formation is influenced by factors which include educational background, teaching experience, interactions with colleagues and students, and broader societal opinions about teaching (Day, 2012). Within the FET sector, these factors play a critical role in determining whether a previous professional identity acts as a barrier or enabler to professional identity (trans-)formation. Previous identities rooted in robust educational backgrounds may enable easier transitions, providing a strong foundation for teaching. Conversely those with less relevant educational experience may face barriers due to gaps in pedagogical and andragogical knowledge. Positive and supportive interactions within the teaching profession can facilitate professional identity (trans-)formation by offering support and mentorship (Sachs, 2001).

6.6.1. Identity Uncertainty

Carer change can be an unsettling and worrying process (See Sections 3.11 to 3.11.3). The subsequent identity (trans-)formation may also be uncomfortable particularly if it involves moving into an uncertain and unpredictable environment (Mezirow, 1978b). Leaving an environment where an individual felt belonging and held a strong professional identity may result in individuals feeling that they are in limbo. Consequently, they may engage in "uncertainty reduction" to increase predictability in their new environment (Bauer *et al*., 2007, p.708). For SCTs transitioning into a new profession and establishing a sense of belonging may be challenging. Belonging, which encompasses civic, social, emotional, and secure dimensions, is crucial for SCTs who may struggle with imposter syndrome when disconnected from these aspects (Dromgold-Sermen, 2022). Civic belonging involves integration into a new professional culture, closely linked to social belonging, which focuses on forming supportive professional relationships. Emotional belonging pertains to personal fulfilment, while secure belonging is closely linked to feeling secure and valued within the workplace. A lack of belonging can negatively impact SCTs' classroom effectiveness, confidence, job satisfaction and ultimately their professional identity (trans-)formation. Participant 13 refers to just such a sense of discomfort and uncertainty, involving a reluctance regarding their professional identity positioning, brought about by tensions between inclination and ability:

> [I am] a writer in exile at the moment… If I was really pushed to it, I think probably, yes, I am a writer. I think I'm instinctively a teacher.

Identity (trans-)formation is a dynamic and multifaceted process which may require negotiation between identities, where doubts about belonging and acceptance may arise,

potentially giving rise to imposter syndrome (See Sections 6.5.2.2 & 6.5.2.3). Connection with participant 4's legal career carried into their subconscious. They recall:

> Every now and again I would have this dream and I would be back in [name] and I would be working weekends, and in my dream, I would be saying to myself, 'I know I changed career. How am I back doing this?'

Feelings of fear and uncertainty in identity (trans-)formation can be introduced through frustrations caused by misunderstandings and lack of awareness of the FET sector (Mezirow, 1978b). Participant 10 notes that:

> …I say… I work in a college for further education. A lot of people say, what's that? Some people do not understand it.

Participant 25 doesn't refer to themself as a teacher, illustrating a distinction between their professional identity and subsequent inclusive approach to teaching, and traditionally held views. This distinction may provide greater professional satisfaction but may increase demands on their time and energy:

> I'm moreso a facilitator of learning as opposed to a teacher. I think a facilitator of learning is something that actually brings learners from where they're at to where they need to be, whereas I think sometimes a teacher actually just teaches for the test.

Identity uncertainty may result in individuals doubting their abilities and questioning their place in a new profession This sense of doubt may manifest as imposter syndrome.

6.6.2. Explicit Imposter Syndrome

Survey data shows that perceived teaching ability is a strong positive factor in career choice indicating that respondents feel confident in their skills and suitability for working in the teaching profession (See Section 5.6.4). Within the literature, while self-confidence born of subject expertise is recognised, it is also acknowledged that this confidence does not automatically transfer into teaching (See Section 3.11.3). Data gathered from the focus group and interviews in this research uncovers an absence of early career self-confidence, which has the potential to negatively affect resilience (Mezirow, 1978b; Le Cornu, 2013) and results in SCTs revealing that they found themselves almost 'playing teacher' and awaiting exposure as a fraud.

Participant 4 expresses concern regarding teaching competency and being able to connect with students, which are common aspects of imposter syndrome:

> I definitely had a concern as to whether I would be a good teacher or not...my biggest worry was, oh, God! If I go in will I be a good teacher, will I be able to connect with my students?

Participant 11 also questions their legitimacy as a teacher, and explains how initially they considered themselves as a charlatan:

> I felt like I'm an impostor, I said someone's gonna come into the staff room and tell me to leave. I was wondering should I be out there with the students? I felt like I was in the wrong place sometimes.

Imposter syndrome or imposter phenomenon is a psychological pattern where individuals doubt their accomplishments and fear being exposed as a fraud, despite evidence of their competence. Feeling like an imposter implies self-doubt (Doran, 2023) and for Stewart (2023) indicates a lack of belonging in the teaching community, which are pervasive amongst participants in this study and in research conducted by Hutchins and Rainbolt (2017). The subsequent need to prove their belonging and constantly seeking validation can intensify the pressures experienced by novice SCTs. IP may lead to a cycle of self-doubt, stress, and anxiety about not meeting expectations or being undeserving of success. This is characterised by phrases such as 'I'll never be good enough' or 'should I really be doing this?' and is explicitly and implicitly evident in the focus group and in many of the interviews (Shah, 2022). Participants A and C appear to be lacking confidence in their ability. They acknowledge that they believe they do not have the competence required to teach and both explicitly state that they believe they are imposters. Participant A is aware they suffer from:

> …a little bit of imposter syndrome… they're gonna realise I actually don't know what I'm talking about. I keep looking over like the notes … I have to keep telling myself that I'm just not in that comfortable place just yet.

While participant C recalls:

> …like definitely imposter syndrome is there….in the back of my head, I'm still very new…

While explicit imposter syndrome is characterised by overt feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, implicit imposter syndrome can be more subtle, manifesting in unconscious attitudes.

6.6.3. Implicit Imposter Syndrome

Feelings of being an imposter are more subtle manifesting through an inability to internalise success (Živković, 2020; Gisselbaek *et al.,* 2024). Participant 4 notes how nervous they felt moving into a new career, and because of their self-doubt they experienced physical symptoms, akin to panic, for quite a length of time:

> … And it took me ages to actually realise that it was my nerves. It was my anxiety about standing up in front of people…what if I misspell something…

> I don't think it lasted for the first day. I think it's like it actually stayed for probably about 2 years.

Frequently participants refer to the part serendipity has played in the career change process which is suggestive of attributing their gain to an unknown external factor, thereby undervaluing their achievement. As examples, when discussing their career change Participant 1 says:

> … I was very lucky to get into teaching. I was very lucky to get into [college name] … So, I was extremely lucky that a year after I started … I got an eligible part-time contract … So, I was extremely lucky to do all that.

In a similar manner participant 13 recalls:

> I was very lucky and fortunate…

and finally participant 17 believes that their career change:

> …was kind of miraculous in a way.

Hutchins and Rainbolt (2017) recognise that those experiencing IP frequently use luck as an explanation of success. Referring to the impact of luck on their career trajectory suggests that individuals believe they are not in control, ultimately diminishing their ability and skills, undermining their self-confidence, and stifling identity development. Participants in the interview process who refer to the part played by external forces downplay their expertise. Whitaker (1997) identifies the importance of individuals recognising their ability to influence how events unfold and how actions more than luck shape outcomes. Perhaps SCTs who attribute their success to luck have not considered that their skills and suitability for the role were the reasons they were invited to consider teaching. Developing professionally entails the formation of a professional identity which hinges on precise self-evaluation. Underestimation of ability and attributing success to external forces are more nuanced indicators of IP and resultant feelings of inferiority can affect the ability to accept a place in a new profession (Grenardo, 2022). Živković (2021) notes that SCTs may place higher demands on themselves resulting in difficulty meeting their own expectations.

6.7. Summary

The qualitative data enriches this research by providing rich and nuanced insights into the personal experiences of SCTs. By capturing the voices and stories of participants at different points on their career journey as SCTs, the focus groups and interviews allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations and difficulties faced. This adds depth and context to the findings of this research regarding the complexities of identity (trans-)formation and the motivations and challenges faced by SCTs in the City of Dublin

ETB. A mix of altruistic-intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence career choice, with many SCTs drawn to the FET sector for its impact on adult learners. The role of personal and professional networks in facilitating and supporting career change is recognised. While motivations like societal contribution are prevalent, factors such as job security and a better work/life balance also influence career choice. However, job security presents a paradox, with established teachers drawn in search of stability while causing uncertainty for novice teachers. Professional identity is shaped by past career experiences, education, and ongoing self-doubt, with imposter syndrome prevalent. Supports from family and friends are crucial, yet despite limited formal supports SCTs choose teaching for its meaningful impact, rather that as a true fallback career.

The decision to separate novice SCTs from more experienced SCTs was intended to explore potential differences in motivations and identity (trans-)formation at various stages of career development. Although clear distinctions between the two groups did not strongly emerge in the data, this approach allowed for a more focused analysis of early career experiences. The overlap in findings suggests that many challenges and motivations are shared across different experience levels, highlighting the universality of some aspects of the SCT experience.

Chapter seven which follows concludes this research by summarizing the thesis and its findings. It proposes practical strategies to assist SCTs in the FET sector. The chapter acknowledges identified limitations to this study, and offers recommendations, including suggestions for future research.

Chapter 7: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

7.1. Introduction

This final chapter begins with a review of the reasons for conducting this research. Following this, a summary of the thesis is provided, and the research questions are revisited to determine the extent to which the research has fulfilled its objectives.

This research emerges from a desire to understand the motivations for career change amongst second-career teachers working in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. As a second-career teacher working therein, I have a personal interest in the reasons why others have made this career change. From the research question, a subsequent question regarding the process of professional identity (trans-)formation emerges. As noted in Section 1.1, identity transformation implies a significant change while identity (trans-)formation captures the ongoing process of forming, developing, and integrating identity, blending change and continuity. The professional identity of SCTs is in a state of flux, being shaped by interactions, experiences, and supports within a new professional context (Stronach *et al.,* 2002). Within the literature career precarity which is frequently the result of job instability is recognised as potentially negatively impacting the identity (trans-)formation process by affecting social and professional identity (Llosa *et al.,* 2018; Albayrak-Aydemir and Gleibs, 2022). This is particularly problematic for SCTs where the process of identity (trans-)formation requires negotiation and integration of past and present professional roles, values, skills, and expectations, in addition to facing challenges from a new work environment and culture.

This research seeks to identify the motivations behind career change. Data from this research identifies the role both altruistic-intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play in motivating career change. These motivations are also recognised as impacting the process of professional identity (trans-)formation amongst SCTs. The role played by connections within the FET sector in facilitating career change is evident. Also strongly evident is the necessity for a strong support network both at a personal level and among peers.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978b) provides a framework for mapping how SCTs navigate career-change. As this research focuses on motivation for career change, there is a stronger focus on his concept of disorienting dilemmas than on the other stages, which while important, are considered as less relevant to this research. The process of career change involves engaging in critical reflection, reassessment of goals, reintegration into a new career, and ultimately professional identity (trans-)formation

(Gardner, 2014). This transformative process is not just changing job but involves a fundamental redefinition of self. For many SCTs in this research, a disorienting dilemma or crisis is the catalyst for career change. The economic environment and recession are mentioned on several occasions as playing a role in the decision. This raises the question of teaching being a fallback career, which has implications for commitment to teaching and professional identity (trans-)formation.

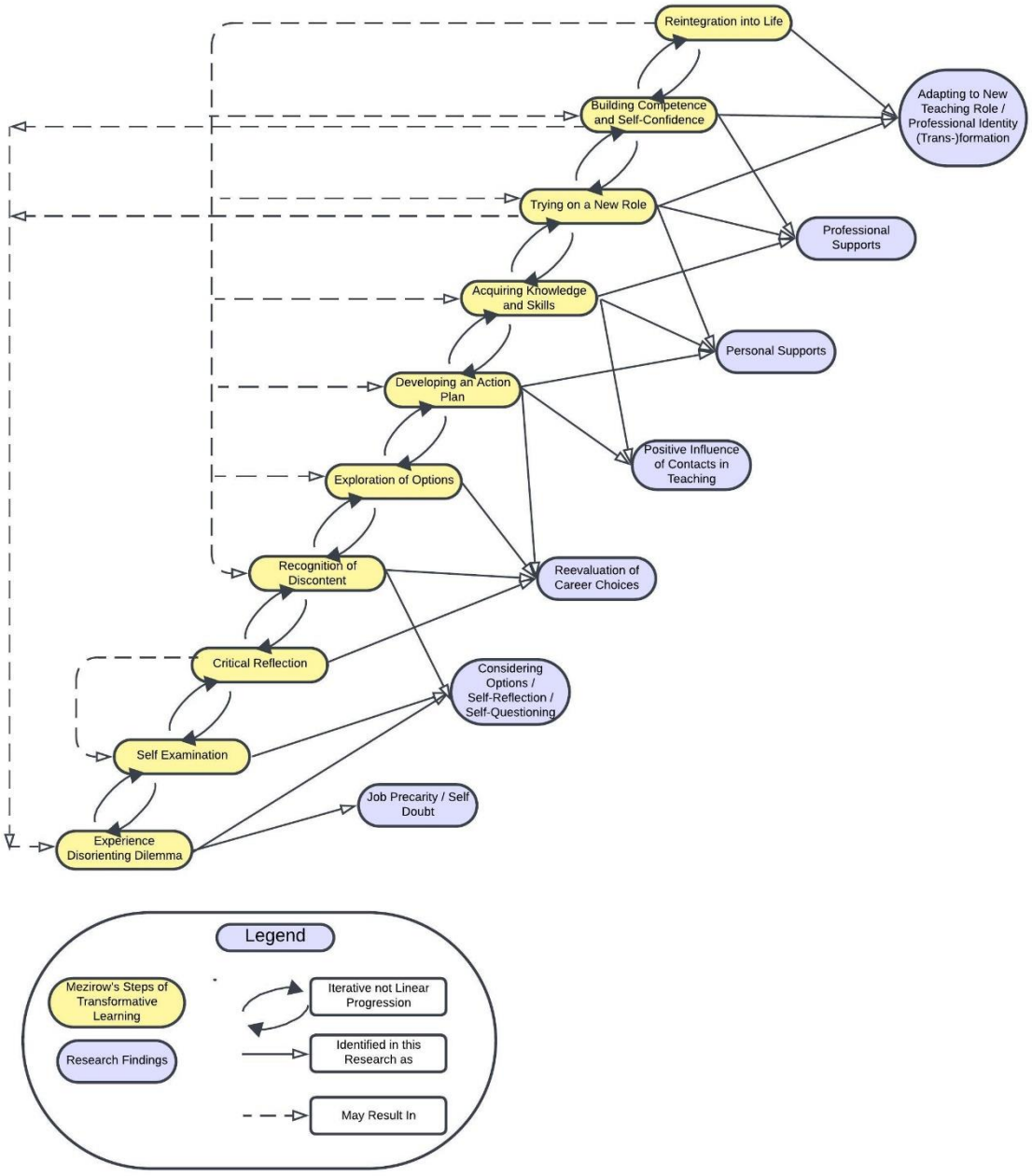
Often the decision to change career came about because of the need for secure employment and the financial security it brings (Jothi and Wesley, 2017). Interestingly, novice SCTs face an almost inverted situation. Many are leaving secure employment and are entering a profession that initially at least does not provide them with security. The prevalence of short-term contracts has caused many novice SCTs to reconsider their decision and to contemplate returning to their previous career. This contrasts with more experienced SCTs who may have already navigated this transition and achieved greater job stability. The difference in career stages highlights that novice SCTs are particularly vulnerable to the uncertainties of their new role.

Regardless of motivation, this uncertainty coupled with the uncertainty of career change and entering a new professional environment makes the process of identity (trans-)formation more problematic (Ibarra, 2023). Frequently explicit and implicit imposter syndrome is evident. In some cases, it is recognised and named by participants. For others it is clear when they speak about the uncertainty they feel. In several cases participants do not recognise that the skills they possess are reasons why they were given their position. Instead, they make frequent reference to the part luck and serendipity have played in their career path.

7.2. Teaching Motivations and Aspirations

This research revealed that despite separating novice and experienced SCTs, distinct differences between the groups did not strongly emerge. Instead the findings suggest that many challenges and motivations are shared across experience levels, indicating a commonality in the SCT experience. As suggested in Section 7.1, career change and subsequent professional identity (trans-)formation can be mapped using Mezirow's transformational learning theory (See Image 7.1).

Image 7.1. Mapping Research Findings onto Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory.



The transition into teaching involves an event or series of events which give rise to dissatisfaction within a previous career. The process then involves self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition of discontent, exploration of options, building competence in new skills, adopting a new framework which better aligns with their values and aspirations and reintegration. Gradually, parallel to these steps, professional identity (trans-)formation occurs. While the transformative process may be presented as a linear series of events, understanding it as such runs the risk of over-

simplifying a complex, dynamic process. The individual may not directly move through discrete phases from experience to (trans-)formation, instead they may experience it as an iterative, often fragmented process of reframing identity and career goals. This progression assumes a level of objectivity that may not be present and is potentially embedded in a mixture of socio-cultural and personal contexts and constraints. Individuals may instead become caught up in their circumstances, which influence the reflective, rational capacity of the individual, causing them to react in an immediate, emotional manner (Brown, 2015; Burkitt, 2018). This research indicates that many SCTs when re-examining career options are motivated by a profound passion for teaching, which often stems from their previous positive educational experiences. These experiences make a teaching career appear as a viable alternative, enabling individuals to develop and follow a suitable plan to achieve their aspiration. This research indicates that many novice SCTs, who are effectively trying their role and attempting to make sense of their experiences, encounter uncertainty while adapting to their new position. This uncertainty may lead to re-evaluation of their career choices, potentially disrupting their identity (trans-)formation (See Section 6.6.1 to 6.6.3). Transformational learning, though often depicted as a linear progression, is recursive, with individuals revisiting or paralleling various steps. For example, critical reflection or uncertainty from a disorienting dilemma can occur alongside exploration of options or planning a course of action. Ongoing critical reflection fosters a broader worldview, aids in navigating challenges, and promotes deeper self-awareness which nourishes transformative learning (Jaakkola *et al*., 2022).

However, while an initial passion for education may underpin career change decisions, uncertainties in a new career, such as job precarity or self-doubt, may lead to a new or prolonged disorienting dilemma. This can cause further emotional turbulence and unease, negatively affecting identity (trans-)formation by stifling reintegration and limiting the individual's ability to adopt new perspectives. This uncertainty may cause individual to re-evaluate previously held assumptions and beliefs to reconcile their previous understanding with their new professional reality.

During times of change or uncertainty personal and professional supports are crucial, helping novice SCTs maintain their commitment and to successfully (trans-)form their profession identities (See Section 6.5.2). Emotional, cognitive, and practical supports from family, friends, colleagues, and mentors, assist in ongoing critical reflection and create a nurturing environment that enhances self-understanding and facilitates transformative learning (Tigchelaar, Brouwerb, and Vermunt, 2010; Tan and Kramer, 2012). As SCTs (trans-)form their new professional identities, they engage with Mezirow's final stages,

building competence and confidence in their teaching role and reintegrating into their lives based upon their transformed perspective. However, this later stage of career change and identity (trans-)formation is evolutionary, involving the integration of past professional experiences with new educational roles (Sachs, 2001). This synthesis of old and new skills, knowledge, and perspectives may be both enriching and challenging. It enriches the teaching practice of SCTs and supports a stronger professional identity (trans-)formation. SCTs as previously noted bring a wealth of experience from their previous professions, however integrating these with the demands of a new profession can be a difficult process, forcing a shift from expert in their field to student and then novice teacher may cause frustration and feelings of being undervalued. While SCTs may possess resilience, their transition requires support to facilitate a smoother integration (See Sections 6.5.2 to 6.5.3.2).

Within this research the appeal of teaching adult learners is evident (See Section 6.3.1). Adult students returning to education are potentially experiencing a significant turning point and transition in their lives. SCTs have first-hand experience of navigating life-changing events, which gives them a unique perspective and level of understanding of what adult learners may be experiencing, potentially making SCTs more empathetic. SCTs and adult learners both bring life experience into a classroom, making the teaching and learning process more engaging, relevant, and impactful.

The process of career change involves a profound shift in how an individual perceives themselves and the world. Individuals must reconstruct their beliefs, integrating a new understanding into their lives (Williams, 2013). SCTs within this research note that they view teaching as a means of bringing about broad social change, educating students to impact their lives and the lives of those around them (See Sections 5.4.3, 5.5.4 and 6.3.2). This positively affects and reinforces the process of professional identity (trans-)formation.

7.2.1. Career Choice Influences

This research shows that many SCTs have prior exposure to teaching within their previous career, or to studying in the FET sector, both of which play important roles in their choice of career and their transition into the profession. Positive experiences of teaching within a non-teaching career may give rise to an unplanned reconsideration of career, whereby individuals begin to reflect upon, and re-evaluate their current career, comparing it to a teaching career (Murtagh, Lopes, and Lyons, 2011). This reflection may be unsettling, leading to reinterpretation of their previous career and contributing to a positive reorientation towards a new career where greater satisfaction is anticipated.

Reinterpretation involves recognising and repurposing existing skills and experiences into a new career supported by targeted interventions. By reinterpreting their previous career, SCTs can identify, appreciate, and apply the knowledge and skills they are bringing to their new role, building competence and confidence. Critical reflection further allows an individual to recognise their resilience and draw insights which may be applied to their new career, fostering smoother transition and stronger identity (trans-)formation by providing a foundation built upon relevant past experiences (Johnson and Down, 2013). Previous experience of teaching or studying within an FET setting may positively position a career in teaching as an option for a new career. This first-hand experience serves to provide a foundational understanding of the learning environment which may facilitate adaption to their new role. In addition, this previous exposure potentially provides valuable context through familiarity with the sector, the curriculum, andragogical approaches, and in some cases instructional competencies. These, in conjunction with their ability to draw on their past professional experiences may inform their teaching practice and have the potential to make the experience of career transition and identity (trans-)formation easier. Personal networks are shown in this research to play a significant role in the process of career change, with half of interviewees referring to the influence of a contact already teaching in the FET sector (See Section 6.4.5). Friends or acquaintances who are already in the teaching profession not only offer opportunities but also insights into the reality of teaching. The social component of having friends working in the sector, in addition to supports offered by other teachers, can significantly validate and support the processes of career transition and identity (trans-)formation.

The proactive choice of teaching, evident in this research, often stems for a desire for greater job security and to a lesser extent a desire for a better work-life balance. Brewer (2020) suggests that such a decision may be the result of critical self-reflective practice. While the choice of teaching is a deliberate step, support or dissuasion regarding career choice is not an important factor in the career change process. Support is however a fundamental element in the processes of transitioning into teaching and professional identity (trans-)formation (Le Cornu, 2013; Sullivan and Al Ariss, 2021). The precarity of being a novice SCT coupled with a lack of support have the potential to cause the individual to question their decisions regarding career change, resulting in the re-examining of options and the emergence of a new disorienting dilemma.

Despite negative perception of the social status of teachers evident within this research (See Sections 5.5.5 and 6.5.1), many individuals still choose a career in teaching. Potentially SCTs balance external sectoral negative perceptions with their altruistic-

intrinsic motivations or their personal experiences of teaching and their aspirations, which are important elements in transformative learning and identity (trans-)formation (McKevitt, Carbery and Lyons, 2017).

7.2.2. Career Stability and Development

For SCTs within this research employment precarity is a significant influence on career change. The uncertainty and instability experienced by many participants in their previous employment, frequently associated with economic downturn and industry decline, led to reassessment of their career path.

Novice SCTs entering the teaching profession may expect stability but instead they find themselves facing instability and uncertainty. By choosing teaching as an alternative career many have moved from secure positions into a profession characterised by initial precarity and uncertainty. Career change, the precarity characterised by instability, uncertainty in employment, and the resultant emotional and social strain, may act as a catalyst for reassessment of professional goals and values. The resultant emotional and social strain may lead to further disorientation and confusion. These elements may significantly influence an individual's capacity to engage in critical reflection and discourse, which are necessary for transformational learning, and the process of professional identity (trans-)formation to occur.

For a small number of participants, teaching may be considered as a fallback career, wherein a career is considered as being safe when other career paths are no longer viable. Within this research, participants do speak of seeking security, however there is no evidence that other careers were considered prior to deciding to transition into teaching. Teaching therefore may be viewed as a preferred alternative career, and not a last resort, particularly given the overall satisfaction with career choice and positivity regarding perceived teaching abilities (See Sections 5.3, 5.6.4, and 6.3). Teaching, if chosen as a fall-back career may be said to lack altruistic-intrinsic motivation, complicating the process of identity (trans-)formation.

7.2.3. Work/Life Balance:

For a small number of participants in this research, primarily novice SCTs, dissatisfaction with work/life balance in their previous career serves as the basis for a disorienting dilemma. The reflective process prompted them to look to teaching as a career which aligns more closely with their personal values, offering more time to spend with family and personal well-being. It may be argued that for many SCTs teaching goes beyond being a job and is part of a desire for a more balanced lifestyle. This impacts their professional and

personal lives by reducing stress and enriches their professional identities. This study's findings align with prior research indicating that personal utility values, such as balancing work/life commitments are considered the least important elements when considering teaching as a career.

7.3. Relevance of this Research

This research makes a significant contribution by highlighting a previously overlooked group within the FET sector, providing new insights into their experiences and motivations as SCTs. Crucially, this study provides SCTs an opportunity to share their motivations, experiences, and the challenges they encountered during their transition into teaching. By capturing the unique perspectives of this demographic, this study challenges existing assumptions and expands the understanding of identity (trans-)formation, a novel concept that encompasses simultaneous formation and transformation within this cohort. The robust methodology used, and diverse data collection methods ensure that these findings offer a meaningful contribution to the field, addressing a critical gap in the current literature. This research elevates the understanding of the FET sector and the teaching staff working therein. It also has the potential to inform strategies for improving the experiences of novice SCTs, teacher retention and overall sectoral recognition as a vital element in Ireland's educational system.

This research not only contributes to the limited body of knowledge but identifies areas for further investigation. It provides an overview of the motivations for career change among SCTs in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB, a perspective not previously documented. By highlighting the experiences of Irish SCTs' this research has the potential to influence policy changes, advocating for improved support for novice teachers. Such changes could enhance professional development and contribute to the enrichment of the Irish FET sector.

7.4. Limitations of this Research

Recognising and addressing potential limitations in research, as well as being aware that some limitations may not be immediately apparent enhances the validity and relevance of research findings (Ott, 2024). While the data collected in this research are robust, several limitations are acknowledged:

i. Despite the low response rate of approximately 10% to the survey, it is possible that the responses may still reflect trends among SCTs working in the FET sector of the Dity of Dublin ETB. While the findings may not be fully generalisable to the

entire population, they may nonetheless provide valuable insights and be indicative of broader patterns within this group.

ii. Another limitation arises from the survey instrument used. To adhere closely to the original survey, no information regarding years teaching or previous career are gathered. Including these details may have provided a richer data set. Furthermore, although minor modifications were made to the survey's wording, substituting 'young people' for 'children', the term 'family' was used without adjustment to include those who may not have a traditional family structure, potentially affecting the relevance of the statements for all respondents.

iii. The use of volunteer sampling also brings potential biases into question. Critics may argue that the sample is not truly representative of the wider population, which could skew the results. This sampling method was chosen as it was deemed to be ethical and appropriate in this context. It respects participant autonomy by allowing individuals to choose to participate, reducing concerns over coerced participation.

iv. There is also the possibility that individuals participated to express personal grievances, or to promote specific agendas, rather than share their genuine experiences. The use of multiple data sources and methods via data crystallisation (See Section 4.9.1) assists in validating findings and reduces the impact of individual biases.

v. Lastly, this research is conducted by an 'insider researcher', which, while providing valuable sectoral insights, may also lead to criticisms that the study could push an internal agenda or fail to fully consider alternative viewpoints.

While these limitations are recognised, this research is still held to offer valuable insights which may influence both policy and practice concerning SCTs entering the Irish FET sector.

7.5. Implications

The findings of this research hold significant implications for the FET sector, extending beyond practical recommendations to address broader issues affecting SCTs. By exploring the motivations, experiences and professional identity (trans-)formation of this cohort, this study offers valuable insights into their unique contributions to the FET sector and the challenges they face. It deepens our understanding of SCTs as a distinctive group within the FET sector. It highlights the diverse skills, expertise, and perspectives they bring from their prior career, which enrich the learning environment. This is achieved through their ability to blend their prior career into their teaching and to utilise real-world perspectives to

improve learner engagement. In addition, it sheds light on the barriers they face, including adapting to new professional identities and navigating entry into a new landscape of practice. The findings from this research can offer actionable insights and inform policy development, particularly in relation to policies aimed at recruiting and supporting SCTs. The findings emphasise the need for targeted strategies and tailored induction programmes to assist SCTs address SCT-specific challenges, including the transition into teaching and balancing work-life commitments.

This research highlights the critical need for both formal and informal support systems for SCTs entering the Irish FET sector. These supports are essential in helping SCTs navigate uncertainties, build confidence, and enhance their competence. While the primary focus during the transitionary phase may be the acquisition of pedagogical skills, facilitating the unlearning of incompatible professional assumptions and behaviours may assist in a more successful integration into teaching. The findings also suggest the need for practical assistance with assessment and administrative tasks. A deeper understanding of the identity (trans-)formation process and the confidence-related challenges SCTs face highlights the importance of developing targeted support structures to meet their specific needs.

This research has shown the novice SCTs are facing uncertainty regarding employment security as they transition into the teaching profession. This uncertainty has the potential to negatively impact teacher retention. Understanding the motivations for entering the teaching profession and addressing the challenges faced, support mechanisms can be developed to offer assistance.

Understanding the motivations for career change into teaching within the FET sector and the struggles they may face can inform policy decisions regarding attraction and retention of SCTs.

This research provides a clearer understanding of the motivations driving SCTs to transition into teaching within the FET sector, enabling the development of targeted recruitment strategies to attract candidates whose skills, experiences, and values align with the demands and goals of the teaching profession. The findings of this research offer a critical lens through which to view the evolving role of SCTs, in meeting the needs of the FET sector. By aligning with the strategic priorities outlined in ‘Future FET: Transforming Learning Strategy-Building Skills, Fostering Inclusion, and Creating Pathways’ (SOLAS, 2020), this research shows how SCTs contribute uniquely to these goals. SCTs have a capacity to promote inclusivity, particularly in supporting marginalised learners, and to root FET in the community. Their diverse professional experiences and backgrounds directly support teacher development by bringing industry-specific expertise into the

sector, which supports the strategy's emphasis on meeting critical skills needs. Professionally, this research has informed my approach to mentoring and supporting new teachers, emphasising the importance of recognising and using prior career experiences to enrich teaching practice. On a personal note, this research journey has profoundly influenced both my personal and professional growth. Exploring the experiences of other SCTs has deepened my understanding of the complexities of SCT motivations and provided me a space to reflect upon my own journey into teaching in FET. Listening to stories of adaption and determination has been truly inspiring. In addition, it has deepened my appreciation for the complexities, challenges, and opportunities of teaching as a profession and the unique contributions SCTs bring into the learning environment.

7.6. Recommendations

This research has provided an insight into teachers who bring unique industry specific talents, experience, and skill into the FET classroom. Several recommendations emerge from this research and are presented below.

7.6.1. Recommendations for Policy Makers

The challenges faced by novice SCTs regarding engaging in teacher training programmes acceptable to the Teaching Council, as discussed in the focus group (See section 6.4.1), must be addressed as a matter of urgency. These challenges relate to financial difficulties associated with leaving jobs to study or to engage in teaching placements, coupled with the absence of initial job security. Addressing these would help make the transition into teaching more attractive and viable for prospective SCTs.

The process of attaining a Contract of Indefinite Duration should be expedited, which would provide greater job-security and stability. This would enhance their ability to fully integrate into the FET sector. Streamlining this process would also help retain skilled teachers by reducing uncertainty and fostering long-term commitment to the sector.

7.6.2. Recommendations for City of Dublin ETB

SCTs present a unique blend of extensive expertise and inexperience. They contribute valuable skills from their previous careers, while entering a career that is unfamiliar and challenging. Potentially this can give rise to feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and disorientation. Supports from peers are recognised as positive factors in assisting in the process of career transition and identity (trans-)formation. While formal supports, particularly at times of induction may be available, they are not mentioned by participants.

The supports spoken about in this research are largely informal in nature. Consideration should be given to implementing, and promoting the presence of, a programme of formal supports. Career change into teaching is recognised as a significant "culture shock," (Schwab, 2002, p.165). This programme should address practical challenges, such as administration and classroom management. In addition, it should assist SCTs to manage their expectations when facing frustrations and provide opportunities for personal development.

It is also recommended that the City of Dublin ETB establish structured Communities of Practice (CoP) to enhance professional learning and development among teachers. CoPs are an environment where novice and experienced teachers come together, fostering a collaborative environment where learning occurs through observation, inquiry, and active participation in shared practices (Levine and Marcus, 2010). These CoPs would provide an opportunity for mutual engagement, discussion, and reflection, promoting continuous professional growth, supporting the professional identity (trans-)formation process among novice teachers but also allowing more experienced teachers to contribute to, and benefit from, the collective knowledge.

7.6.3. Recommendations for Those Considering a Move into Teaching

The Irish FET sector provides a unique educational environment that is greatly enhanced by the subject-specific expertise of its teachers. However, expectations regarding working in the FET sector may not match up to reality. For anyone considering a career in teaching, it is wise to thoroughly research all available options prior to enrolling in any initial teacher training programme. Many interview participants recommend reaching out to FET colleges, speaking directly with teachers and observing the educational environment firsthand to understand more clearly the reality of the profession.

7.6.4. Recommendations for Providers of Initial Teacher Education Programmes

Novice SCTs in this research speak of the financial strain and time commitment involved in starting a teaching career and undertaking an initial teacher education course. Measures to provide support relating to the life and financial commitments of those enrolling on programmes should be considered. Offering flexibility in course delivery by providing a hybrid format, combining in-person and online sessions could be beneficial.

Initial teacher training courses should also incorporate specific support mechanisms for SCTs, to facilitate the integration of previous professional skills and identities into their new teaching roles. This should incorporate modules or workshops that recognise and

build upon the diverse expertise which SCTs possess. Providing mentorship, encouraging peer collaboration, and promoting reflective practices may help in the transition into teaching. This may enhance the effectiveness and confidence of SCTs, and ultimately enriching the learning environment for FET students.

7.6.5. Recommendations for Further Research

This research has provided the first step in exploring and understanding the motivations and challenges experienced by SCTs. The rich data from this study emphasises the need for further research. Given the findings and the scarcity of data concerning the Irish FET sector and SCTs within it, further research is considered essential. Based upon this study possible areas for further research include:

1. Conduct a comparative research project across different regions. Comparing the motivations and professional identity (trans-)formation of SCTs across various ETBs would provide a wider sample, enhancing the generalisability of the findings. A wider sample would also allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences and challenges faced by SCTs in different geographical contexts. This may help determine if policy, social, or cultural variations influence motivations and the identity (trans-)formational process.
2. Research into career satisfaction and retention rates among SCTs is required. This could involve a longitudinal study to track SCTs over time to understand how their previous professional identities and experiences influenced their sustained engagement in the teaching profession.
3. Future research should undertake a comprehensive examination of the formal support structures implemented across various ETBs, assessing their impact on the transition into teaching and professional identity (trans-)formation processes of both SCTs and non-SCTs. This research should include an analysis of different support models, exploring how these structures influence the integration of prior professional identities and skills into a new career in teaching.
4. The overlap in findings between novice and experienced SCTs suggests that many motivations and challenges are shared across experience levels. Future research could further investigate these nuances, potentially with a larger sample or more targeted questions to uncover subtle differences.
5. Some participants in this research have spent a short period of time in their first career. Future research investigating whether individuals who have spent a short time in their first career experience an easier transition and identity (trans-

)formation process when moving into teaching when compared to those with longer times in first careers. Examining this aspect could provide valuable insights into how the duration of previous career experience influences the ease and success of career transitions and professional identity (trans-)formation.

7.7. Closing Remarks

The FET sector in Ireland is valuable yet remains poorly understood and insufficiently researched. It continues to grapple with the challenge of meeting the needs of learners and staff in an ever-changing environment. This research has shed light on the motivations and identity (trans-)formation processes of SCTs within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB, yielding surprising and challenging results. Undertaking this research has provided the opportunity to share in the life stories and experiences of so many SCTs. Participants have shared intimate details about their personal and professional lives. My hope is that this research has adequately represented the valuable insights they provided.
As an SCT myself, undertaking this research has been a profoundly enriching experience. It has allowed me to connect with many highly skilled and intriguing individuals. This project has also provided me a reflective space to consider my own professional journey and identity (trans-)formation, contributing significantly to my personal growth. The journey of SCTs, much like this research, is not undertaken in isolation. It involves numerous forms of support and contributions which coalesce to provide the necessary framework for success.

As this thesis draws to a close, it is important to recognise the profound impact that teaching has on both students and teachers, especially within the context of SCTs. The journey of transitioning into teaching is marked by challenges, hard work, and moments of frustration. Yet, the rewards far outweigh the difficulties, as illustrated by Participant 4:

> It is hard work, it is challenging, …it can be frustrating. But it is so much fun. You know the relationships you develop with your students are great. I have to say, I absolutely adore them. They all bring something unique into the classroom, and when you can tap into that. The learning environment is just phenomenal, for me included.

This reflection encapsulates the essence of what it means to be a teacher: an ongoing exchange of knowledge, a mutual learning experience, and a deep connection with students that makes the journey not only worthwhile but deeply fulfilling.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Circular 32 of 1992 (CL32/92) Qualification Requirements for Permanent Appointments.

CL 32/92

22 December, 1992.

To: The Chief Executive Officer
of each Vocational Education Committee

With reference to CLI7/92 issued on 28th April, 1992, the Minister for Education wishes to inform Committees that, following consultation with interested parties, he has decided that the following qualifications will be accepted for the purposes of permanent appointments under Vocational Education Committees in respect of Vocational Preparation and Training Programme courses:

1. Degree or equivalent in subjects relevant to the course.

OR

2. Degree and either

(a) an appropriate qualification in an area relevant to the course.

or

(b) three years approved experience (including industrial and teaching experience) in the appropriate area.

OR

3. Qualifications other than those at 1 or 2 above which would be acceptable for posts in the Colleges sector.

All appointments are subject to the approval of the Department.

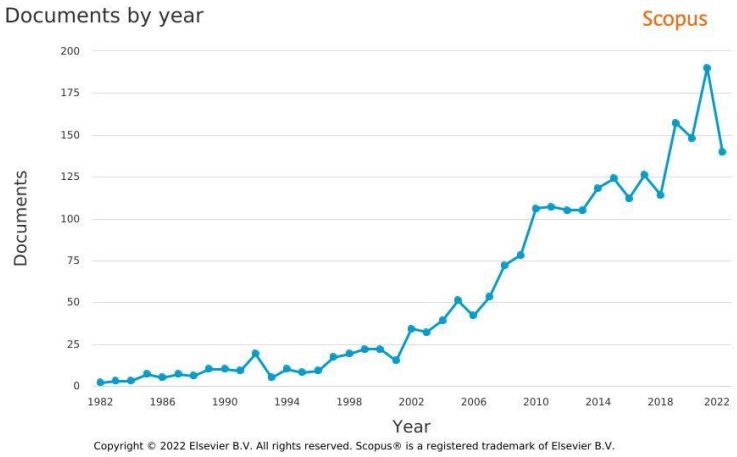
Persons appointed under the terms of this Circular will be appointed to the particular Vocational Education Committee scheme and not to specific courses.

The Department is reviewing the qualifications in Irish required for permanent appointments. Pending a decision on this matter, the existing requirements for permanent appointment will continue to apply.

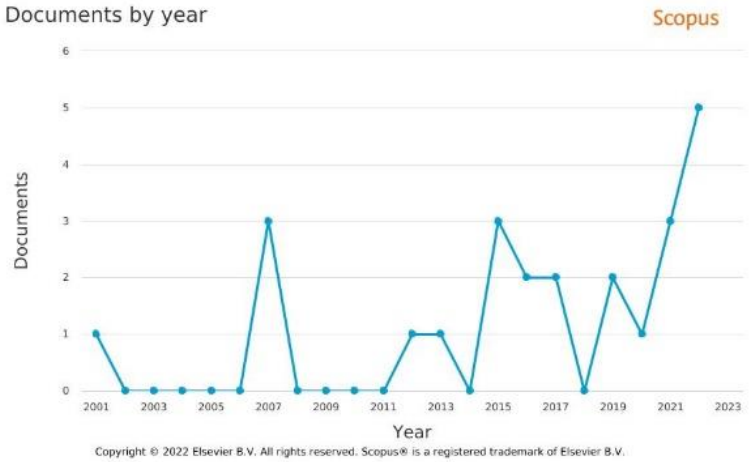
C. N. Lindsay,
Secretary.

Appendix B. Analysis of Search Results on Scopus for Search Strings by Year

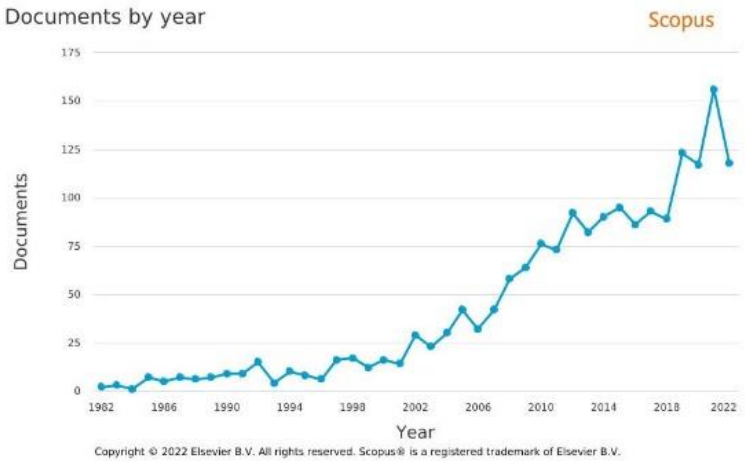
Search String: 'Career Chang* Teacher'



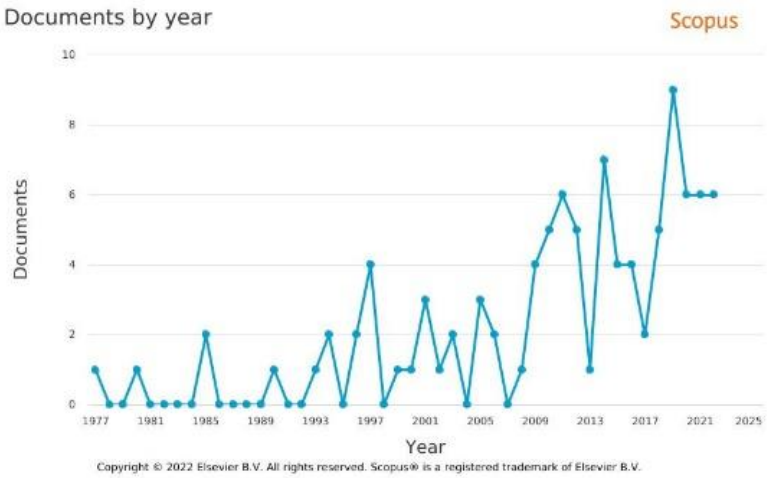
Search String: 'Career Switch Teacher'



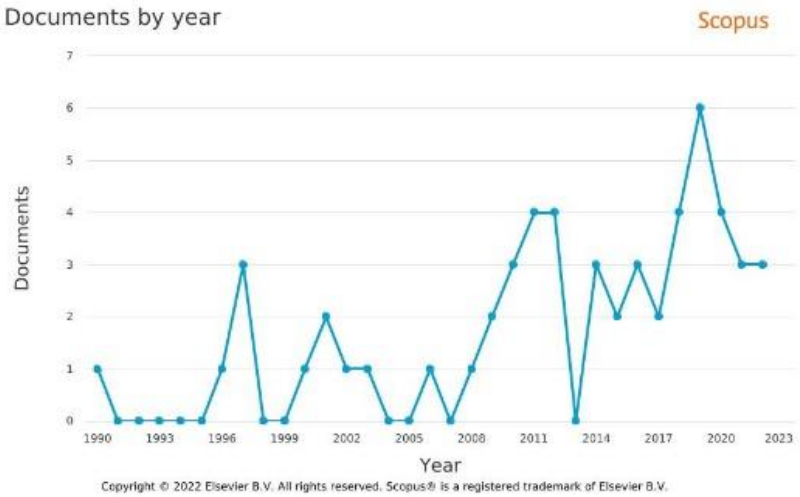
Search String: 'Change of Career Teacher'



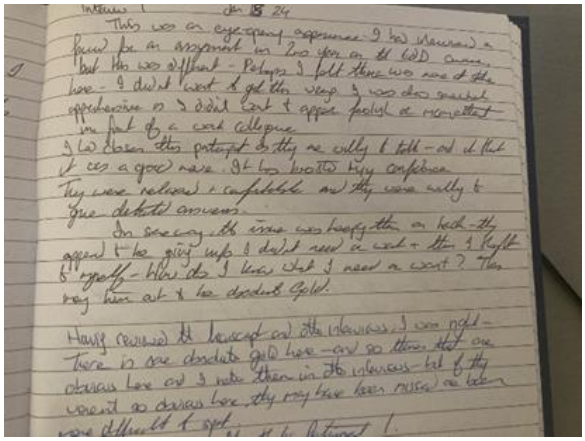
Search String: ‘Second Career’



Search String: ‘Second Career Teacher’



Appendix C. Excerpts from Research Reflective Diary



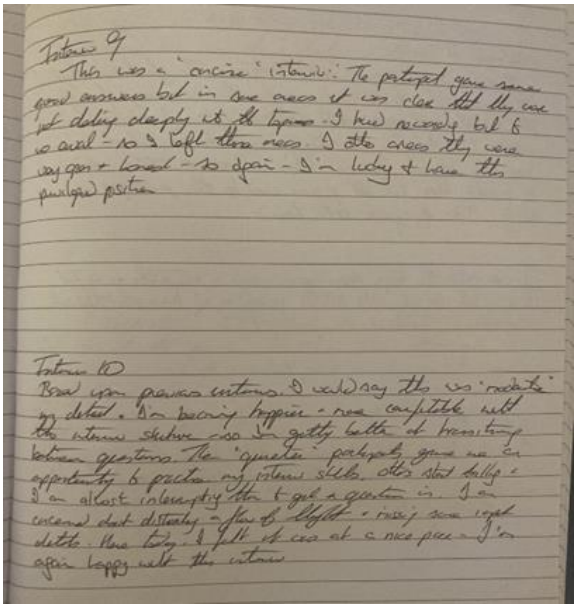
Interview 1 Jan 24

This was an eye-opening experience. I had reviewed a paper for an assignment on Zoo-ing on the COD course, but this was different - Perhaps I felt there was more at the line - I didn't want to get this wrong. I was also worried about appearing as I didn't want to appear foolish in front of a work colleague.

I was drawn this participant as they are willing & told - and it felt it was a good move. It has started my confidence. They were relaxed & comfortable and they were willing to give detailed answers.

On reviewing, the time was happy that we had the agreed to be going up & didn't need a rest - then I left & myself - How do I know that I need a rest? Then may have at & be shocked. Gold!

Hardly reviewed the transcript and the interviews. I was right - There is one absolute gold here - and so there that one obvious here on I note them in the interview - but if they weren't so obvious here they may have been missed or been more difficult to spot as the first interview.

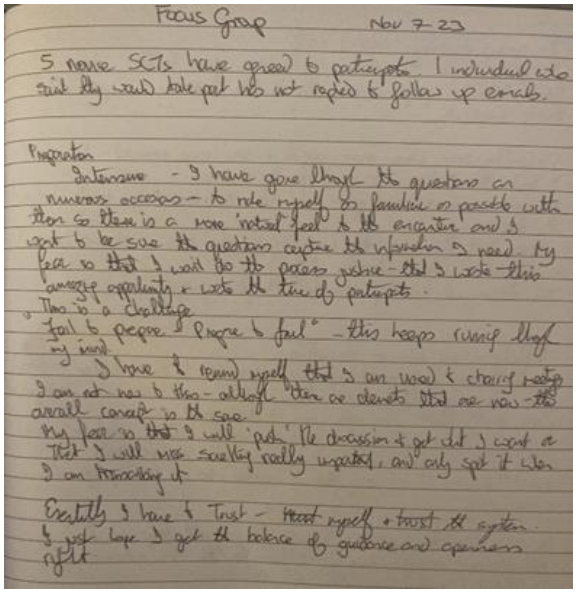


Interview 9

This was a 'concise' interview. The participant gave some good answers but in some areas it was clear that they were not delving deeply into the topics. I had recently had 6 weeks off - so I felt there were the areas they were very open & honest - so open - I'm lucky to have this privilege position.

Interview 10

Best interview process. I would say this was 'robust' in detail. I'm becoming happier - more confident with the interview structure - so getting better at transitioning between questions. The 'quieter' participants gave me an opportunity to practice my interview skills. Others started talking & I am almost interrupting them to get a question in. I am concerned about distracting - flow of rhythm - may come right eventually - I felt it was at a nice pace - I'm again happy with the interview.



Focus Group Nov 7 23

5 nurse SCTs have agreed to participate 1 individual who said they would take part has not replied to follow up emails.

Preparation

Interviews - I have gone through the questions on numerous occasions - to make myself so familiar with them so there is a more natural feel to the encounter and I want to be sure the questions capture the information I need. My fear is that I will do the process justice - that I make this amazing opportunity & waste the time of participants.

This is a challenge

'fail to prepare & prepare to fail' - this keeps running through my mind

I have & remind myself that I am used & change makes I am not new to this - although there are elements that are new - the overall concept is the same.

My fear is that I will 'pick' the discussion & get out I want & that I will miss something really important, and only get it when I am transcribing it.

Excitedly I have & Trust - Trust myself & trust the system. I just hope I get the balance of guidance and openness right.

Appendix D. Approval from City of Dublin ETB

26th June 2023

Good evening Mr. Hodkinson,

My name is Brendan Kavanagh, a teacher in Inchicore College of Further Education. I am currently studying on the Doctorate in Education programme in Dublin City University, and I am looking for permission to carry out my research project in the City of Dublin ETB.

The working title is: "Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Profession Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB."

My research intends to explore the motivations of teachers within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB. Specifically, I wish to look at second-career teachers, those who worked in an area other that teaching, prior to making the career change into teaching in the FET sector. I hope to look at the motivating factors which lead to this career change and their decision to teaching in the FET sector. In addition, I hope to look at the development of the professional teacher identity of those in the first year of teaching.

To complete this, Mr. Donnchadh Clancy, principal of Inchicore College has agreed to send the emails to all FET teaching staff working in the City of Dublin ETB. The first email will be an explanation of the project. The second which will be sent shortly after will have a link for an online survey in addition to the Plain Language Statement and the consent form.

Following this I will be seeking volunteers to be interviewed about their career journey into teaching. I also hope to have a focus group discussion with first year teachers. Participation in all three elements will be voluntary and anonymous, with all data being securely stored and treated as confidential.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this email, and if you require any further detail please contact me by email or phone 08X XXXXXXX.

Yours Sincerely,

Brendan

28th June 2023

Blake Hodkinson

Brendan Kavanagh

Hello Brendan,

Thank you for your email, once the research is agreed with Donnchadh I am happy for it to proceed. I would be interested to know what type of findings or recommendations do you think you might generate? But then it is too easy to try and predict research which can ruin the whole process! Best of luck in your studies.

Kind regards,

Blake

Appendix E. Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

Introduction to the Research Study

The research working title is

> *An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Professional Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB*.

The research is being conducted by Brendan Kavanagh, a teacher in Inchicore College of Further Education, who is studying for a Professional Doctorate in Education at the School of Education Studies, Dublin City University (DCU), and I would be grateful if you would agree to participate. I can be contacted at brendan.kavanagh28@dcu.ie.

Participation is completely voluntary and participation or non-participation will have no bearing on any relationships with City of Dublin ETB or DCU.

What is this research about?

This research is to examine what motivated teachers to move from their previous career and into teaching at Further Education and Training (FET) level, as a second career. It will also explore the process of professional identity formation amongst second-career teachers.

What will you be expected to do if you decide to participate in the research study?

1. Complete an anonymous online survey - which takes approximately 15 minutes.
2. If you are a second-career FET teacher, you are asked to volunteer to be interviewed. These interviews should last no more than 60 minutes and will take place on the DCU licenced version of Zoom.
3. Second-career teachers in their first year of working in the FET sector will be invited to volunteer to take part in 2 focus groups, one in September 2023 and another in May 2024. These should take no more than 1 hour and will take place on the DCU licenced version of Zoom.

Interviews and focus groups will be conducted by the principal researcher via Zoom meeting room. The researcher will use his own DCU licenced version of Zoom and ensure all the appropriate security and privacy settings are activated. For safety and security, only those taking part in the interview or focus group will be permitted to enter the meeting. Participants will be required to register in advance of the interview or focus group as appropriate, and the link for the meeting will be shared with you be email the day before the meeting. The Zoom meeting link will not be shared publicly.

Zoom is being used to save time and the inconvenience of having to travel to participate, particularly after a busy working day. It is hoped that it will make the process more inclusive, allowing those who may not otherwise be able to participate, to take part. Zoom will allow participants to see and converse with each other 'virtually'.

Audio recordings of the interviews and focus groups will be retained and subsequently transcribed. Once transcribed and anonymised the audio recordings will be permanently deleted. The transcriptions will be used for analysis, discussion, and dissemination. All data will be disposed of by Dr. Francesca Lorenzi, research supervisor, by permanently deleting files on 1st December 2025.

Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

The storage and maintenance of all data will be in line with best practice guidance on GDPR. It will be held in confidence and will be used for the purpose of completing this research and to produce articles which may be published in academic journals. Survey data will be anonymous. To achieve this:

- Responses will be anonymous as email individuals' addresses or usernames are not being collected.
- There will be no tracking of who has or has not responded.
- No directly identifying information is being gathered.
- Demographic information which may lead to identification is not being gathered.
- The survey population is 600 teachers in the FET sector.

- All FET teachers in the City of Dublin will receive the email simultaneously, meaning timing of responses cannot be linked to a particular college.

Interview participants will be referred to as 'Teacher 1', 'Teacher 2' and so on. At no stage will your name appear in this research or in any future articles. Transcripts will never be made available in their entirety, however, quotes from transcripts will be used. All transcripts and written data will only be stored in DCU's secure online server.

How will your privacy be protected?

This study will be conducted in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and if you have any concerns regarding how your data in this study has been handled, you can contact: DCU Data Protection Officer, Mr. Martin Ward – (data.protection@dcu.ie Tel: 01-7005118/01- 7008257) who will handle any data protection concerns arising from this research. An individual also has the right to report a complaint concerning the use of personal data to the Irish Data Protection Commission: Data Protection Commissioner

You should be aware that the information given in the research study is subject to the established legal limitations on confidentiality. Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

Any personal data provided by you will be managed in accordance with the University's Data Privacy Policy. Data will be collected on the basis of your consent and any questions you have in relation to how it will be used and managed should, in the first instance, be directed to myself. DCU is the Data Controller of the research and the DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward *(email: data.protection@dcu.ie* or by phone at either: *01-7005118 or 01-7008257)*.

You should be aware that the information given in the research study is subject to the established legal limitations on confidentiality. Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

How will the data be used and subsequently disposed of?

The data collected and the research findings will be used to produce the final dissertation or to produce articles which will be published in academic publications. Sections may be used as anonymised quotes in the thesis or subsequent academic publications. In line with DCU's Data Retention Policy (DCU, 2018) all electronic files will be permanently deleted from DCU's Google Drive on the 1st December 2025 by Dr. Lorenzi.

You have the right to access your own personal data. You can do this by emailing brendan.kavanagh28@mail.dcu.ie or by contacting DCU's Data Protection Unit. If you have any concerns, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Commission.

Are there any benefits of taking part in the research study?

There are no financial benefits to taking part in this survey. The main benefit in participation is in being able to share your career story.

Are there any risks of taking part in the research study?

All research carries some risk, as questions about personal experience or professional practice may prompt some discomfort. The two main risks to be aware of are:

A. Loss of anonymity.
B. Disclosure of personal or confidential information.

If you decide to volunteer, you may choose not to answer any questions you wish, without providing any reasons.

Change of mind or withdrawing from the study.

Participation in all elements is voluntary and you may change your mind while the research is taking place. Any contributions you have made, can be removed from the research up to 28 days after the interview or focus group takes place, at that time it will be anonymised. You do not have to give a reason or ask permission from the researcher. To have your contribution permanently deleted, just email brendan.kavanagh28@mail.dcu.ie stating that you wish your contribution to be removed.

Online Survey.
Once submitted data cannot be removed as it is anonymous.
Interview Process.
Interviews will be audio recorded on the DCU licenced version of Zoom. Participants are free to skip any interview questions they wish, or to stop an interview at any point without explanation. You have a right to withdraw your data from the research up to 28 days after the interview takes place, and to have any recordings and data previously provided removed and permanently destroyed, without explaining this decision. To do so, email brendan.kavanagh28@mail.dcu.ie.
Focus Group Process.
Focus groups will be audio recorded on the DCU licenced version of Zoom. Participants are free to skip any questions they wish during the focus group, or to withdraw from the session at any point without explanation. You have a right to withdraw your data from the research up to 28 days after the focus group takes place, and to have any recordings and data previously provided removed and permanently destroyed, without explaining this decision. To do so, email brendan.kavanagh28@mail.dcu.ie.

How will participants find out what happens with the project?
The initial online survey will be conducted anonymously; therefore, it will be impossible to contact those who completed the survey after the research has been completed. Those who volunteer to participate in the interview section, or the focus group sessions will be known to me. An electronic copy of the completed thesis can be sent to you, should you wish to receive one. The final thesis will be made available online on DCU's Thesis Access platform, DORAS. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the completed thesis, please email me at brendan.kavanagh28@mail.dcu.ie
If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail: rec@dcu.ie

Appendix F. Survey Statements, Codes and Cronbach's Alpha

	Factors	Code	Items	Subscales	For Individual Factors
Item	Motivations			Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	Enhance Social Equity	ESE1	B.36 Teaching allows me to raise the ambitions of underprivileged youth	0.947	0.947
2	Enhance Social Equity	ESE2	B49. Teaching allows me to benefit the socially disadvantaged		0.947
3	Enhance Social Equity	ESE3	B54. Teaching allows me to work against social disadvantage		0.947
4	Fallback Career	FC1	B11. I was unsure of what career I wanted	0.949	0.949
5	Fallback Career	FC2	B35. I was not accepted into my first-choice career		0.949
6	Fallback Career	FC3	B48. I chose teaching as a last-resort career		0.950
7	Intrinsic Value	IV1	B1. I am interested in teaching	0.947	0.947
8	Intrinsic Value	IV2	B7. I have always wanted to be a teacher		0.948
9	Intrinsic Value	IV3	B12. I like teaching		0.948
10	Job Security	JS1	B14. Teaching offers a steady career path	0.948	0.948
11	Job Security	JS2	B27. Teaching provides a reliable income		0.948
12	Job Security	JS3	B38. Teaching is a secure job		0.948
13	Job Transfer	JT1	B8. Teaching may give me the chance to work abroad	0.948	0.949
14	Job Transfer	JT2	B22. A teaching qualification is recognised everywhere		0.947
15	Job Transfer	JT3	B45. A teaching job allows me to choose where I wish to live		0.948
16	Make Social Contribution	MSC1	B6. Teaching allows me to provide a service to society	0.947	0.948
17	Make Social Contribution	MSC2	B20. Teachers make a worthwhile social contribution		0.947
18	Make Social Contribution	MSC3	B31. Teaching enables me to 'give back' to society		0.947
19	Perceived Teaching Abilities	PTA1	B5. I have the qualities of a good teacher	0.947	0.948
20	Perceived Teaching Abilities	PTA2	B19. I have good teaching skills		0.948
21	Perceived Teaching Abilities	PTA3	B43. Teaching is a career suited to my abilities		0.948
22	Prior Teaching & Learning Experiences	PLT1	B17. I have had inspirational teachers	0.947	0.948
23	Prior Teaching & Learning Experiences	PLT2	B30. I have had good teachers as role-models		0.948
24	Prior Teaching & Learning Experiences	PLT3	B39. I have had positive learning experiences		0.948
25	Shape Future of Young People	SF1	B23. Teaching allows me to influence the next generation	0.947	0.947
26	Shape Future of Young People	SF2	B53. Teaching allows me to have an impact on younger people		0.947
27	Shape Future of Young People	SF3	B9. Teaching allows me to shape student values		0.947
28	Social Influences	SI1	B3. My friends thought I should become a teacher	0.948	0.948
29	Social Influences	SI2	B24. My family thought I should become a teacher		0.948
30	Social Influences	SI3	B40. People I worked with thought I should become a teacher		0.948
31	Time for Family	TF1	B4. As a teacher I have lengthy holidays	0.948	0.949

32	Time for Family	TF2	B16. Teaching hours will fit with the responsibilities of having a family		0.948
33	Time for Family	TF3	B18. As a teacher I have a short working day		0.948
34	Time for Family	TF4	B29. School holidays fit in with family commitments		0.949
35	Time for Family	TF5	B2. Teaching allows me more time to spend with family		0.948
36	Work with Young People	WYP1	B13. I want a job that involves working with young people	0.947	0.947
37	Work with Young People	WYP2	B26. I wanted to work in a young person-centred environment		0.947
38	Work with Young People	WYP3	B37. I like working with young people		0.947
39	Expert Career	EC1	C10. Teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge.	0.948	0.948
40	Expert Career	EC2	C14. Teachers need high levels of technical knowledge.		0.948
41	Expert Career	EC3	C15. Teachers need highly specialised knowledge.		0.948
42	High Demand	HD1	C2. Teachers have a heavy workload.	0.948	0.949
43	High Demand	HD2	C7. Teaching is emotionally demanding.		0.948
44	High Demand	HD3	C11. Teaching is hard work?		0.948
45	Salary	S1	C1. Teaching is well paid.	0.949	0.949
46	Salary	S2	C3. Teachers earn a good salary?		0.949
47	Social Status	SS1	C4. Teachers are perceived as professionals.	0.948	0.948
48	Social Status	SS2	C5. Teachers have high morale.		0.948
49	Social Status	SS3	C8. Teaching is perceived as a high-status occupation.		0.948
50	Social Status	SS4	C9. Teachers feel valued by society.		0.948
51	Social Status	SS5	C12. Teaching is a well-respected career.		0.948
52	Social Status	SS6	C13. Teachers feel their occupation has high social status.		0.948
53	Satisfaction with Career	SWC1	D5. I am happy with my decision to become a teacher	0.947	0.948
54	Satisfaction with Career	SWC2	D1. I thought carefully about becoming a teacher		0.948
55	Satisfaction with Career	SWC3	D3. I am satisfied with my choice to become a teacher		0.948
56	Social Dissuasion	SD1	D2. I was encouraged to pursue careers other than teaching	0.949	0.950
57	Social Dissuasion	SD2	D4. Others told me that teaching was not a good career choice		0.949
58	Social Dissuasion	SD3	D6. Others encouraged me to consider careers other than teaching?		0.950

Appendix G. Results for Cronbach's Alpha.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.920	.927	58

Appendix H. Margin of Error.

Margin of Error	
Population Size	971
Confidence Level	95%
Sample Size	105
Margin of Error	9.04%

Appendix I. Consent Form - Focus Group

Focus Group Consent Form
Study Title:

An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Profession Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.

Conducted by: Brendan Kavanagh
I confirm that I have read and understand the information form for this study and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving any reason.
I agree to take part in the study and that my participation will involve participating in a focus group. I agree that any information gathered through my participation can be recorded through written notes and audio recorded, and that it can be used for the purposes of this research and in future academic publications. Any personal data provided will be managed in accordance with the University's Data Privacy Policy and will be held in confidence.
I understand that the audio recordings will be deleted when uploaded to DCU Google drive. Once interviews are transcribed, the recordings will be deleted within 2 weeks of the interview taking place. All data will be securely stored on DCU's Google Drive. All identifiable and potentially identifiable data will be deleted from DCU's Google Drive on the 1st of December 2025. Anonymous data will be retained to facilitate the production of future academic publications until 1st December 2025.
I also understand that confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.
I also agree to the use of my anonymized information in completing this academic assignment and in other academic publications.
Please complete the following section *(Circle Yes or No for each question)*

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided in relation to data protection	*Yes/No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	*Yes/No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	*Yes/No*
I am aware that my interview will be audio-visually recorded	*Yes/No*

Participant Name: _____
Date: _____
Signature: _____

Investigators Name: _____
Date: _____
Signature: _____

Appendix J. Consent Form - Interviews

Interview Consent Form

Study Title:

An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Profession Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.

Conducted by: Brendan Kavanagh

I confirm that I have read and understand the information form for this study and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving any reason.

I agree to take part in the study and that my participation will involve participating in a one-to-one interview. I agree that any information gathered through my participation can be recorded through written notes and audio recorded, and that it can be used for the purposes of this research and in future academic publications. Any personal data provided will be managed in accordance with the University's Data Privacy Policy and will be held in confidence.

I understand that the audio recordings will be deleted when uploaded to DCU Google drive. Once interviews are transcribed, the recordings will be deleted within 2 weeks of the interview taking place. All data will be securely stored on DCU's Google Drive. All identifiable and potentially identifiable data will be deleted from DCU's Google Drive on the 1st of December 2025. Anonymous data will be retained to facilitate the production of future academic publications until 1st December 2025.

I also understand that confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

I also agree to the use of my anonymized information in completing this academic assignment and in other academic publications.

Please complete the following section *(Circle Yes or No for each question)*

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided in relation to data protection	*Yes/No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	*Yes/No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	*Yes/No*
I am aware that my interview will be audio-visually recorded	*Yes/No*

Participant Name: _____
Date: _____
Signature: _____

Investigators Name: _____
Date: _____
Signature: _____

Appendix K. Focus Group Schedule

1	Can I start by asking you to introduce yourself to the groups and tell us about your previous career.
2	What first drew you into that career?
3	What first drew you to teaching?
4	Do you think family or friends see you differently now that you are an FET teacher?
5	Prompt if needed: If we compare it to Primary, Secondary or Teaching in Higher Education?
6	How would your friends or family describe you?
7	Has your perception of teaching in the FET sector changed since starting your education or training, and if so, how?
8	Has teaching changed your work/life balance? If so in what way?
9	What advice would you give to someone considering entering the teaching profession?

Appendix L. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1	How long have you been teaching in the FET sector?
2	**Questions Relating to Previous Career**
3	What did you do prior to teaching?
4	What drew you into that career?
5	How long did you work there?
6	Did you enjoy it?
7	Why did you decide to leave / to change career?
	Questions Relating to The Process of Career Change
8	What influenced your decision to become a teacher?
9	What did you tell others when you made the decision to become a teacher?
10	How do others view yourself now? (do they think you've changed)
11	What did you know about the FET sector at that time?
12	What drew you into it?
13	Does teaching in any way resemble your previous career?
14	Are there any skills that you have brought from your prior profession into teaching?
	Questions Relating to Starting as a Second Career Teacher
15	How did it feel, starting a new career, in a new environment?
16	Is NAME the teacher different from NAME the JOB TITLE
17	If you were at a party and met someone for the first time and they asked, 'what do you do?' – how would you answer?
18	Looking back, in an overall sense, how do you feel now about the change you made to become a teacher?
19	What advice do you have for others considering the move from another career into
	Before we finish, is there anything further you would like to say, or any area you feel we should cover but did not?

Appendix M. Email to 'All Staff' Explaining IT Issue

19th September 2023

Good morning,

Survey of ALL teachers in the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB

Firstly, many thanks to all those who have already completed this survey - it is very much appreciated.

Can I encourage those of you who have not completed it to consider doing so.

The survey takes approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Apologies but access to cloud platforms is blocked on the City of Dublin ETB's admin network. This means the survey can only be accessed by laptop, mobile device or a computer not on the admin. network.

Please click on the image below to access the survey,
Alternatively, you can click the link HERE or you can copy the address below into the address bar.

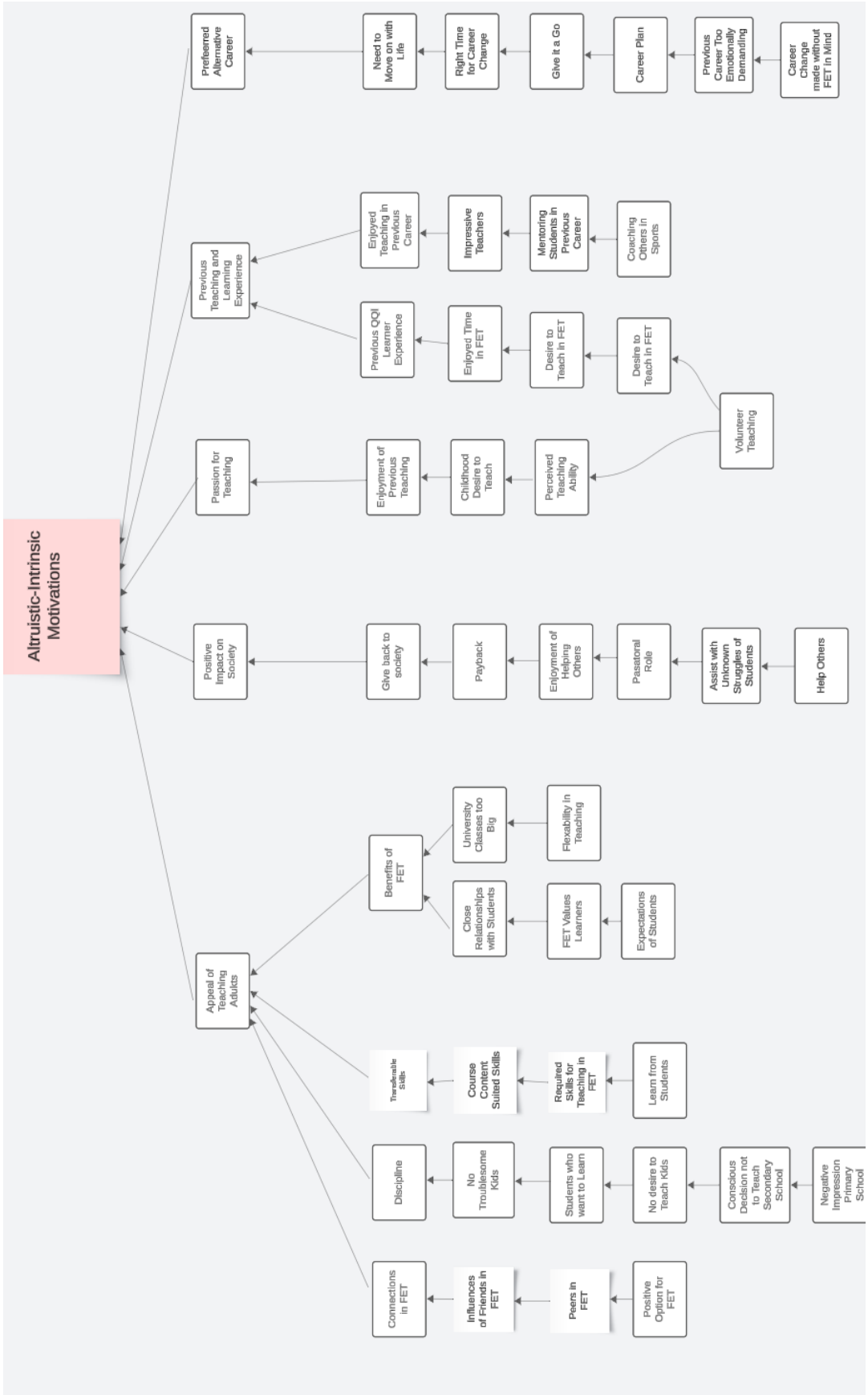
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/.....

Again, many thanks for taking the time to complete this.

The Plain Language Statement which explains the research in more detail is again attached.

Brendan

Appendix N. Example of Coded Subthemes and Themes



Appendix O. Research Ethics Committee Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

DCU

Dr Francesca Lorenzi
School of Policy and Practice

26th July 2023

REC Reference: **DCUREC/2023/142**

Proposal Title: **An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Profession Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.**

Applicants: **Dr Francesca Lorenzi, Dr Elaine McDonald, Mr Brendan Kavanagh**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your application to DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC). Further to expedited review, DCU REC is pleased to issue approval for this research proposal.

DCU REC's consideration of all ethics applications is dependent upon the information supplied by the researcher. This information is expected to be truthful and accurate. Researchers are responsible for ensuring that their research is carried out in accordance with the information provided in their ethics application.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

DCU
Research & Innovation

Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

Research & Innovation Support
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Dublin 9, Ireland

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E research@dcu.ie
www.dcu.ie

Dr. Melrona Kirrane
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

Note: Please retain this approval letter for future publication purposes (for research students, this includes incorporating the letter within their thesis appendices).

Appendix P. Consent Form – Survey

Consent Form
Study Title:

An Exploration of the Motivations for Changing Career and the Formation of Professional Teacher Identity among Second-career Teachers working within the FET sector of the City of Dublin ETB.

Conducted by: Brendan Kavanagh
I confirm that I have read and understand the information form for this study and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time and without giving any reason.
I agree to take part in the study and that my participation will involve participating in this anonymous survey. Your participation in this online survey is completely anonymous. No information you share electronically can be traced to you or the computer you used. Your participation in the survey indicates you read this consent information and agreed to participate in this anonymous survey. I also agree to the use of my anonymized information in completing this academic assignment and in other academic publications.
If you have questions about this study, you may contact me at brendan.kavanagh28@mail.dcu.ie

Please complete the following section *(Tick Yes or No for each question)*

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided in relation to data protection	*Yes/No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study prior to completing this survey	*Yes/No*
I have received satisfactory answers to any questions I asked	*Yes/No*

Appendix Q. Explanation and Eample of Spearman's Correlation Coefficient for SCT Responses.

		I am interested in teaching	As a teacher I have lengthy holidays	I have the qualities of a good teacher	Teaching allows me to provide a service to society	I have always wanted to be a teacher	Teaching may give me the chance to work abroad	Teaching allows me to shape student values	I was unsure of what career I wanted
I am interested in teaching	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.147	.551**	.485**	.443**	0.048	.343**	-0.133
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.170	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.655	0.001	0.216
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
As a teacher I have lengthy holidays	Correlation Coefficient	0.147	1.000	.213*	0.064	0.161	-0.059	0.040	0.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.170		0.047	0.556	0.134	0.588	0.710	0.383
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
I have the qualities of a good teacher	Correlation Coefficient	.551**	.213*	1.000	.492**	.241*	-0.047	0.188	-0.181
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.047		0.000	0.024	0.662	0.080	0.092
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
Teaching allows me to provide a service to society	Correlation Coefficient	.485**	0.064	.492**	1.000	.307**	0.133	.459**	0.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.556	0.000		0.004	0.218	0.000	0.481
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
I have always wanted to be a teacher	Correlation Coefficient	.443**	0.161	.241*	.307**	1.000	0.163	.255*	-0.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.134	0.024	0.004		0.128	0.017	0.434
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
Teaching may give me the chance to work abroad	Correlation Coefficient	0.048	-0.059	-0.047	0.133	0.163	1.000	0.185	0.145
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.655	0.588	0.662	0.218	0.128		0.085	0.176
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
Teaching allows me to shape student values	Correlation Coefficient	.343**	0.040	0.188	.459**	.255*	0.185	1.000	0.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.710	0.080	0.000	0.017	0.085		0.587
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
I was unsure of what career I wanted	Correlation Coefficient	-0.133	0.094	-0.181	0.076	-0.085	0.145	0.059	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.216	0.383	0.092	0.481	0.434	0.176	0.587	
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88

The Spearman test uses the ranks to calculate the coefficient while the Pearson test calculates the coefficient using the actual values. The four dependent variables chosen for the Spearman test (See Tables A to E below) relate to factors from the Satisfaction with Career (SWC) and Intrinsic Value (IV) factors and are:

SWC1 - D5. I am happy with my decision to become a teacher.

SWC2 - D1. I thought carefully about becoming a teacher.

SWC3 - D3. I am satisfied with my choice to become a teacher.

IV3 - B12. I like teaching.

These variables were chosen as they allowed me to gain an insight into the general attitude of respondents towards teaching and their satisfaction with their career choice. Upon completion of the Spearman test for the data provided by SCTs, several significant positive (See Table A) and negative (See Table B). relationships are observed between these four dependent variables and other factors in the survey.

Table A. Type of Correlation and Direction of the Relationship (Ali Abd Al-Hameed, 2022).

Value of Correlation Coefficient	Meaning
+1	Completely positive correlation
From 0.70 to 0.99	Strong positive association
From 0.50 to 0.69	Average positive correlation
From 0.01 to 0.49	Weak positive correlation
0	Not a positive relationship
From -0.01 to -0.49	Weak negative correlation
From -0.50 to -0.69	Average negative correlation
From -0.70 to -0.99	Strong negative association
-1	Completely negative correlation

The strongest positive relationships are presented below.

Table B. Strongest Positive SCT Responses.

	SWCI	SWC2	SWC3	IV3
IV1	rho = .489, p=<.001	rho = .500, p=<.001		rho =.582, p=<.001
IV2	rho = .486, p=<.001			
SWC3		rho = .687, p=<.001		
SWC2			rho = .687, p=<.001	
WYP3				rho = .560, p=<.001
IV3			rho = .490, p=<.001	

Table C. Strongest Negative SCT Responses.

	SWCI	SWC2	SWC3	IV3
FC3	rho = -.274, p= .010	rho = -.342, p= .001	rho = -.291, p= .006	rho = -.419, p=<.001

Spearman tests were also conducted for the data provided by non-SCT respondents, with several significant positive relationships (Table C) and negative (Table D) relationships emerging.

Table D. Strongest Positive Non-SCT Responses.

	SWCI	SWC2	SWC3	IV3
IV1		rho = .564, p=<.010		
SWC1			rho = .602, p=.11	
SWC3	rho = .602, p=.011			
WYP1	rho = .564, p=<.010			
PLT1		rho = .754, p=<.001		
SS5			rho = .495, p=<.043	
MSC2				rho = .775, p=<.001
PTA2				rho = .609, p=.01

Table E. Strongest Negative Non-SCT Responses.

	SWCI	SWC2	SWC3	IV3
JS2	rho = -.453, p=.068			
FC1		rho = -.418, p=.095		
FC2			rho = -.329, p=.198	
FC3			rho = -.329, p=.198	
JT2				rho = -.245, p=.343

When considering satisfaction with career amongst SCT respondents, the strongest positive correlation is with intrinsic value, which is reflected in the qualitative data (See Section 6.3). Strong altruistic values may account for the greater satisfaction with career choice, despite perceptions regarding salary and social status. For individuals driven by altruistic-intrinsic motivations, the internal rewards outweigh external rewards, profoundly influencing overall satisfaction and career perception, and allow for stronger professional identity (trans-)formation (McKevitt, Carbery, and Lyons, 2017).

Appendix R. Example of Spearman's Correlation Coefficient for Non-SCT Responses.

		I have the qualities of a good teacher	I have good teaching skills	Teaching is a career suited to my abilities	I am interested in teaching	I have always wanted to be a teacher	I like teaching	Teaching offers a steady career path	Teaching provides a reliable income
I have the qualities of a good teacher	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.288	0.299	0.041	.579*	0.053	-0.069	0.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.262	0.244	0.877	0.015	0.841	0.793	0.651
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
I have good teaching skills	Correlation Coefficient	0.288	1.000	.557*	-0.138	0.263	.609**	0.230	0.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.262		0.020	0.597	0.309	0.010	0.375	0.878
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Teaching is a career suited to my abilities	Correlation Coefficient	0.299	.557*	1.000	0.257	0.405	0.415	0.106	-0.212
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.244	0.020		0.319	0.107	0.098	0.687	0.414
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
I am interested in teaching	Correlation Coefficient	0.041	-0.138	0.257	1.000	.632**	0.263	0.163	0.259
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.877	0.597	0.319		0.006	0.308	0.532	0.315
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
I have always wanted to be a teacher	Correlation Coefficient	.579*	0.263	0.405	.632**	1.000	0.298	0.153	0.479
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.015	0.309	0.107	0.006		0.246	0.557	0.052
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
I like teaching	Correlation Coefficient	0.053	.609**	0.415	0.263	0.298	1.000	0.126	0.217
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.841	0.010	0.098	0.308	0.246		0.630	0.403
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Teaching offers a steady career path	Correlation Coefficient	-0.069	0.230	0.106	0.163	0.153	0.126	1.000	-0.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.793	0.375	0.687	0.532	0.557	0.630		0.701
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Teaching provides a reliable income	Correlation Coefficient	0.118	0.040	-0.212	0.259	0.479	0.217	-0.101	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.651	0.878	0.414	0.315	0.052	0.403	0.701	
	N	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17

Appendix S. Tests of Normality – SCT Responses to Survey

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test is used for data sets over 100, and as the data sets are less than 100 (88 and 17), the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to identify statistical significance and normally distributed results. In the Shapiro-Wilk test, the null hypothesis states that the population is normally distributed. If the p-value is >0.05, then the null hypothesis is accepted, and the data is considered as being normal. A result of <0.05 shows significant deviation from a normal distribution (Hanusz and Tarasińska, 2015). These results were viewed in conjunction with data visualisations, which illustrate the normal distribution of the data.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
I am interested in teaching	0.290	88	0.000	0.742	88	0.000
As a teacher I have lengthy holidays	0.145	88	0.000	0.918	88	0.000
I have the qualities of a good teacher	0.308	88	0.000	0.769	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to provide a service to society	0.257	88	0.000	0.752	88	0.000
I have always wanted to be a teacher	0.129	88	0.001	0.914	88	0.000
Teaching may give me the chance to work abroad	0.313	88	0.000	0.728	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to shape student values	0.188	88	0.000	0.885	88	0.000
I was unsure of what career I wanted	0.196	88	0.000	0.899	88	0.000
I like teaching	0.329	88	0.000	0.679	88	0.000
I want a job that involves working with young people	0.148	88	0.000	0.911	88	0.000
Teaching offers a steady career path	0.206	88	0.000	0.869	88	0.000
Teaching hours will fit with the responsibilities of having a family	0.191	88	0.000	0.835	88	0.000
I have had inspirational teachers	0.171	88	0.000	0.857	88	0.000
As a teacher I have a short working day	0.143	88	0.000	0.939	88	0.000
I have good teaching skills	0.254	88	0.000	0.822	88	0.000
Teachers make a worthwhile social contribution	0.250	88	0.000	0.791	88	0.000
A teaching qualification is recognised everywhere	0.141	88	0.000	0.921	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to influence the next generation	0.213	88	0.000	0.870	88	0.000
My family thought I should become a teacher	0.202	88	0.000	0.865	88	0.000
I wanted to work in a young person centred environment	0.127	88	0.001	0.936	88	0.000
Teaching provides a reliable income	0.214	88	0.000	0.884	88	0.000
School holiday fit in with family commitments	0.179	88	0.000	0.879	88	0.000
I have had good teachers as role-models	0.206	88	0.000	0.869	88	0.000
Teaching enables me to 'give back' to society	0.231	88	0.000	0.871	88	0.000
I was not accepted into my first-choice career	0.365	88	0.000	0.643	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to raise the ambitions of underprivileged	0.178	88	0.000	0.884	88	0.000
I like working with young people	0.213	88	0.000	0.854	88	0.000
Teaching is a secure job	0.251	88	0.000	0.846	88	0.000
I have had positive learning experiences	0.268	88	0.000	0.813	88	0.000
People I worked with thought I should become a teacher	0.165	88	0.000	0.892	88	0.000
Teaching is a career suited to my abilities	0.277	88	0.000	0.782	88	0.000
A teaching job allows me to choose where I wish to live	0.219	88	0.000	0.858	88	0.000
I chose teaching as a last-resort career	0.424	88	0.000	0.608	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to benefit the socially disadvantaged	0.239	88	0.000	0.872	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to have an impact on younger people	0.183	88	0.000	0.891	88	0.000
Teaching allows me to work against social disadvantage	0.187	88	0.000	0.888	88	0.000
Teaching is well paid?	0.191	88	0.000	0.941	88	0.001
Teachers have a heavy workload?	0.184	88	0.000	0.906	88	0.000
Teachers earn a good salary?	0.175	88	0.000	0.927	88	0.000
Teachers are perceived as professionals?	0.222	88	0.000	0.902	88	0.000
Teachers have high morale?	0.149	88	0.000	0.943	88	0.001
Teaching is emotionally demanding?	0.235	88	0.000	0.836	88	0.000
Teaching is perceived as a high-status occupation?	0.201	88	0.000	0.912	88	0.000
Teachers feel valued by society?	0.188	88	0.000	0.935	88	0.000
Teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge?	0.260	88	0.000	0.862	88	0.000
I am satisfied with my choice to become a teacher	0.300	88	0.000	0.698	88	0.000
Teaching is hard work?	0.304	88	0.000	0.812	88	0.000
Teaching is a well-respected career?	0.217	88	0.000	0.901	88	0.000
Teachers feel their occupation has high social status?	0.242	88	0.000	0.904	88	0.000
Teachers need high levels of technical knowledge?	0.211	88	0.000	0.872	88	0.000
Teachers need highly specialised knowledge?	0.207	88	0.000	0.832	88	0.000
Teaching allows me more time to spend with family	0.210	88	0.000	0.849	88	0.000
School holidays fit in with family commitments	0.179	88	0.000	0.868	88	0.000
I was encouraged to pursue careers other than teaching	0.147	88	0.000	0.891	88	0.000
Others told me that teaching was not a good career choice	0.269	88	0.000	0.790	88	0.000
Others encouraged me to consider careers other than	0.226	88	0.000	0.840	88	0.000
I thought carefully about becoming a teacher	0.188	88	0.000	0.886	88	0.000
I am happy with my decision to become a teacher	0.357	88	0.000	0.607	88	0.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix T. Tests of Normality – non-SCT Responses to Survey

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
I have the qualities of a good teacher	0.373	17	0.000	0.501	17	0.000
I have good teaching skills	0.375	17	0.000	0.669	17	0.000
Teaching is a career suited to my abilities	0.260	17	0.003	0.786	17	0.001
I am interested in teaching	0.357	17	0.000	0.622	17	0.000
I have always wanted to be a teacher	0.236	17	0.013	0.843	17	0.008
I like teaching	0.426	17	0.000	0.630	17	0.000
Teaching offers a steady career path	0.165	17	.200*	0.921	17	0.156
Teaching provides a reliable income	0.238	17	0.011	0.880	17	0.032
Teaching is a secure job	0.219	17	0.029	0.789	17	0.001
Teaching allows me more time to spend with family	0.180	17	0.145	0.916	17	0.126
As a teacher I have lengthy holidays	0.218	17	0.031	0.897	17	0.061
Teaching hours will fit with the responsibilities of having a family	0.196	17	0.081	0.866	17	0.019
As a teacher I have a short working day	0.152	17	.200*	0.916	17	0.128
School holiday fit in with family commitments	0.264	17	0.003	0.784	17	0.001
Teaching allows me to shape student values	0.182	17	0.136	0.913	17	0.112
Teaching allows me to influence the next generation	0.243	17	0.009	0.880	17	0.032
Teaching allows me to have an impact on younger people	0.275	17	0.001	0.862	17	0.016
Teaching allows me to raise the ambitions of underprivileged youth	0.228	17	0.019	0.827	17	0.005
Teaching allows me to benefit the socially disadvantaged	0.254	17	0.005	0.895	17	0.057
Teaching allows me to work against social disadvantage	0.383	17	0.000	0.647	17	0.000
Teaching allows me to provide a service to society	0.369	17	0.000	0.627	17	0.000
Teachers make a worthwhile social contribution	0.363	17	0.000	0.714	17	0.000
Teaching allows me to 'give-back' to society	0.259	17	0.004	0.744	17	0.000
I want a job that involves working with young people	0.236	17	0.012	0.894	17	0.055
I wanted to work in a young person centred environment	0.283	17	0.001	0.856	17	0.013
I like working with young people	0.200	17	0.071	0.878	17	0.030
I have had inspirational teachers	0.259	17	0.004	0.805	17	0.002
I have had good teachers as role models	0.266	17	0.002	0.811	17	0.003
I have had positive learning experiences	0.223	17	0.025	0.807	17	0.003
My friends thought I should become a teacher	0.316	17	0.000	0.780	17	0.001
My family thought I should become a teacher	0.242	17	0.009	0.807	17	0.003
People I worked with thought I should become a teacher	0.258	17	0.004	0.842	17	0.008
Teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge?	0.256	17	0.004	0.869	17	0.021
Teachers need high levels of technical knowledge?	0.298	17	0.000	0.837	17	0.007
Teachers need highly specialised knowledge?	0.225	17	0.022	0.823	17	0.004
Teachers have a heavy workload?	0.252	17	0.005	0.877	17	0.028
Teaching is emotionally demanding?	0.225	17	0.022	0.845	17	0.009
Teaching is hard work?	0.269	17	0.002	0.791	17	0.002
Teachers are perceived as professionals?	0.229	17	0.018	0.863	17	0.017
Teachers have high morale?	0.260	17	0.003	0.896	17	0.057
Teaching is perceived as a high-status occupation?	0.164	17	.200*	0.956	17	0.549
Teachers feel valued by society?	0.173	17	0.190	0.932	17	0.234
Teaching is a well-respected career?	0.230	17	0.018	0.850	17	0.011
Teachers feel their occupation has high social status?	0.192	17	0.098	0.897	17	0.061
Teaching is well paid?	0.237	17	0.012	0.900	17	0.069
Teachers earn a good salary?	0.277	17	0.001	0.815	17	0.003
I was encouraged to pursue careers other than teaching	0.259	17	0.004	0.833	17	0.006
Others told me that teaching was not a good career choice	0.196	17	0.081	0.827	17	0.005
Others encouraged me to consider careers other than teaching?	0.241	17	0.010	0.813	17	0.003
I thought carefully about becoming a teacher	0.233	17	0.015	0.816	17	0.003
I am satisfied with my choice to become a teacher	0.257	17	0.004	0.777	17	0.001
I am happy with my decision to become a teacher	0.419	17	0.000	0.634	17	0.000
Teaching may give me the chance to work abroad	0.405	17	0.000	0.683	17	0.000
A teaching qualification is recognised everywhere	0.204	17	0.059	0.913	17	0.111
A teaching job allows me to choose where I wish to live	0.197	17	0.077	0.892	17	0.050
I was unsure of what career I wanted	0.366	17	0.000	0.734	17	0.000
I was not accepted into my first-choice career	0.537	17	0.000	0.262	17	0.000
I chose teaching as a last-resort career	0.537	17	0.000	0.262	17	0.000

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction