

Review of the Droichead Teacher Induction Pilot Programme

March 2016

Emer Smyth, Paul Conway, Aisling Leavy,
Merike Darmody, Joanne Banks, Dorothy Watson





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Economic and Social Research Institute; University of Limerick; Mary Immaculate College

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The Authors

Emer Smyth	Economic and Social Research Institute
Paul Conway	University of Limerick
Aisling Leavy	Mary Immaculate College
Merike Darmody	Economic and Social Research Institute
Joanne Banks	Economic and Social Research Institute
Dorothy Watson	Economic and Social Research Institute

Emer Smyth is a Research Professor, Merike Darmody is a Research Officer, Joanne Banks is a Research Officer and Dorothy Watson is an Associate Research Professor at the ESRI. Paul Conway is a Professor in the Department of Education and Professional Studies (EPS), University of Limerick. Aisling Leavy is a Lecturer in Mathematics Education at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

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Glossary

HEI	Higher Education Institution
IoGP	Indicators of Good Practice
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NPPTI	National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PME	Professional Master of Education
PST	Professional Support Team

Executive Summary

THE DROICHEAD PILOT PROGRAMME

The Droichead pilot programme, which began in 2013, is designed to provide whole-school support for teacher induction in both primary and post-primary schools. The programme is innovative in a number of respects. It is led at school level by a Professional Support Team (PST) consisting of the principal, mentor(s) and other member(s), who have received training provided by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) in relation to their roles and responsibilities. Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in Droichead schools have support from a mentor and other members of the PST in the identification of their professional learning needs and in planning opportunities to address these needs. NQTs have the opportunity to observe and be observed by other teachers, and receive feedback on their teaching. NQTs also compile a learning portfolio which supports their learning and records their reflections on their learning. At the end of the process, the PST may make a recommendation to the Teaching Council that the Droichead condition be removed from a teacher's registration. In this process, emphasis is placed on the progress made by the teacher in terms of his or her professional learning and practice.

The introduction of the Droichead pilot programme in Ireland reflects a wider trend internationally toward the design of more systematic, integrated and intensive programmes to support induction and probation. Since 2012, the induction programme requirement for registration has involved attendance at induction workshops for NQTs. However, at school level, induction practices prior to Droichead varied considerably, with some schools using trained mentors to support NQTs while other schools adopted more informal approaches. In non-Droichead primary schools, the probation process has involved the completion of a period of service and the demonstration of satisfactory professional competence on the basis of inspector visits to observe NQTs' teaching. In non-Droichead post-primary schools, newly qualified teachers were required to have a specified number of hours of post-qualification employment (PQE), as verified by the school principal. Droichead represents a sea-change in relation to previous approaches to supporting newly qualified teachers in its emphasis on whole-school support for the NQT and school ownership of the recommendation process.

RESEARCH ON TEACHER INDUCTION

With an increased policy focus on teacher quality, the provision of high quality teacher induction is now seen as an important, if not essential, part of becoming

a teacher. Induction has been framed in a number of ways; as a distinct phase in learning to teach, as a socialisation process and as an integrated programme for learning to teach. The third orientation, and one of particular relevance in reviewing Droichead, focuses on induction as a deliberate programme for sustained and systematic support and assistance for newly qualified teachers. Existing research indicates very considerable variation within and across countries in the design of integrated induction programmes, with differences in; the allocation of mentors, the duration of mandatory induction, system commitment to the intensity of induction for NQTs, links between induction and subsequent phases in the professional continuum, and the role of higher education institutions in induction. The emerging consensus from existing research is that a set of factors rather than one single factor alone is critical for effective induction. The literature on induction illustrates the many ways in which school culture matters in the successful implementation of induction, an issue addressed in this report using case studies of primary and post-primary schools to explore implementation at the school level.

METHODOLOGY

The current study aims to assess the Droichead pilot programme and thus to inform the model of teacher induction which will be used in Irish primary and post-primary schools in the future. In so doing, it seeks to answer the following key questions:

- How effectively are the teachers who participate in Droichead supported and is the process adequately resourced?
- How useful and appropriate are the criteria and indicators of good practice developed through Droichead?
- How effective, appropriate and fair are the procedures and protocols employed by members of the Professional Support Team (PST) in making a recommendation to the Council in relation to the practice of a newly qualified teacher (NQT)?
- How effective is the Droichead experience as an induction into the teaching profession?
- What can be learned from the research findings on Droichead to facilitate the mainstreaming of an effective induction and probation process for all teachers?

Postal questionnaires were developed for school principals, mentors, other PST members and newly qualified teachers in Droichead schools. In non-Droichead schools, questionnaires were developed for principals, newly qualified teachers

and teacher induction co-ordinators (where evident). In Autumn 2014, questionnaires were distributed to the 123 primary and post-primary schools then taking part in the programme and to a matched sample of 199 non-Droichead schools. A further wave of questionnaires was distributed in Autumn 2015; this allowed for a more detailed exploration of the experience of Droichead, as many schools had only joined the programme a couple of months before the initial survey. These data have been supplemented by case studies of six Droichead primary and six Droichead post-primary schools. Within each of the schools, interviews were conducted by members of the research team with school principals, mentors, other PST members and newly qualified teachers. In addition, in order to capture information on teacher collaboration within the school and the potential wider impact of Droichead on the school culture, interviews were conducted with two teachers in each school not directly involved in the Droichead process.

MAIN FINDINGS

Principals in Droichead and non-Droichead schools were asked about the extent to which initial teacher education prepares teachers for a number of different aspects of teaching. Principals were most positive about the extent to which initial teacher education (ITE) prepared NQTs in terms of using a range of teaching methods in an appropriate way, knowledge of curriculum content, planning lessons and use of appropriate assessment methods. However, they were more critical of the extent to which ITE prepared teachers for dealing with diversity in terms of teaching students with special educational needs and from multicultural or disadvantaged backgrounds. Only a small number felt that NQTs had been prepared for working with parents. Responses were similar in Droichead and non-Droichead schools and newly qualified teachers highlighted similar gaps in their prior education.

Schools taking part in the Droichead pilot programme did so on a voluntary basis. This decision reflected their prior history, with schools opting into Droichead being more likely than other schools to have had a formalised approach to teacher induction prior to joining the pilot programme; over half (56 per cent) had such an approach compared with just a third of non-Droichead schools. A significant minority, four-in-ten, of Droichead principals had themselves received mentor training prior to joining Droichead. Furthermore, the majority of Droichead schools had staff who had already taken part in mentoring professional development. The findings indicate that Droichead takes place within the broader context of formal and informal cooperation within the school. Newly qualified teachers frequently rely for support on other teachers who are not involved in the PST and on other NQTs, and the extent to which they do varies across

schools. Schools differed in the extent to which they had assumed ownership over Droichead and adapted the programme to meet their specific needs. A prior history of mentoring and collaboration facilitated this ownership and the fostering of school-wide support for teaching and learning, but was not a necessary condition.

The Professional Support Team was typically made up of the principal, the mentor and the other PST member, although some schools had larger teams. The mentor was the main source of support across schools, meeting very frequently with the NQT. Principals varied in whether they assumed an 'overseer' role or were more heavily involved in the day-to-day operation of the programme. Across all schools, however, they played a crucial role in the choice to join Droichead and in facilitating staff buy-in to that decision. The 'other' PST member had a somewhat more ambiguous role, being very involved in the recommendation process in some schools while taking a more administrative role in other cases. PST members were very positive about the professional development they had received as part of Droichead, and mentors in particular were positive about the extent to which they had learned from the NQTs they were supporting.

Members of the Professional Support Team typically observed the NQT teaching on two to four occasions, being more frequent in primary than in post-primary schools. Mentors were the most involved in giving feedback to NQTs and beginning teachers found this feedback helpful and constructive. Other professional conversations between the mentors mainly centred on teaching methods, classroom management and how the NQT was coping. Teaching methods, differentiation and assessment were more frequently discussed in primary than in post-primary schools.

While all NQTs pointed to some induction workshops which were helpful, many highlighted a duplication of material covered in initial teacher education and suggested similar gaps to those experienced in ITE, particularly teaching diverse student populations. The vast majority of NQTs keep a learning portfolio, mainly to reflect on their practice. Several teachers in the case-study schools felt this enabled them to document their learning throughout the Droichead process. However, teachers in a number of schools were critical of the lack of clarity around the purpose and nature of the portfolio.

PST members and NQTs were generally clear about the recommendation process with regard to removing the Droichead condition from the teacher's registration

and felt it was fair. However, over half of primary principals felt that the number of days required to complete Droichead was 'too short' and case-study interviews suggested additional pressure in terms of scheduling meetings and observations where NQTs were only in the school for the minimum period. Staff were generally positive about sign-off as a process rather than a one-off, and less authentic, 'performance' for the inspector. However, there was some tension about combining support and assessment, and this was expressed strongly by some schools who had not taken part in Droichead. In practice, the recommendation process itself was not seen as highly contentious, with the mentor typically taking a supportive role while the principal and other PST member were more involved in making the recommendation to the Teaching Council. The team-based approach appeared to mitigate against the risk of personality clashes influencing the process. Furthermore, there was no evidence that PST members were reluctant to make a recommendation in relation to NQTs because they had worked closely with them. However, PST members did raise concerns about how to handle serious underperformance by an NQT and about the potential for uneven standards across schools.

Levels of satisfaction with Droichead were very high among principals, mentors and other PST members, though somewhat less satisfaction was expressed in relation to resources as well as the timing and location of meetings. NQTs were also very positive about the support provided by the Professional Support Team. The benefits of the programme were seen as providing a structured support for NQTs while a very significant minority of principals felt that involvement had contributed to a more collaborative culture and greater openness within the school as a whole. Principals in Droichead schools reported greater levels of improvement among their NQTs than those in a matched sample of non-Droichead schools, and NQTs in Droichead schools reported lower levels of stress than those in non-participating schools. The most commonly reported challenge centred on the issue of time, mainly time for meetings and observations. Meetings were regularly scheduled outside school hours and only half of principals drew down the full allocation of release time available under the programme. This reflected both the perceived inflexibility of the method of allocating release time and a reluctance among teachers to miss class time. Other challenges centred on the additional workload, especially for the mentor, without commensurate rewards and the difficulty for NQTs in securing enough teaching hours to complete the process in an uncertain labour market climate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The Teaching Council indicated in October 2015 that it was envisaged that, with the appropriate resources and support, Droichead would be confirmed as the

route of induction for all NQTs within a three-year timeframe. The study findings highlight a number of implications for the availability and sustainability of this model across primary and post-primary schools as well as the future development of teacher induction policy and practice, principally:

- In rolling out the programme, the importance of information and support in securing buy-in from principals and staff and addressing their concerns about workload and assessing new teachers, especially in schools without a strong tradition of mentoring and staff collaboration;
- The need to consider cross-school cooperation in Droichead provision in extending the programme to smaller schools with teaching principals, given additional challenges regarding time for meetings;
- Greater flexibility in the allocation of time to cover meetings and observations along with the potential to build Droichead planning and meetings into the timetable, at least at post-primary level;
- In a context where principals indicate they are likely to expand or rotate membership of the PST, the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities for participating staff;
- Greater clarity regarding the purpose and nature of the learning portfolio;
- Closer links between Droichead and school development planning, given the way that support for new teachers relies on a broader network of formal and informal ties within the school;
- The need to ensure complementarity between initial teacher education, Droichead induction activities and the proposed Cosán framework for teacher professional development in order to provide continuity of learning and facilitate high quality teaching;
- A need to examine the implications of the labour market context for the ability of new graduates to complete the Droichead process in a timely manner and review options such as guaranteed placements.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Droichead pilot programme, which began in the school year 2013/14, is designed to provide whole-school support for teacher induction in both primary and post-primary schools. The programme is innovative in a number of respects. It is led at school level by a Professional Support Team (PST), consisting of the principal, mentor(s) and other member(s). Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in Droichead schools have support from a mentor and other members of the PST in the identification of their professional learning needs and in planning opportunities to address these needs. NQTs have the opportunity to observe and be observed by other teachers, receiving feedback on their teaching. At the end of the process, the PST may make a recommendation to the Teaching Council that the Droichead condition be removed from a teacher's registration, signalling the completion of the induction phase on the teacher education continuum. In making a recommendation, emphasis is placed on the progress made by the teacher in terms of his or her professional learning and practice, as appropriate to his or her career phase (that is, induction). This report draws on two waves of survey data along with detailed case studies of twelve schools taking part in Droichead to explore the implementation of the programme and the lessons that can be learned to inform the future development of teacher induction policy and practice. This chapter describes the background to the development of Droichead and the approach taken to undertaking the current study.

1.2 TEACHER INDUCTION IN IRELAND

The intent of induction programmes is to transform a newly qualified teacher into a competent professional (Schlechty, 1985). Even though beginning teachers have completed quality teacher education programmes, they need additional knowledge and skills to be successful in their own classrooms (Santoli and Vitulli, 2014). In Ireland, teaching is a popular profession and attracts high achieving graduates (Darmody and Smyth, forthcoming). In recent years, initial teacher education programmes have been lengthened with undergraduate programmes now lasting four years and post-graduate programmes lasting two years. Students graduating from teacher education programmes are referred to as NQTs (newly qualified teachers).

The need in Ireland for structured induction and support for newly qualified teachers was highlighted in a number of international and national reports in the 1990s (see OECD, 1991; Government of Ireland, 1992). These and other reports pointed to the necessity to provide continuity between initial teacher education and teaching as well as the provision of continuous professional development opportunities throughout teachers' careers (Burke, 2010). In fact, Killeavy and Murphy (2006) characterised teacher induction in the 1990s as 'inconsistent and in many cases non-existent' (p. 20). These debates coincided with the action taken by a number of Irish colleges regarding the provision of support for new teachers. For example in the 2000s, a pilot project for primary schools was undertaken by St. Patrick's College. The aim of the project was to develop an induction programme for NQTs involving mentoring and other forms of support. The programme aimed to support the personal, professional and pedagogical development of young teachers and offer them support during their first year of teaching (Burke, 2010). How teacher induction has developed in Ireland is explored in the following sections.

1.2.1 The History of Teacher Induction in Ireland

Drawing on Stanulis and Floden's (2009) typology (see Chapter 2), teacher induction in Ireland can be characterised in terms of three waves (see Table 1.1). The first wave – Informal and Needs-focused (prior to 2002) – emphasised general support for first year teachers (the term 'newly qualified' was introduced later). It was voluntary and typically experienced by new teachers within a school context with only a very small minority of teachers participating in a short off-site programme (organised by Teacher/Education Centres, although some ITE providers also supported networks for beginning teachers, e.g. Beginning Teachers Network; see Killeavy and Murphy, 2006). In the latter case, these short induction programmes were an exception rather than a rule, with some Teacher/Education Centres providing induction where participation was voluntary and the programme most likely comprised initial orientation-type support early in the first year of teaching. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many primary and post-primary teachers both experienced and benefited from support by colleagues during their first year of teaching. Such support was most likely needs-focused, providing general emotional support for the 'new' teacher by the 'experienced' teacher – based on the latter's memories of the challenges of beginning teaching and its 'sink or swim' learning to teach culture. As Coolahan (2002) noted,

beginning teachers are often 'thrown in at the deep end', with a full teaching load and associated responsibilities. They often have few support structures to draw upon and can feel isolated, stressed and anxious (p. 25).

TABLE 1.1 Waves of Induction in Ireland: 1980s-Present

Wave	Features
1st prior to 2002 <i>Informal: Needs-focused with policy calls for induction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Focused on the needs of new teachers and their wellbeing * Largely informal, loosely organised, short term, possibly a few 1-2 hour ‘orientation’ meetings early in first year of teaching (possibly away from school site, if slightly more formal) * Typically organised by Teacher/Education Centres (some college-centred networks also, e.g. Beginning Teacher Network) * Reports – initially in 1984 (<i>Report on In-service Education</i>) and again 1991 (OECD) call for attention to and investment in teacher induction.
2nd 2002-2010 <i>Formal and pilot: Support focused</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Development of national pilot project on teacher induction (NPPTI) * Emergence of mentoring as key component of induction * Professional development for mentors, NQTs and principals * Evaluation of NPPTI undertaken.
3rd 2011-present <i>Formal and required: Support and professional standard focused</i>	<p><i>Induction: non-pilot (majority of NQTs) commenced 2012</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * NIPT provision of mandatory set of off-site workshops via the Education Centre network (12 x two hour workshops: 24 hours) * Criteria for full registration as a teacher * Flexibility in workshop provision commenced in 2013 (NQTs choose ten out of a suite of 12 workshops: 20 hours) * Flexibility further enhanced in 2014 in the provision of workshops on a non-teaching day, and recognition for NQTs’ school-based professional learning with an NIPT trained mentor. <p><i>Droichead pilot (minority of NQTs) commenced 2013</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * More developmental and structured approaches to induction including mandatory off-site workshops plus in-school support including school-based workshops (20 hours) * Multiple observation and feedback opportunities * Comprises formative and summative assessment linked to four criteria for full registration as a teacher * Comprehensive, organised system of integrated novice teacher assistance and assessment involving mentor, principal and Professional Support Team (PST) * Cluster/regional network meetings training and sharing purposes: for NQTs, mentors and PST.

The second wave commenced in 2002 when the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI) was launched. This ran until 2008 and involved a number of phases. The pilot involved collaboration by a number of partners including the Department of Education and Skills, teacher unions, schools and Education

Centres, and aimed to identify models of induction that could be utilised nationally (Politis, 2012).

A comprehensive evaluation of the initial phases was undertaken by Killeavy and Murphy (2006), resulting in a number of conclusions and recommendations at system, school and classroom levels, with implications for all stakeholders in the provision of induction. According to the authors, the role and responsibilities of mentors allied with a whole-school approach in supporting beginning teachers emerged as a key dimension of the NPPTI (Killeavy and Murphy, 2006).¹ The overall findings of Killeavy and Murphy's report were positive about the impact of the NPPTI on newly qualified teachers and their mentors at both primary and post-primary levels and provided valuable direction for developments in the latter stages of the pilot programme. The majority of mentors involved in the pilot emphasised the central role of trust in the mentor-mentee relationship and did not think they ought to have a role in assessing beginning teachers. This need to address the issue of assessment undertaken by mentors during induction reflects a wider change internationally which has emphasised the importance of both the coaching/mentoring and assessment/evaluative functions of experienced teachers in schools in supporting beginning teachers (Yusko and Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Both primary and post-primary teachers expressed positive views in relation to the support they received as well as the opportunities to engage with others' practice via observation. This finding from the NPPTI evaluation is especially noteworthy given that anecdotal evidence prior to that had noted the prevailing 'sink or swim' culture experienced by beginning teachers in their first year of teaching.

At the end of the National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction in 2010, the National Induction Programme for Teachers was launched. It is important to note that unlike some other countries where attracting and retaining good teachers is high on the policy agenda (see Darmody and Smyth, forthcoming), the impetus in Ireland came from teacher unions and teacher educators who wished to provide a 'bridge' between university education and the first year of teaching and to provide opportunities for continuous professional development (O'Doherty and Deegan, 2009).

¹ It is important to note that the evaluation was undertaken prior to the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006 and needs to be considered in that specific context.

The third wave in relation to teacher induction in Ireland commenced with the introduction of mandatory induction for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) as of September 2012.² The move reflected wider initiatives being undertaken by the Teaching Council to regulate and support professional standards across the continuum of teacher education from initial teacher education to induction and beyond. Consistent with Stanulis and Floden's (2009) observation about the move toward increasingly systematic approaches to induction internationally, both the NIPT induction programme (i.e. the programme available to NQTs in non-pilot schools) and the more intensive supports available through Droichead (pilot schools) resonate with the wider trend toward more coherent and integrated teacher induction.

1.2.2 The Droichead Pilot Programme

In September 2013 the Teaching Council, building upon its mandatory induction introduced in 2012 which had been informed by a prior national pilot project on teacher induction (2002-2010), introduced a new model of school-based and NIPT-supported induction called Droichead ('bridge' in Irish). This pilot has since been undertaken across schools in regions with the highest density of newly qualified teachers, although schools outside these geographic regions have been able to opt into the pilot (and some have done so). As the Teaching Council specified in developing and establishing the Droichead pilot induction programme, its main aim is 'to offer systematic professional and personal support to the newly qualified teacher' (2013, p. 4).

The Droichead pilot programme represents an approach consistent with the move toward integrated and intensive mentoring internationally. Indicative of the more intensive approach to mentoring in Droichead are the expectations around: (i) observation (NQTs observing and being observed), (ii) professional conversations between NQTs and mentor/PST on indicators of good practice, and (iii) NQTs' identification of their own professional learning needs following on from observations and associated feedback/professional conversations with mentor teacher and PST teachers. As such, these practices exemplify the meaning of 'intensive' in the context of the Droichead pilot and distinguish it from what

² Since 2012, all NQTs have been required to undertake 24 hours of induction programme workshops. The workshops take place in the late afternoon or evening time and each workshop is two hours in duration. They take place in Education Centres and/or outreach venues around the country. Themes covered in the workshops include: working as a professional; planning and preparation; classroom management and organisation; working with parents; child protection; assessment; behaviour management; literacy; numeracy; differentiation; inclusion; Gaeilge (primary teachers) / transition from primary school (post-primary teachers).

NQTs in non-pilot schools are likely to experience in terms of support in learning to teach. The two dimensions – assistance and assessment – built into conditions for registration add a further dimension to the meaning of ‘intensive’ vis-à-vis induction. In the case of Droichead, the involvement of the school-based PST in this aspect of induction introduces a new and potentially challenging dimension to the teacher induction landscape. Its introduction is consistent with wider trends internationally.

The Droichead pilot programme provides support over and above that for non-pilot schools (i.e. the majority of schools and NQTs nationally). Whereas the NIPT induction workshops are available to all NQTs, Droichead pilot schools have additional in-school supports for NQTs in the form of a Professional Support Team (PST), comprising the principal, a mentor or mentors and other support teachers as well as supports external to the school comprising cluster meetings at which participating schools receive training, share their experiences of the pilot, and receive support from the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and an inspector assigned to that cluster (see Teaching Council, 2015). Ongoing email and phone support is available from the NIPT and the Inspectorate.

1.2.3 Conditions of Registration for all NQTs: Assistance and Assessment

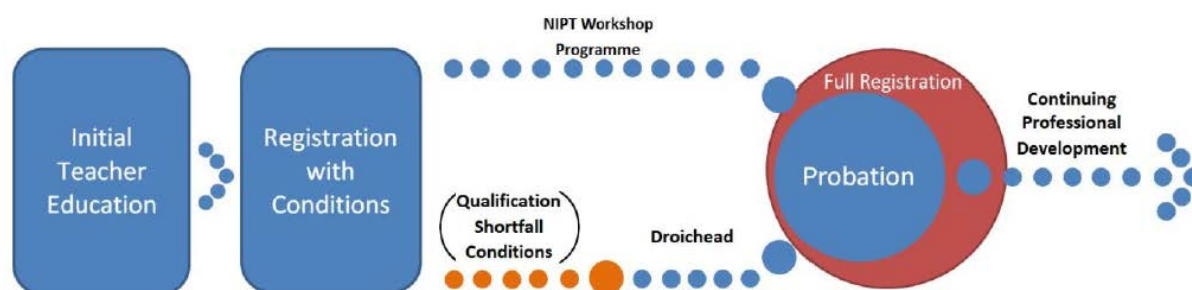
With the mandatory induction of NQTs established since 2012, two conditions of registration are in place for all NQTs: induction and probation (primary) or post-qualification experience (post-primary). These two conditions comprise what are increasingly seen as essential components of induction programmes internationally (Stanulis and Floden, 2009; Wang et al., 2010) and represent a step beyond earlier induction designs which focused solely on assistance/support systems. The induction workshop programme is provided by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) in Education Centres with the support of the Centres’ national association (i.e. ATECI). In response to demand by NQTs, some changes were made to the NIPT Workshop Programme delivery in 2013 and 2014-2015, whereby, in addition to the evening workshops, day-time workshops and school-based professional development ‘may also be recognised as part of the required 20 hours’ (Teaching Council, 2014). The Teaching Council is informed by the Education Centre once the minimum of 20 hours has been completed by each NQT.

Induction can be defined as a vital stage in the teacher's professional journey between initial teacher education and fully independent practice as a qualified teacher (Teaching Council, 2013). While engagement in the workshop programme as part of the induction is a requirement for full registration with the Teaching

Council, engagement in the school-based induction activities is not currently a requirement for full registration (as not every school has a trained mentor on the staff).

Probation refers to that juncture when an NQT has satisfied all of the conditions which were applied on initial registration and is now ready for progression to the next phase of the continuum (Teaching Council, 2013). At primary level, all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) must undergo probation which is school based and involves a service and a competence dimension. The competence aspect is currently confirmed by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) while the principal confirms the service aspect. At post-primary level, principals confirm satisfactory completion of a minimum period of post-qualification employment via a form known as 'Form B'. This is deemed to address both the competence and service issues.

FIGURE 1.1 Probation in the Context of the Continuum of Teacher Education



Source: Teaching Council, 2013.

1.2.4 Criteria that the NQT is Expected to Meet Before Completing Droichead

While each school participating in the Droichead programme is expected to ensure that the experience offered to the new teacher is structured, and that support is available, there is certain flexibility in how such support is provided (e.g. membership of PST team), to suit the particular circumstances of each school. In some circumstances, a single Professional Support Team might be comprised of teachers from a number of schools. In general, the principal, and/or the experienced colleague(s), are asked to confirm to the Teaching Council that the new teacher has satisfactorily completed the process. The Teaching Council's (2013) document, *Droichead: Teaching Council Policy on a New Model of Induction and Probation*, specified four criteria which NQTs are required to meet in order to successfully complete the Droichead process. The four criteria are having:

1. Completed a required minimum period of professional practice (at least one block of 50 days at primary level or a block of 100 hours at post-primary level);
2. Engaged professionally with the school-based induction activities as established by the Teaching Council;
3. Demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning; and
4. Demonstrated an ability to practice independently as a qualified, fully registered teacher.

The Council identified the latter three criteria as ‘high-level criteria’ and in order to explicate these, developed ‘indicators of good practice, which may be considered by PSTs in making a recommendation to Council’ about whether an NQT had or had not met the required standard of professional practice. The Council’s specification of these standards along with the facility for their adaptation to meet individual school understandings of practice can be seen as an important feature in contextualising professional standards. *Droichead – A Guide for Schools 2015/2016* provides examples of good practice across these categories.

Since the 1990s there have been notable developments in teacher induction and probation in Ireland. Traditionally, induction into the teaching profession was not structured, but consisted of ad hoc support to new teachers, an approach that varied a great deal between schools. The National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction (NPPTI), which catered for approximately 20 per cent of NQTs, was established in 2002 with the aim of developing proposals for an effective national programme for primary and post-primary schools. Since the introduction of the pilot programme, each phase of induction has suggested ways of further development and fine-tuning the process to address the needs of new teachers. The process has culminated in introducing a structured Droichead programme in pilot schools. As of November 2015, there are over 300 schools (primary and post-primary) registered for Droichead, with over 280 newly qualified teachers participating in the process for 2015/16. The pilot will run until 2016, with the aim that Droichead would be the route of induction for all NQTs within a three-year timeframe (see www.teachingcouncil.ie, 21 November 2015).

TABLE 1.2 Indicators of Good Practice

Criterion	Indicators of Good Practice
Engaged professionally with the school-based induction activities as established by the Teaching Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taken a proactive approach to his or her own learning and to reflection on his or her practice; - participated constructively in a broad range of professional experiences; - worked well as part of a team and contributed to the professional conversations with the PST; - engaged fully in the life of the school commensurate with his or her stage on the continuum of teacher education; - sought and availed of opportunities to observe and work alongside other teachers, and sought and availed of support and engaged with constructive feedback from the PST
Demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in line with school policies (in particular homework, assessment and other relevant teaching and learning policies) and the relevant national curriculum/syllabus or specification; - used a range of appropriate teaching methodologies, resources and assessment techniques commensurate with his or her stage of development; - structured and paced lessons appropriately; - provided for differences in student abilities, backgrounds and learning styles; - covered an appropriate range of material
Demonstrated an ability to practice independently as a qualified, fully registered teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated good communication skills; - demonstrated good classroom management skills; - engaged with all of the school community, including parents, in a respectful and courteous manner, having due regard for the values and standards set out in the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and for the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies; - supported, guided and motivated pupils/students towards the achievement of quality learning outcomes, including written work; - demonstrated an ability to exercise professional judgement in dealing with a range of issues and situations, and - actively engaged with colleagues in the context of the school as a professional learning community, and sought their guidance and support when necessary

Source: Teaching Council, 2015.

1.3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The current study aims to capture the learning from the Droichead pilot project and seeks to inform the model of teacher induction used in Irish primary and post-primary schools. In so doing, it seeks to answer the following key questions:

- How effectively are the teachers who participate in Droichead supported? Is Droichead adequately resourced?
- How useful and appropriate are the criteria and indicators of good practice developed through Droichead?

- How effective, appropriate and fair are the procedures and protocols employed by members of the Professional Support Team (PST) in making a recommendation to the Council in relation to the practice of a newly qualified teacher (NQT)?
- How effective is the Droichead experience as an induction into the teaching profession?
- What can be learned from the Droichead project to facilitate the mainstreaming of an effective induction and probation process for all teachers?

The study is complex in a number of respects. Firstly, it covers primary and post-primary schools, sectors which differ in their initial teacher education, management and school structures. Secondly, the findings need to be generalisable to the population of schools but at the same time need to yield insights into the processes at the school level in sufficient detail. As a result, it was decided to adopt a mixed methods approach, which would combine information from a quantitative survey of primary and second-level schools with in-depth qualitative information collected from principals, newly qualified teachers, mentors and members of the Professional Support Team in a set of case-study schools. In order to measure potential change over time as the programme becomes embedded in school practice, surveys were administered at two time-points (school year 2014/15 and 2015/16).

Many studies of teacher induction focus on evaluating a particular induction programme without comparing processes and outcomes to those in other schools not participating in the relevant programme (see Chapter 2, Banks et al., 2015). Given that participation in the Droichead pilot programme requires opt-in on the part of schools, we would expect that participating schools may differ from the total school population. For this reason, the survey phase of the study includes a set of non-participating schools matched to Droichead schools in terms of gender mix, DEIS status, school size, location (Dublin, other city, elsewhere) and, in the case of post-primary schools, school sector.

1.3.1 Survey Design

Postal questionnaires were developed for school principals, mentors, other PST members and newly qualified teachers in Droichead schools. In non-Droichead schools, questionnaires were developed for principals, newly qualified teachers and teacher induction co-ordinators (where evident). The questionnaire items drew on a number of items from previous studies of teacher induction in Ireland and elsewhere (see Banks et al., 2015). New questions were also developed to

reflect the specific nature of the Droichead pilot programme. Questionnaires were revised in response to a pilot survey of a small number of schools and to comments from the Teaching Council and NIPT.

The questionnaires focus on a number of topics:

1. The resources and supports available to NQTs, including:
 - i. The respective roles and responsibilities of different personnel;
 - ii. The kinds of support provided through the Professional Support Team (PST) and other in-school activities;
 - iii. Arrangements for in-school support, including the use of release time for NQTs and PSTs and the timing and nature of meetings;
 - iv. Access to external supports;
 - v. The extent and nature of between-school clustering in support; the frequency of contact between cluster schools;
 - vi. Factors impinging on the implementation of the programme, including capacity issues;
 - vii. The school's approach to teacher induction prior to the implementation of the Droichead programme.

2. The role of the mentor and other PST member, including:
 - i. How teachers become mentors or members of the PST;
 - ii. Their perceptions of their role and the degree of clarity around this role;
 - iii. Access to, and perceptions of, information material on teacher induction;
 - iv. Their interface with the principal, other members of the PST and staff members more generally;
 - v. Degree of formal cooperation (e.g. team teaching) and informal cooperation among teaching staff;
 - vi. Perceived adequacy of preparation for the role and development needs.

3. Feedback to and on NQTs, including:
 - i. The extent and nature of observation of the new teacher's practice; who is involved in the observation;
 - ii. The extent and nature of observation of other teachers' practice by the NQT;
 - iii. The frequency and nature of feedback to the NQT from the mentor, principal and other staff;
 - iv. The mechanisms for recording and reflecting on professional experience and learning for NQTs;

- v. Perceptions of the standards required for NQTs to demonstrate readiness for probation.
4. The experiences of NQTs, including:
- i. Reflections on their preparedness for teaching; self-efficacy;
 - ii. The main challenges as a beginning teacher;
 - iii. Perceived adequacy of the support given by the mentor and other colleagues;
 - iv. Access to, and perceptions of, information material on teacher induction;
 - v. Perceptions of the quality of out-of-school supports, including workshops;
 - vi. Perceived development needs;
 - vii. Teaching and assessment methods used with students; perceived influences on the approach used;
 - viii. Overall satisfaction with the induction programme.

Because of the small number of schools taking part in Droichead in 2013/14, the first wave of the survey phase was delayed until November 2014 in order to include schools which joined the programme in the school year 2014/15. Questionnaires were distributed to the 61 primary schools then taking part in the programme and to a matched sample of 100 primary schools. At post-primary level, questionnaires were distributed to 62 Droichead schools and 99 non-Droichead schools. Because of the lack of a database on mentors, PST members and NQTs, questionnaires were distributed by post via the school principal. The second wave of the survey of the schools involved in Wave 1 was conducted in Autumn 2015 and examined (a) changes in the Droichead process within schools between 2013/14 and 2014/15 for those schools who joined the programme at an early stage; (b) more detailed information on the Droichead process for schools who joined the programme in 2014/15; and (c) the experiences of newly qualified teachers who had taken part in the Droichead process. The number of completed questionnaires for the two waves of the survey is presented in Table 1.3. The response rate for Droichead principals was 61 per cent in Wave 1 and 43 per cent in Wave 2, with response rates of 68 per cent and 54 per cent respectively for mentors. Data were re-weighted to reflect the profile of all schools in the sample. The analyses presented in the remainder of the report mainly focus on responses to Wave 2 of the survey. As many schools had joined the programme just before the Wave 1 survey, this allows them to reflect on their experiences over a more extended period. Where Wave 1 and 2 responses differ, this is noted in the analysis.

TABLE 1.3 Completed Questionnaires for Waves 1 and 2 of the Survey

Staff member	Wave 1: Number of completed questionnaires	Wave 2: Number of completed questionnaires
Droichead schools		
Principal	75	53
Mentor	84	66
Other PST member	69	48
Newly qualified teacher	91	48
Non-Droichead schools		
Principal	111	63
Teacher induction co-ordinator	44	24
Newly qualified teacher	89	37

1.3.2 Case Studies of Schools

The survey data have provided important information on induction practices and perceptions of Droichead across schools. These data were being supplemented by case studies of six Droichead primary and six Droichead post-primary schools. The survey data were used to select the case-study schools, with the main criteria for selection centring on diversity in relation to length of time in Droichead (for post-primary schools), school size and number of NQTs. In addition, efforts were made to ensure a geographical spread of schools as well as a mix of DEIS and non-DEIS and single-sex and coeducational schools to the extent that this was possible among participating schools.

Within each of the schools, interviews were conducted by members of the research team with school principals, mentors, other PST members and newly qualified teachers. In addition, in order to capture information on teacher collaboration within the school and the potential wider impact of Droichead on the school culture, interviews were conducted with two teachers not directly involved in the Droichead process. These interviews focused on the themes addressed in the questionnaire but allow for much more detailed insights into the operation of the pilot programme at the school level. After the case studies were completed, newly qualified teachers were contacted by email to trace their experiences over time. Analyses in the remainder of the report draw on the multiple perspectives of members of the PST and the NQTs to provide a rounded picture of the implementation of Droichead at school level.

TABLE 1.4 Characteristics of the Case-Study Schools

Primary schools	
Chestnut Avenue primary school	Large, coeducational, DEIS
Sycamore Street primary school	Medium, coeducational, non-DEIS
Beech Park primary school	Large, coeducational, non-DEIS
Hazel Way primary school	Large, coeducational, non-DEIS
Holly Road primary school	Large, coeducational, non-DEIS
Aspen Square primary school	Large, coeducational, non-DEIS
Post-primary schools	
Ash Lane post-primary school	Large, girls, non-DEIS
Maple Street post-primary school	Small, girls, DEIS
Pine View post-primary school	Small, coeducational, DEIS
Cherry Lane post-primary school	Small, coeducational, DEIS
Willow Close post-primary school	Large, coeducational, non-DEIS
Birch Avenue post-primary school	Large, coeducational, non-DEIS

Informed consent and confidentiality/anonymity were key principles of the approach taken. Respondents were given very clear information on the nature and purpose of the study, allowing them to make a fully informed decision regarding participation. The research team also had specific procedures in place to ensure the confidentiality and security of the data used, including restricted access to the server on which data are stored.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 places the current study in the context of previous research on teacher induction internationally. The decision to join Droichead and the potential influence of earlier involvement in mentoring are examined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 looks at induction activities across schools, integrating survey and case-study data to explore differences between schools. Chapter 5 examines the recommendation process and the way schools have sought to balance support and assessment. Chapter 6 uses the case-study material to provide an in-depth picture of how Droichead is being implemented at school level while Chapter 7 looks at overall satisfaction with the programme and the benefits and challenges that schools have experienced. Chapter 8 summarises the main findings of the study and explores their implications for the future development of teacher induction policy and practice.

Chapter 2

Research on Teacher Induction

For decades, education researchers and reformers have called attention to the challenges encountered by newcomers to school teaching. However traditionally teaching has not had the kind of support, guidance and orientation programs for new employees — collectively known as induction — common to many skilled blue- and white-collar occupations and characteristic of the traditional professions (Waller, 1932; Lortie, 1975; Tyack, 1974). Ingersoll and Strong, 2011, p. 201

2.1 INDUCTION, TEACHING QUALITY AND LEARNING TO TEACH

2.1.1 Teaching Quality as a Policy Focus

In the last two decades research on teaching and learning has provided considerable evidence that the quality of teaching in schools is the single most important school-level variable in student achievement and the promotion of quality schooling (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; OECD, 2005; Hargreaves, 2003; Darling-Hammond and Lieberman, 2012). However, there is no such consensus on what defines teaching quality, nor on how to test or measure it. Despite the difficulties in reaching consensus around the exact definition of quality, a reliance on student achievement in core curricular areas (reading, Mathematics and Science) has typified and been the fall-back position in operationalising the outcomes of teaching quality, especially for governments and influential trans-national education bodies (e.g. OECD; UNESCO). One of the outcomes of this recognition of the importance of teaching quality has been an intense and unprecedented policy focus by governments worldwide on the education of teachers from initial teacher education through induction and beyond across the remainder of the professional life-cycle. In Ireland this is evident in the continuum of teacher education focus of recent policy (Teaching Council, 2011) and its focus to date primarily on the early phases of learning to teach (i.e. ITE and induction). However, the proposed requirement for ongoing CPD by all teachers reflects further evidence of the enactment of a professional life-cycle or continuum of teacher education policy in Ireland. Informed by the focus on quality teaching, this chapter reviews some of the key issues from the now significant literature on induction design, implementation and evaluation which has been undertaken over the last three decades. First, we note the appeal

of induction programmes in the context of efforts to promote quality teaching. Second, we outline three orientations to the conceptualisation of induction, that is, as a distinct phase, as socialisation and as an integrated programme. In framing the evaluation of Droichead, each orientation provides valuable insights on induction. However, the integrated programme orientation is central to contemporary practice on induction, and the critical issue for evaluation of Droichead evident from this research is the intensity of provision. Despite the absence of formal induction in the teaching profession for many decades compared to other professions, teacher induction is now increasingly viewed as a necessary and critical element in any teacher education reform agenda. The benefits of induction are seen as three-fold: reduced attrition, increased teacher commitment to teaching and enhanced student achievement (Arends and Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Ingersoll and Kralik, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Youngs, 2002; OECD, 1998, OECD, 2005). Evaluations of the introduction of similar induction programmes for newly qualified teachers have been undertaken in Scotland (Draper et al., 2004; Forrester and Draper, 2007), England (Kyriacou and O'Connor, 2003), Estonia (Löfström and Eisenschmidt 2009) and Hong Kong (ACTEQ, 2003), among other jurisdictions. There is now a very significant body of research literature on induction spanning the last twenty-five years (for reviews see Feiman-Nemser et al., 1989; Moskowitz and Stephens, 1997; OECD, 2005; Serpell and Bozeman, 1999; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; Strong, 2009; Wang et al., 2010). More broadly, recognition of the importance of transition and induction into any work setting has a long history in occupational research (Schein, 1970), with associated acknowledgement of the need to develop an understanding of the dynamics of quality induction and how exactly it fosters employee wellbeing and commitment to occupational roles (Forrester and Draper, 2007).

2.1.2 Appeal of Induction in Promoting Teaching Quality

New teachers have two jobs – they have to teach and they have to learn to teach. No matter how good a pre-service program may be, there are some things that can only be learned on the job. Feiman-Nemser, 2001a, p. 1026

Internationally, as governments have become more attuned to a recognition of teaching quality in fostering educational outcomes (and hence economic advancement) and an understanding has emerged about the complexity of teaching as a practice, the provision of high quality teacher induction is increasingly and unequivocally seen as an important, if not essential, part of becoming a teacher (OECD, 2005). In Ireland, while there have been calls to provide teacher induction for over thirty years (Killeavy and Murphy, 2006), the provision of teacher induction gathered significant momentum since the early

2000s with the initiation of the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI) (see Killeavy, 2006; Killeavy and Murphy, 2006). The NPPTI sought to identify best practice as a basis for future policy in the professional education of Ireland's teachers at primary and post-primary levels. After significant investment in design, implementation and evaluation over a number of years, the NPPTI formed the basis for the development of the national induction programme for primary and post-primary teachers, a culmination of the aforementioned calls for, and efforts to, crystallise a mandatory and structured induction programme for newly qualified teachers in Ireland (see Chapter 1).

The purpose of this review of literature on induction is to frame the evaluation of the Droichead programme in a national and international context. While there is now an extensive literature on teacher induction, and an associated and sometimes overlapping body of literature on mentoring newly qualified teachers, the literature on the design and evaluation of induction is our focus here. In particular, we note an emerging consensus on design principles for induction programmes. Furthermore, there has been a long-standing focus on three presumed benefits of induction, namely, its potentially measurable contribution to (i) promoting teacher retention/reducing teacher attrition, (ii) enhancing teacher engagement with practice and (iii) improving student achievement. In this review, we do not focus on a cross-national comparison of induction programme arrangements as this has been undertaken by many other reviews internationally (OECD, 2005) and nationally (Killeavy and Murphy, 2006; Conway et al., 2009). For example, internationally the influential OECD (2005) report, *Teachers Matter*, compared the standing of, and provision for, induction in over thirty countries. Nationally, Killeavy and Murphy's (2006) NPPTI evaluation report (i.e. *National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction: Report on Phase 1 and 2, 2002-2004*) provided a description of practices in other jurisdictions, as did the Teaching Council-commissioned literature review on learning to teach, *Learning to Teach and its Implications for the Continuum of Teacher Education: A Nine-country Cross-national Study* (Conway et al., 2009), comparing induction across nine countries. In terms of emerging policy on teacher induction, these reviews focus on a number of key trends: wide variation in requirement for induction, with it being mandatory in a small number of settings and linked to full licensure in a small number. The now mandatory nature of induction linked to full licensure for teachers in Ireland reflects a significant, though by no means, universal policy direction internationally in the promotion of teaching quality in schools and the development of a professional life-cycle approach to teacher education. In the case of induction in Ireland, the introduction of mandatory induction occurred in 2012 comprising a workshop programme offered by NIPT as noted earlier. The Droichead pilot represented a significant re-design of induction with its move

toward school-based support (observation, feedback, planning support, in-school workshops) (See Section 1.2.2).

In many countries internationally, recognition of the role of processes within, and impact of, teacher induction has been the focus of research over the last thirty years. Much of the earlier research in the 1990s focused on the arrangements for, and process of, induction. In the last fifteen years, in addition to the continued and important focus on the process of induction, there has been a notable focus on the impact of induction on teacher and student outcomes (for a major review, see Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). The appeal of, and rationale for, induction had gained very significant research and policy momentum in the late 1990s and is evident in a range of ways. First, researchers began to make a case for the potential efficacy of induction in meeting a number of valued aims in teacher learning as well as simultaneously making a case for designing the ‘seamless professional continuum’ (Howey and Zimpher, 1999, as cited in Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999) in the context of the early phases of the teaching life-cycle.

2.2 WHAT IS INDUCTION? PHASE, PROCESS OR INTEGRATED PROGRAMME

The question of defining what exactly induction is within a professional learning framework has been a notable feature of the literature with three framings emerging (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999), that is, induction as (i) a distinct phase in learning to teach, (ii) a socialisation process and (iii) an integrated programme for learning to teach. Each can be understood in terms of key assumptions, focus, strengths and weaknesses (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1 Three Views on Teacher Induction

	Assumes	Focus	Strengths	Weaknesses
A distinct phase in learning to teach	Novice and expert teachers are very different and induction occurs in a specified time period	Concerns of novice teachers and group differences (novice V expert teachers)	Recognises and values different needs within career phase context	Deficit view of novice teachers and concern with teacher concerns
A socialisation process	Central role of the school in enculturating novice teachers into the profession over time	Socialising teachers into norms and values of teaching in school and profession	Recognises the powerful and 'natural' school level enculturation that occurs for all new teachers.	The school level socialisation focus may or may not foster an engaged and committed stance to teacher learning
An integrated programme	Structured and systematic support over a designated period of time (usually a year) will enhance three valued outcomes: teacher retention, engagement with teaching and student learning	Design features presumed to positively impact novice teachers and students	Recognises need for deliberate and targeted support for novice teachers focused on key supports Recognises the complexity of teaching as practice and in some cases the role of curriculum reform in shaping induction	Wide variation in the intensity of induction programmes means overall effects difficult to ascertain in the absence of adequate research design

2.2.1 Induction as a Distinct Phase

The conceptualisation of induction as a distinct phase assumes that novice and experienced, and presumed expert, teachers, are very different. As such, it emphasises the differences between novice and expert teachers in terms of knowledge, skills and capacities. In particular, this literature focuses on the specific quality of beginning teacher concerns as they begin their professional careers and the anxiety that characterises this phase of learning to teach (Rajuan et al., 2008). Veenman (1984), in a review of novice concerns over a seventy-year period, ranked classroom discipline as the most serious problem followed by student motivation, dealing with individual differences, assessing student work and relating to parents. In the Irish context, a very similar set of concerns was identified by beginning teachers in the NPPTI evaluation (Killeavy and Murphy, 2006; 2008).

As a number of authors have argued (Zeichner and Teitelbaum, 1982; Buchmann, 1987; Conway and Clark, 2003), dealing solely with concerns as the major focus of induction (or during ITE) is not sufficient to help novice teachers learn the thinking skills and practices associated with adaptive expertise. In essence, the induction as a phase orientation has been criticised as overly concerned with deficit views of novice practitioners. It is important to address the specific

learning needs of the beginning teacher as a unique phase and also to understand that phase's place within a broader continuum of teacher development and its connection to both pre-service and continuing professional development. Thus, defining the learning needs and goals of beginning teachers in flexible ways and relating them specifically to the context of teaching is important in developing a learning orientation towards problems of practice. In addition, beginning teachers need to learn the skills for identifying assumptions and principles underlying practices and challenging dominant practices that are not consistent with reform-oriented teaching.

2.2.2 Induction: a Socialisation Process

The second orientation sees induction as a natural 'socialisation' process that occurs, with or without a formal programme, and that beginning teachers are inducted informally into the prevailing dominant culture of teaching and learning practices in their schools and wider system. Here the focus is on the context of teaching and the importance of socialising new teachers into the professional norms, values and practices that are recognised as productive and valued, which may or may not lead to engagement in lifelong learning practices. It recognises that 'learning on the job' without support can set beginning teachers into survival mode and thus short-circuit learning at a time when teachers are very motivated to learn. In addition, the culture of some schools is antithetical to learning and beginning teachers are left to 'sink or swim' (Johnson et al., 2004; Kardos et al., 2001), with little support or opportunity to learn from practice. In these contexts new teachers often develop safe practices that enable them to 'survive' in classrooms. Unfortunately without a structured, integrated model of teacher learning, teachers are often socialised into the culture of schools which are not set up for learning for either novice or veteran (Fulton et al., 2005; OECD, 1998; Sarason, 1996; Little, 1990; Johnson et al., 2004).

2.2.3 Induction: An Integrated Programme for Beginning Teacher Learning

Arising out of insights from both the distinct phase and socialisation orientations to induction has been the realisation that more systematic support for newly qualified teachers might address the well-documented problems in the first year of teaching going back many decades (Forrester and Draper, 2007). In some cases student NQTs have smooth beginnings (Huberman, 1989), but most describe the reality shock and struggle for survival associated with taking on full-time teaching responsibilities without assistance (Bullough, 1987; McDonald and Elias, 1983; Ryan, 1970). However, for decades systematic induction support was not available and NQTs were left to 'sink or swim' on their own. Consequently, the third orientation, and the one of particular relevance in the evaluation of Droichead, focuses on induction as a deliberate programme for sustained and

systematic support and assistance for beginning teachers. Recognising the assumptions, focus, strengths and weaknesses of both the distinct phase and socialisation framings of learning to teach, the focus on induction as an integrated programme orientation emphasises purposive design of induction to meet stated educational aims and objectives. As such, there is very considerable variation evident within and across countries in how exactly integrated induction programmes have been designed as illustrated by a number of reviews (OECD, 2009; Conway et al., 2009) with differences in (i) allocation of mentors, (ii) teaching workload accommodation, (iii) duration of mandatory induction, (iv) system commitment to induction for NQTs, (v) perceived links between induction and subsequent phases in the professional continuum and (vi) the role of higher education institutions in induction. We address each of these six as illustrative but by no means exhaustive policy decisions which point to the scope for variation in how systems construct an integrated induction programme. Later in this review we note the extent to which there is evidence, or not, to support these and other induction programme design features.

First, in the allocation of mentors, NQTs in Poland have the benefit of a *staz tutor*, an experienced teacher employed in the school at Appointed or Chartered Teacher level who supports the NQT throughout the first three-and-a-half years of teaching. This deliberate focus on appointing someone already highly credentialed as a mentor reflects a wider system-wide framing of the professional continuum for teachers. Second, in relation to teaching workload, Singapore has a well-developed scheme of induction for beginning teachers. For their first year, NQTs have a reduced workload of 80%, and are mentored by experienced teachers within the school in which co-teaching is a typical feature with teachers learning through observing one another teaching, through mutual feedback and sharing of lesson plans. Third, in relation to the duration of mandatory induction, NQTs in New Zealand are given provisional registration on graduation but must undergo a two-year induction period before full registration. In the OECD *Teachers Matter* report, eight of 24 countries studied did not offer induction, eight had mandatory induction and eight other countries had variations with some offering it at the discretion of schools or, in one country, depending on the status of teachers. Fourth, the extent to which a system commits to the intensity of the provision of induction varies hugely. Scotland has developed an innovative induction scheme, with guaranteed one-year teaching places in schools for participants, reduced teaching hours, time for professional development, and an experienced teacher as a probationer supporter (Draper et al., 2003; Forrester and Draper, 2007). Given this system-level commitment, Scotland's scheme has attracted extensive interest internationally. It is important to note that the choice of features such as co-teaching, observation, mutual feedback, shared and co-planning reflects a deliberate policy decision in induction programme design.

Fifth, the links between formal induction programmes and subsequent phases in the professional continuum has been infrequently structured into induction policy. However, Northern Ireland also recognises a phase of *Early Professional Development (EPD)* as progression from induction. This phase, extending over the second and third years of full-time teaching, provides a structured framework of professional development through planning, evaluation, reflection and discussion. The EPD phase is viewed as part of the professional continuum and the GTCNI has developed phase exemplars for ITE, for induction, for early professional development and for continuing professional development. So, for example, a *Career Entry Profile* encourages beginning teachers to develop a reflective attitude to their own professional development and ensures that the school is aware of and can make provision for the needs of the beginning teacher during and extending beyond the first year of teaching. As such, the EPD phase is intended to provide a context for teachers to further develop competences and extend them in new directions, but also built upon a particular vision of induction programme design. Sixth, while the central role of HEIs in ITE has been and is now increasingly conceptualised in considerable detail vis-à-vis its optimal design features, the role of HEIs in induction is typically not well articulated. While some HEIs have been involved in designing and supporting some induction programmes (e.g. Stanulis and Floden, 2010), the potential wider systemic role of HEIs in the design, implementation, evaluation and review of induction programmes has not been systematically assessed. In the case of Ireland, HEIs have had a significant role in contributing to the design and evaluation of induction over the last decade.

2.3 INDUCTION PROGRAMME WAVES: DROICHEAD IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Recognising the importance of the continuum of teacher education, induction aims to develop a culture of lifelong learning in each teacher. The purpose of an induction programme is to offer systematic professional and personal support to the newly qualified teacher...

It is grounded in the belief that the people best placed to conduct that formal welcome are experienced colleagues who know what is involved in teaching and learning in their school. Teaching Council, 2013 on Droichead pilot induction

In September 2013 the Teaching Council, building upon its mandatory induction introduced in 2012 which had been informed by a prior national pilot project on teacher induction (2002-2010), introduced a new model of school-based and

NIPT-supported induction – titled Droichead – and this pilot has since been undertaken across schools in regions with the highest density of newly qualified teachers, although schools outside these geographic regions have been able to opt into the pilot (and some have done so). As the Teaching Council specified in developing and establishing the Droichead pilot induction programme, its main aim is ‘to offer systematic professional and personal support to the newly qualified teacher’ (2013, p. 4).

How does Droichead compare to the various induction programmes developed over at least the last thirty years in other countries? To what extent is Droichead similar or different to programmes in other jurisdictions in terms of aims and design? To what extent can the current Droichead design be said to have been informed by developments elsewhere? What, if anything, can be learned from examining how induction has evolved in other settings? We draw on Stanulis and Floden (2009) to begin to address the above questions. In the context of the US, Stanulis and Floden identified, what they termed, four waves of induction in the US between 1986 and 2006:

- First-wave programmes established prior to 1986;
- Second-wave programmes implemented between 1986 and 1989;
- Third-wave programmes administered between 1990 and 1996;
- Fourth-wave programmes implemented between 1997 and 2006.

They chose the wave metaphor as they felt it helped characterise ‘the historical ebb and flow (initiation and culmination) of induction programs due to sporadic budgetary cuts and legislative indifference’ (p. 2). Characterising overall changes across the four waves in induction programme conceptualisation, they note that:

Reflecting increased understanding of teacher development, quality induction in the United States has progressed in developmental waves from informal one-to-one mentoring toward a comprehensive system of induction with multiple components. Each wave of programs has produced clearer and more comprehensive definitions, program goals, and induction components.

The same overall observation can be made of induction in Ireland – albeit that the pace of progress in Ireland has been more gradual than that in other countries against whose Ireland’s education system is typically compared – especially in relation to teacher education; that is Scotland, Northern Ireland, England, New Zealand, as well as the US and Australia. For example, Killeavy and

Murphy (2006), in their comprehensive evaluation of the National Pilot Programme for Teacher Induction (NPPTI) in Ireland, provide a detailed account of the impetus behind, and start date of, compulsory induction in England among other countries. They noted that in England induction became a statutory requirement for all Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in 1999, and that by 2005, twenty-two states in the US had mandatory teacher induction programmes (with some variation between states in the exact design). As such, given NQTs in Ireland were not required to undertake induction until 2012 (see Chapter 1), the development of mandatory induction in Ireland has come about a very significant number of years after its establishment in some comparable jurisdictions.

First wave induction (prior to 1986) was typically focused on the needs of new teachers and their wellbeing, involving largely informal, loosely organised, and often unfunded programmes. Second wave induction (1986-1989) was characterised by the important emergence of mentoring as a key component of induction. Third wave induction (1990-1996) involved more developmental and structured approaches to induction; they added formative assessment to the programme component and importantly were linked to curriculum standards, thereby linking induction explicitly to wider curriculum and educational reforms. Fourth wave induction (1997-2006), building up on the standards-based and curriculum reform focus of the third wave, were characterised by a more comprehensive, organised system of integrated novice teacher assistance and assessment system using multiple strategies. Summarising fourth-wave induction in more detail, Stanulis and Floden (2009) identified nine 'somewhat consistent sets of program components' which they listed in 'order of prominence' and noted that, '[q]uality induction programs usually encompass the first six components, and inclusion of the last three components is less frequent':

1. Educative mentors' preparation and mentoring of novice teachers,
2. Reflective inquiry and teaching practices,
3. Systematic and structured observations,
4. Developmentally appropriate professional development,
5. Formative teacher assessment,
6. Administrators' involvement in induction,
7. A school culture supportive of novice teachers,
8. Programme evaluation and/or research on induction,
9. A shared vision of knowledge, teaching, and learning.

Though the scale and governance structures of education in the US are very different, with 15,000 school districts across 51 state education systems,

compared to the more monolithic structure of the education system in Ireland, Stanulis and Floden's framing of the evolution of teacher induction programmes in the US in four waves is potentially helpful in our conceptualisation of Droichead (see Chapter 1).

2.4 SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Schools involved in programmes such as Droichead cannot be regarded as a 'blank slate'. Each has its own distinct organisational culture, different levels of formal and informal collaboration among teachers, and varying approaches to inducting new teachers. There is now an extensive research on organisational culture in schools and teacher effectiveness. Researchers have put forward various definitions of organisational culture, generally recognising that it is a system of shared values and norms that give it a distinct identity (Schein, 1984). All schools have their own distinctive identities and culture that are shaped by their history, context, staff and students, and that are also influenced by the external context of a school (Stoll, 1998). Closely linked to the organisational culture is school climate. Both are found to have impact on the work and wellbeing of individuals who work and study in these establishments. Exploring organisational culture and climate is important for understanding the experiences of early career teachers who often feel overwhelmed by the work involved and meeting the expectations of their more experienced colleagues (Cherubini, 2009). Furthermore, in order to prepare new teachers, attention needs to be paid to factors in teacher effectiveness such as teacher preparation and subject matter knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2006). To assist new teachers, various induction programmes have been implemented across jurisdictions in order to help the socialisation of novice teachers (see above). The following sub-sections present a short overview of the existing literature on organisational culture and school climate, and its impact on novice teachers.

2.4.1 Previous Research: What is Organisational Culture?

Organisational culture can be seen to take many forms. According to different theorists, it can be *uniform/integrationist*, i.e., it can be expressed in terms of a distinct 'collective consciousness' (Hofstede, 1980), 'underlying shared assumptions' (Schein, 1984) or 'group values' (Sackman, 1991). A *differentiated perspective* acknowledges cultural heterogeneity and plurality within organisations, as well as the potential for conflicting sets of values or beliefs (Martin 1992). According to Johnson (2000), individuals may have varying beliefs about many aspects of their organisation, but there is some level of agreement on core sets of assumptions, without which an organisation could not function. The *fragmentation perspective* conceptualises culture as a continuously changing reality. Martin and Frost (2004) contend that 'any organisation has aspects of

integration, differentiation and fragmentation’, and argue that researchers should therefore take all the three perspectives into account to understand the dynamics of culture more fully.

Most authors refer to the concept as the set of values, norms, standards of behaviour and shared expectations that influence the way in which individuals, groups and teams interact with each other and cooperate to achieve organisational goals (Jones and George, 2003; Hargreaves, 1992). Different inter-related elements are seen to create a pattern that is a distinctive part of any organisation (Hellriegel et al., 2004). Organisational culture is individually and socially constructed and can manifest itself in a conscious (e.g. physical setting, rituals, history) or subconscious way (unwritten rules, norms of behaviour)(Rousseau, 1990). Exploring the effect of the culture of an organisation, Keup et al. (2001) argue that culture clearly affects the way the members of the organisation perceive and attempt their work. A strong organisational culture tends to be cultivated by management, learned and reinforced by employees and passed on to new employees (Hellriegel et al., 2004; Kruger, 2003). Consequently the organisational culture has the potential to enhance organisational performance and individual satisfaction. As with other organisations, the organisational culture of schools is a multi-layered phenomenon which refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape the school climate. To what extent school culture and climate differ is discussed in the next sub-section.

2.4.2 To What Extent do Organisational Culture and Climate Differ?

Existing research on school culture and school climate reveals different perspectives held by researchers. Some authors have highlighted for a conceptual distance between school culture and climate (Hoy and Feldman, 1999). For example, the former is seen as comprising the shared values and norms of the school, while the latter refers to behaviour within the organisation and shared perceptions (Hoy, 1990; Heck and Marcoulides, 1996; Hoy and Feldman 1999). Hoy et al. (1991) further contend that school or organisational climate is generally viewed from a psychological perspective whereas school culture tends to be viewed from an anthropological perspective. Other authors, however, argue that norms, values, rituals and climate are all manifestations of culture (Schein, 1984, 1996; McDougall and Beattie, 1998; Schneider and Reichers, 1983).

School culture is a multi-layered concept. It is influenced by the interplay between three factors: the attitudes and beliefs of persons both inside the school and in the external environment; the cultural norms of the school; and the

relationships between persons in the school. A growing body of evidence indicates that the success of individuals within the school relies heavily upon how the school functions (Deal and Peterson, 2009). The prevailing culture in a school can assist school improvement efforts, or act as a barrier to change (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). To foster teaching and learning, a collaborative school culture that supports high levels of collegiality, teamwork and shared vision is essential (Edmonson, et al., 2002). It is important to note that culture in a school can be counterproductive and an obstacle to educational success; it can also be oppressive and discriminatory for various subgroups within the school (Patterson, et al., 1986). Over time, school culture may become internalised, i.e. teachers become comfortable with the standard operating procedures of the school's culture (Davis, 1988). In such cases, any change in the school may be accompanied by feelings of discomfort and resistance.

2.4.3 Leadership Practices and Organisational Culture

There is now an extensive literature on the development of organisational culture in education (Kruger, 2003) and the role of the principal in this process (Singh and Lokotsch, 2005; Waters and Kingston, 2005; Kapp, 2000). Hallinger and Heck (1998) argue that the principal's impact on learning is an indirect one, as it is mediated through the climate and culture of the school. At the same time, school principals have an important role to play in establishing a positive school culture (Barnett et al., 2000; Sahin, 2004). The activities of a school principal that impact on the culture of the school include building a vision and setting direction, supporting the staff, re-designing the organisation, and leading teaching and learning in schools (Leithwood et al., 2008). Other school improvement activities include providing opportunities for teachers to develop as leaders in the school, and providing teachers with opportunities for high quality professional development (McLeskey, 2011). As a leader of an organisation, a school principal's actions and leadership style is likely to have impact on the work and behaviour of the teachers in the school (Mintzberg, 1983). It is important to note that while the role of school leader is important in improving the culture of the school, a whole-school approach in implementing any change is essential (Deal and Peterson, 2009).

2.4.4 Teachers' Experiences

During their career teachers develop an 'interpretative framework', one that is shaped and reshaped through interaction with the social, cultural and structural conditions which impact on their everyday work (Kelchtermans, 2009). A supportive organisational culture is crucial to the enhancement of teacher job satisfaction.

Considering the new and multiple pressures that teachers are increasingly facing, it is important to understand and manage the balance between the ‘dissatisfiers’ and ‘satisfiers’ that keeps teachers resilient. ‘Satisfiers’ or positive features of the job (the work itself, responsibility, recognition, achievement) are essential to teachers’ sense of professional fulfilment. ‘Dissatisfiers’ refer to interpersonal relationships, administration, salary, and working conditions (Edwards, 2002). In order to increase teacher satisfaction it is necessary to enhance the teaching experience, autonomy and initiative in the classroom regarding subject delivery and pedagogy.

Over time some teachers become disillusioned in their job. Beltman et al. (2011) found that the extent to which teachers maintain their motivation and resilience reflects their personal attributes and the context within which they teach. The reasons for diminishing motivation included lack of stimulus and new challenges accompanied by external pressure for compliance. Hargreaves (2000) argues that the market perspective, and the rules and regulations associated with it, diminishes teachers’ sense of autonomy and confidence in their classroom judgement. Teachers are increasingly likely to be burdened with excessive expectations from society at large, caught between high expectations and low professional esteem (Punch and Tuetteman, 1996). In order to increase teacher motivation and job satisfaction, the school’s commitment to employee participation in goal setting, planning, and decision-making is paramount. Understanding the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction is crucial for teacher effectiveness and is particularly relevant for improving induction and the early years of teaching.

2.4.5 Early Career Teachers

Florio-Ruane (1989) highlights the importance of understanding the social organisation of schools and how it impacts on early career teachers. An increasing body of work has considered the experiences of novice teachers and difficulties they encounter when starting work in schools. An encounter with an established school culture often means they need to revise many established assumptions they hold about the nature of schooling – its norms, activities and social roles. In addition, novice teachers have also been found to be concerned about discipline in classroom, personal and institutional adjustments, and personal interactions, teaching methods and strategies, and working with special needs students (Smith, 2007). In addition, research has pointed to the emotional effect of teaching upon beginning teachers, the pervasive influence of school administrators, the perceived inequity of status, and the impact of school culture on their experiences (Cherubini, 2009). These teachers may also come under

pressure as a result of a heightened desire to meet the needs of students and the demands of fellow teachers (Pajares, 1993). One of the persistent problems is that student teachers' views of teaching are shaped by their own experience which in turn shapes their practices within the classroom, often irrespective of the approaches and methodologies learned in college (Hoy and Murphy, 2001; Pajares, 1993). Taken together, these studies highlight multiple issues that impact on the work of a novice teacher.

Existing research also shows that not all novice teachers manage to negotiate their start of the career successfully. Retention of new teachers is one of the driving forces underpinning formal induction programmes in the US and some other countries. According to many authors, up to half of all new teachers in the US leave within the first five years in the profession, with almost 30 per cent leaving within the first three years (Joiner and Edwards, 2008; Ingersoll and Smith, 2004; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004). The reason for leaving has been associated with weak socialisation structures in schools, sometimes characterised by a 'sink or swim' mentality (Maciejewski, 2007; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004) as well as the quality of their pre-service education (DeAngelis et al., 2013). The issue of teacher retention has not emerged as a concern in the context of primary or post-primary teachers in Ireland (Conway et al., 2009). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that retention may be an issue for some categories of teachers who leave teaching due to poor employment opportunities at post-primary level (i.e. 'leavers') and that turnover (i.e. 'movers') of teachers may be an issue in some urban schools designated as disadvantaged. The distinction between 'leavers' and 'movers', albeit based on anecdotal evidence, points to the complexity of retention at both a local and system level. Regardless of the distinctions between movers and leavers, evidence has accumulated about the need for formal induction for all newly qualified teachers.

2.5 SUPPORT FOR NOVICE TEACHERS

Various authors have referred to the importance of encouragement and support of novice teachers at school level (Fives et al., 2007), as the lack of collegial support may lead to 'feelings of ineffectiveness or un-accomplishment [which] are accompanied by a growing sense of inadequacy' (Friedman, 2000, p. 595). School culture has important implications for the induction of a new teacher with effective/supportive schools more likely to create school-wide conditions to support teaching and learning and to develop a supportive professional culture (Tait, 2005). Common features of induction programmes for new teachers include the incorporation of a mentoring element (Barrett, et al., 2009). In order for this to work, willingness to participate among partners (Zachary, 2005) and appropriate professional development for, and support of, mentors (Moir, 2005)

are essential. Fives et al. (2007) found in their study of beginning teachers that those who benefited from 'high guidance' from their mentors demonstrated lower levels of burnout and were less likely to leave teaching than their colleagues who experienced 'low guidance'. An inadequate or badly structured/organised mentoring process can actually have a negative impact on the experiences of novice teachers (Ehrich, et al., 2004). Components that could lead to dysfunction include

lack of time for mentoring, poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees, and a lack of understanding of the mentoring process (Ehrich, et al., 2004).

Socialisation practices, including induction programmes, are a crucial component in supporting novice teachers. It is imperative that rather than providing generic programmes, the induction provided should reflect the needs of the teachers (Mandel, 2006), which at a basic level include security, affiliation and self-esteem while other concerns are more job specific (see above). Without practical and relevant support, new teachers are more likely to experience burnout, struggle to cope with the daily stress and pressures and eventually end up leaving the profession (Kelley, 2004).

Effective collaboration between higher education institutions and schools in providing induction programmes benefits both novice teachers and more experienced colleagues who work with them. In the United States a longitudinal study on the effectiveness of an induction programme showed that 94 per cent of the novice teachers participating in this induction programme had remained in the classroom after four years (Kelley, 2004). The programme was individualised to meet the needs of the teachers within the schools and was not a general 'one-size-fits-all model'.

Joiner and Edwards (2008) argue that induction programmes must be tailored to address the true needs of the teachers within individual schools. An initial evaluation must be conducted to determine what is causing teachers to leave the profession or transfer out of specific schools. Just as one programme model or collection of induction activities will not work for all schools, all teachers are not leaving the classroom for the same reason. Commonly named reasons are: lack of instructional support; lack of emotional support; feeling of being isolated from colleagues; unrealistic expectations of what classroom environment includes; inadequate and poorly timed professional development; no support or induction programme; no formative observations and feedback; and an ineffective school climate and culture which leads to animosity among faculty members when trying

to implement new ideas (Angelle, 2006; Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Ingersoll and Smith, 2004; Maciejewski, 2007; Mandel, 2006).

In Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) study of formal induction and mentoring programmes, it was found that while there is a relationship between beginning teachers receiving support and their retention rate, the strength of that relationship depends on the type of support and the number of supports received. The challenge for teacher educators is to use knowledge about the social organisation of schooling to help novice teachers see classrooms in a new light to deal with the dissonance between their own lack of agency as a student and the authority of the teacher (Florio-Ruane, 1989).

2.5.1 Climate, School Culture and Teacher Induction

There is a significant correlation between the success of the induction programme and the climate and culture of a school. If the climate and the culture of a school do not support the induction activities of mentoring, collaborating and growing professionally, then new teachers will not be successfully socialised into the school organisation (Gruenert, 2008). Even if the new teacher survives the first year of socialisation practices in an ineffective school, it does not mean that he/she has been socialised into becoming an effective teacher (Angelle, 2006). This teacher will either continue the 'sink or swim mentality' and foster ineffective practices among future novice teachers, or leave the profession in the long run (Angelle, 2006). Therefore, the quality of the culture and climate within a school can determine whether or not socialisation experiences are going to be positive or negative.

The type of organisational socialisation that is utilised at the school level is one factor that affects the level at which the new teacher will implement the teaching model. For example, a *custodial culture* is one that is more conservative and less accepting of new teaching practices and change. In contrast, an *innovative culture* is one in which the beginning teacher would be encouraged to try a new teaching model and take risks (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2007). Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) in Belgium note that the 'praxis shock' of novice teachers not only has to do with issues at the classroom level, but also with teacher socialisation in the school as an organisation. Understanding novice teachers' micro-level experiences is important both for improving the quality of teacher education and induction as well as developing the theory of lifelong (career-long) learning of teachers (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2007).

The above emerging lessons from organisational socialisation as well as the wide variation in the degree of support experienced by beginning teachers have prompted researchers to study the interface between school cultures and induction to ensure that schools are both work and learning places for beginning teachers (Conway et al., 2014). Johnson's conceptualisation of professional learning cultures, even though based on a study of newly qualified teachers during their induction, is especially informative. Here we draw upon a large-scale study of induction in the US – the *Project on the Next Generation of Teachers* (Johnson, 2004) – which identified three professional learning cultures in schools, based on interviews with 50 second year teachers, that had very different implications for the types of support offered to novice teachers:

- **Novice-oriented professional culture:** beginner teachers support each other with little or no mentoring or opportunities to observe and share practice;
- **Experienced/veteran-oriented professional culture:** experienced or veteran teachers are supportive in a general way, yet by and large provide no mentoring, observation opportunities or feedback on classroom teaching;
- **Integrated professional culture:** learning to teach is seen as a task for all in the school. Support for newly qualified teachers is generally widespread across the school, with peer observation, feedback and a coaching culture centred around sharing professional practice and a deep focus on pedagogy.

As Feiman-Nemser (2012b) summarised the lessons from the *Project on the Next Generation of Teachers*,

Some new teachers found themselves in veteran-oriented cultures, where independent work patterns isolated them from their experienced colleagues. Others found themselves in schools with novice-oriented professional cultures, where their energy and commitment could not compensate for a lack of guidance by more experienced colleagues.

The optimal setting for what she terms the 'most fortunate' beginning teachers was

in schools with integrated cultures that promoted professional exchanges across experience levels and ongoing support for all teachers (Kardos and Johnson, 2007) (p. 14).

Crucially, as Kardos et al. (2001) note,

Principals proved to be important in developing and maintaining integrated professional cultures where the particular needs of new teachers were both recognized and addressed.

In the context of the evaluation of Droichead then, we might hypothesise that the ‘school cultures’ within which Droichead is being implemented will matter significantly vis-à-vis the opportunities to learn to teach afforded to NQTs.

2.5.2 Assessment and Assistance: ‘Embracing Contraries’ or ‘Judge-Mentoring’?

The separate functions and the optimal, as well as viable, relationship between assistance and assessment in induction programmes have been prominent in the induction literature. Some have argued, based on empirical studies of induction programmes in the US, that principals, mentors and newly qualified teachers can embrace the contrary imperatives of assistance and assessment despite some inherent challenges in doing so (Yusko and Feiman-Nemser, 2008). However, on the other hand, others have made a strong case, again based on empirical studies of induction programmes in England, that the judgement function will inevitably overwhelm the mentoring function resulting in judge-mentoring (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). Hobson and Malderez sought to ‘examine root causes of the failure of school-based mentoring to realise its full potential’. Their study drew upon two major mixed-method empirical studies carried out in England and focused on data generated from interviews with beginner teachers and mentors in both primary and secondary schools. Their study attributed the difficulty of embracing the contrary functions ‘to a failure to create appropriate conditions for effective mentoring in England at the level of the mentoring relationship, the school, and the national policy context’ (p. 89). Discussing their findings they emphasised the need to create a much greater ‘degree of informed consensus on the meaning and purposes of mentoring in teacher education’ (p. 89), in order to forestall the ‘practice of judgemental mentoring or ‘judgementoring’’ (p. 89), which they saw acting as an obstacle to the optimal professional learning of NQTs.

Although the induction literature has traditionally recommended separating assistance and assessment (i.e. a ‘coach’ can’t also act as a ‘judge’), there has been growing recognition that assessment is integral to promoting and gauging teacher quality. This has led to increased interest in approaches to new teacher

induction that meld support, development, assessment and accountability. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) undertook an in-depth study of the ‘images of mentoring in two well-regarded induction programs that integrate assistance and assessment to promote quality teaching’ (p. 923) (i.e. Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program (PAEP) in Cincinnati, and the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project), in order to understand ‘the possibilities and pitfalls of each approach’ (p. 923). Using a mixed-method qualitative case study design, they undertook interviews with programme leaders, analysed programme documentation and observed staff meetings and mentor training. Their findings are noteworthy in the context of the school level NQT ‘sign-off’ function for registration being undertaken in the context of Droichead. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) found that

assistance and assessment can coexist. Participating in assessment and evaluation did not prevent mentors from forming trustworthy relationships, although it sometimes made that more challenging (p. 923).

They documented how mentors not only addressed NQTs’ concerns, but they also assessed and supported new teachers in meeting the learning needs of their students. Significantly they concluded that

Mentoring can be most educative when mentors engage in assistance and assessment structured by appropriate frameworks and processes, get support from a professional community that upholds professional teaching standards, and receive training and ongoing professional development to carry out their important responsibility.

How can we, if at all, reconcile these apparently contradictory findings? First, while the conclusions offered are different, embrace contrary functions (Feiman-Nemser, 2008) and the inevitability of ‘judgementoring’, that is, combining support and evaluation (Hobson and Malderez, 2013), both studies highlight the wider system level structuring that led to very different constructions of mentoring and induction. Second, both studies highlighted the inescapable tensions between assistance and assessment, although these were resolved in very different ways in the respective case-study settings. Third, the differential outcomes point to the fact that either outcome is not necessarily inevitable, rather than the combined influence of school and system level factors may lead to a situation whereby assistance and assessment can be combined, or not. Finally, in terms of the tensions between assistance and assessment, while induction is not probation, nevertheless the co-occurrence brings a number of

tensions to the fore. Increasingly in latter years, assessment has been added on to the induction phase and in the US assessment and licensing of beginning teachers is increasingly the case with states linked to the INTASC standards. In the case of Droichead, the school is being called upon not only to provide an important assistance role but also to play a very significant assessment function in signing off on the NQT's readiness for full licensure as a teacher. As such, research suggests this dual role is likely to be challenging in some respects, but at least from Yusko and Feiman-Nemser's findings, a challenge that holds potential for significant professional learning for all involved.

2.6 CONVERGENCE ON BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHER INDUCTION

2.6.1 Early Research 1990s: Components of Induction³

The emerging consensus that a set of factors rather than one single factor alone is critical for effective induction reflects findings accumulated from significant research on induction over the last twenty-five years (Ingersoll and Strong, 2004; 2011). For example, illustrative of both the focus and policy salience of induction in studies in the 1990s, Moskowitz and Stephens' (1997) cross-national study (primarily Japan, New Zealand and Australia) of induction programmes, undertaken for the US Department of Education, identified a number of best practice principles:

- In general, new teachers are viewed as professionals on a continuum with increasing levels of responsibility and experience. Novice teachers are not expected to do the same job as experienced teachers without significant support;
- Typically, new teachers are nurtured rather than left to struggle in a 'sink or swim' situation;
- More often than not, teacher induction is a deliberate, purposeful and valued activity. In Japan new teachers, they noted, must have no fewer than sixty days per year of in-school training and thirty days out of school;
- In general, schools possessed a culture of shared responsibility and support for induction. As such, a school's staff members, as a collective, are expected to contribute to the nurturing of the new teacher.

³ An international research project IGNATIUS (Induction and Guidance of Newly Appointed Teachers in European Schools) aimed to improve induction and guidance of newly appointed teachers, highlighted the differences across countries regarding systems of teacher education and teacher induction. The project focuses also on those responsible for their guidance and induction in the schools where they are employed.

Addressing the appropriate balance between assessment and support was a challenge in all three countries, and in general they observed that assessment was downplayed, though there is an attempt to filter out incompetent teachers. Drawing out the implications of their review for the US at that time, they noted that teacher induction in the US focused (in the mid-1990s) primarily on assessment, and assistance when it existed was purposefully linked to aiding new teachers achieve assessment criteria.

After the implementation of integrated induction programmes since the late 1980s, Wong et al. (2005) reviewed induction programmes in five countries: Switzerland, France, New Zealand, Japan and China. Crucially, they found that there were three noteworthy similarities across the countries studied summarising these as follows:

- Induction was well structured based on the assumption that induction is a crucial component of the continuum of teacher education;
- Induction was underpinned by a focus on professional learning opportunities for both the 'new' teachers and mentors;
- Programmes emphasised collaborative learning among beginning teachers.

A central question posed in both the empirical studies and reviews has been the exact combination of factors that underpin effective induction. We now turn to this issue in the context of recent reviews on the effects of induction programmes.

2.6.2 Recent Reviews 2000s+: Induction Programme Intensity

In the last fifteen years, a number of different kinds of reviews of research on induction and mentoring have been undertaken including those that focus on: (i) the theory, rationale and conceptualisation of induction (e.g., Gold, 1999; Hegsted, 1999; Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ganser, 2002a; 2002b; Strong, 2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2012a), (ii) the dynamics of specific teacher induction reforms and initiatives (e.g., Fideler and Haselkorn 1999; Scherer, 1999; Serpell and Bozeman, 1999; Wang and Odell, 2002; Kyriacou and O'Connors, 2003; Forrester and Draper, 2007; Desimone et al., 2014) and (iii) the dynamics of teachers' experiences with induction (e.g., Wang et al., 2008; Youngs, 2007; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Saka et al., 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Risser, 2013). In addition, two recent books by Strong (2011) and Wang et al. (2010) provide valuable overviews of key aspects of the now very substantial literature on teacher induction programmes.

Over a decade ago, Ingersoll and Smith's (2004) review of the effects of mentoring identified practices and supports that had a positive effect on the retention of teachers. They found that the strongest factors or elements that influenced teacher retention included: having a mentor from the same subject area, collaborative planning time with teachers on the same grade level and subject, having common and consistent planning with other teachers, and participating in networking activities with other novice teachers (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004). According to Angelle (2006), formal and informal class visits by the principal, reflective feedback, and the principal's promotion of best instructional strategies were the most effective elements that retained teachers. Other researchers have also concluded that effective components are: personalising mentor programmes to the location and subject area, intensive mentor training and support, release time for observing experienced teachers, common time to share and develop problem-solving strategies with other new teachers, well-timed professional development and novice teacher directed information sessions and discussion (Ganser, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Maciejewski, 2007; Mandel, 2006; and Robinson, 1998). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that it is not the use of one single element that reduces attrition rates but the bundling of multiple activities and supports that makes the difference. The greater the number of supports included in the induction programme, the lower the predicted probability of leaving the profession prematurely (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004).

In the most comprehensive review of induction programme impact to date, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) observed that despite the accumulation of a number of significant reviews of induction '...there have been few efforts to provide comprehensive and critical reviews of empirical studies that evaluate the effects of induction on various outcomes' (p. 229). Their 2011 review built upon their earlier work in 2004 on the effects of mentoring and on Strong's (2009) book which reviewed induction and mentoring research. In Ingersoll and Strong (2011), the authors initially identified 500 studies on induction of which 150 were empirical. They then assessed these 150 studies and found that only 15 studies met their three selection criteria: evaluation of outcomes, comparison within the study design and explicit description of data and methods. Ingersoll and Strong's findings are both very informative and important for a number of reasons. First, they demonstrate that despite the proliferation of studies on induction, most of the literature does not provide a sufficiently rich and rigorous description of programmes researched for the purposes of research meta-analyses. Second, while there was general consensus on the effectiveness of 14 of the 15 programmes in terms of the three focal outcomes, the fifteenth study, with its randomised control design, provided equivocal results, prompting the authors to question the other overarching findings of their study. In doing so, they pointed

to the general need for higher quality research designs in evaluating induction programmes for teachers. Third, echoing previous research, they found that the intensity of programmes mattered.

2.6.3 Intensity and Interactions Matter

However, the data also tell us that the kinds and amounts of support greatly vary, and research suggests the effects depend on how much induction one gets and for how long. Ingersoll and Strong, 2011

The issues of induction programme intensity and programme interactions with other aspects of beginning teachers' experiences together highlight the complex nature of induction programmes and the limitations of general unqualified claims about the 'impact' of induction programmes, notwithstanding some of the emerging findings from systematic reviews of induction programme impact discussed above (i.e. Ingersoll and Strong's major critical review).

First, the intensity of induction programmes can be understood in a number of ways: the combined effect of initial formal orientations for NQTs along with whatever bundle of activities and supports are designed to support their work as teachers, the intensity of mentoring support afforded NQTs (i.e. both formal and informal mentoring, e.g. Desimone et al., 2014) or the role only of formal mentoring opportunities afforded NQTs (Hopkins and Spillane, 2014). For example, Desimone et al. (2014) undertook a study premised on the idea that informal mentors likely play a significant role in NQT learning, 'yet we know little about them, especially in relation to formal mentoring, which is the cornerstone of most induction programs' (p. 88). In a study of 57 first-year Mathematics teachers (across 11 districts in the US), they found that informal and formal mentors 'sometimes serve similar functions but often provide compensatory and complementary support' (p. 88). In the context of Droichead then we might hypothesise that in some schools informal mentors as well as designated Professional Support Team mentors might together play a significant induction role and/or that Droichead may act as a catalyst for the activation of informal mentoring. Were either or both of these outcomes the case, we might then ask about Droichead's capacity to animate wider professional learning communities in schools in support of teacher education.

Despite the emerging awareness of the important role of informal mentors, there has been a continued focus on the contribution of formal organisational structures and arrangements vis-à-vis the intensity of induction programmes and

how they do or do not meet the learning needs of NQTs. Hopkins and Spillane (2014), using a mixed methods design (i.e. social network and interview data analysis), examined beginning teachers' advice- and information-seeking behaviours related to Mathematics and literacy. They found that

formal organisational structures inside schools were critical for shaping beginning teachers' opportunities to learn about instruction, including grade level teams and formal leadership positions.

In terms of Droichead, then we might consider the ways in which formal organisational structures (class level planning at primary; subject departments at post-primary) support and possibly amplify the intensity of the overall Droichead experience.

Second, in terms of understanding the impact of induction a number of recent studies have pointed to the ways in which beginning teachers' experiences prior taking up their first teaching position interact with formal induction programmes. DeAngelis et al. (2013), in a study examining perceived preparation quality and the likelihood of leaving teaching (evidenced in previous research findings), found the 'comprehensive support moderates the relationship between pre-service preparation and intentions to leave' (p. 338).

2.7 CONCLUSION: DESIGNING AND EVALUATING INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

The theory behind induction holds that teaching is complex work, pre-employment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all of the knowledge and skill necessary to successful teaching, and a significant portion can only be acquired while on the job (see e.g., Gold, 1999; Hegsted, 1999; Feiman-Nemser 2001; Ganser, 2002). Ingersoll and Strong, 2011, p. 228

2.7.1 Rationale for Induction

Taking up a prominent theme in teacher education policy and research internationally, various reports and reviews in Ireland going back over thirty years, as noted by Killeavy and Murphy (2006) in their NPPTI evaluation, have recognised the need for a structured and integrated induction process. These long-standing calls for induction have been underpinned by an emphasis on it being 'demarcated, interconnected and related to a holistic view of professional practice' (Conway, Murphy, Rath and Hall, 2009). As such, the design, evaluation and implementation of the National Pilot Programme of Teacher Induction

(NPPTI), starting in 2002, was an important step at a system level toward realising a more integrated and extended view of learning to teach. In particular, it recognised that the transition from student teaching to becoming a practising teacher is a phase worthy of deliberate support recognising its underpinning in a reconceptualisation of what it means to learn to teach (Killeavy and Murphy, 2006). Crucially, a consensus has emerged internationally that learning to teach effectively cannot happen in ITE alone. Rather, learning to teach must occur within a context of a continuum of teacher education. As we have noted this insight has been a feature of reports and incremental moves toward system-wide teacher induction in Ireland since the early 1990s. For the purposes of this Droichead research, we can summarise a number of key ideas that have emerged in our review of the now extensive literature on teacher induction.

2.7.2 Framing of Induction Matters

The framing of induction in terms of phases, a process of socialisation and an integrated programme provides a typology for thinking about the ways the term ‘induction’ is used in policy and in practice. In terms of the evaluation of Droichead, it also draws our attention to ways in which each orientation can help us understand important aspects of induction. The distinct phase and socialisation orientations are reflected in the attention in the questionnaire and school case studies to novice teacher concerns and experience of the dynamics of enculturation in their schools. The orientation toward induction matters for both design and evaluation, given Feiman-Nemser’s observation that conventional mentoring programmes have historically emphasised emotional support and induction into the social mores of the setting within hierarchical relationships with little attention given to the development of teaching and learning (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999).

2.7.3 School Culture / Context Matters

The literature on induction illustrates the many ways in which school culture matters in the successful implementation of induction. In this review we have highlighted a number of ways in which school culture matters: principal leadership, the critical role of both formal and informal mentoring in schools, and the professional learning culture in the school (novice, veteran or integrated). Crucially, research suggests, that each of the dimensions of school culture mediates the nature and level of support for NQTs involved in induction programmes.

2.7.4 The Impact of Induction

Case studies of thoughtful mentors at work show that they act as cothinkers and coplanners, helping new teachers reframe challenges, design and modify instruction and assessments, and analyze and promote student learning. Mentors also deliver difficult feedback and strive for a balance between supporting new teachers and challenging them to grow. Feiman-Nemser, 2012

As we noted, the recent and most comprehensive review of induction programme impact to date, undertaken by Ingersoll and Strong (2011); observed that despite the accumulation of a number of significant reviews of induction the actual number of studies that employed research designs to ascertain programme impacts has been limited to date. In the context of this research on Droichead, the approach being taken is consistent with the three essential criteria identified by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), they are evaluation of outcomes, comparison within the study design and explicit description of data and methods.

2.7.5 Scalability of Induction Programmes

The issue of 'scale' is a key challenge for educational and school reform in every country. As Coburn (2003) notes, 'definitions of scale have traditionally restricted its scope, focusing on the expanding number of schools reached by a reform' (p.3), thereby masking 'the complex challenges of reaching out broadly while simultaneously cultivating the depth of change necessary to support and sustain consequential change' (p.3). The Droichead induction programme meets the criteria for a system-wide reform initiative and as such it is important to consider the issue of scalability of reform. Coburn, for example, argues that we must move beyond a numbers approach and consider the depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership of any educational initiative.

Chapter 3

Joining Droichead

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the decision to join the Droichead pilot programme. The second section outlines the characteristics of schools that have joined the programme. Section three describes the rationale for taking part in the programme from the perspective of the case-study schools. This is followed by the description of the recruitment of members of the Professional Support Team (PST) in section four. The teacher induction process pre-Droichead is described in section five while the school's prior professional learning culture is described in section six of this chapter.

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Because schools self-selected into the Droichead pilot programme, it is worth examining which kinds of schools chose to take part. Table 3.1 shows a logistic regression model indicating the relationship between primary school size, DEIS status and gender mix and the likelihood of taking part in Droichead. Positive coefficients mean that this type of school is more likely to take part while negative coefficients mean that these schools are less likely to take part, all else being equal. The main differentiating factor between Droichead and non-Droichead schools is school size, with larger schools (those in the top third in terms of student numbers) being over 21 times more likely to take part than smaller schools. This is likely to reflect differences in the numbers of newly qualified teachers across schools. There are no differences between Droichead and non-Droichead schools in their gender mix or DEIS status. These school characteristics (size, gender mix and DEIS status) only explain a very small amount (2.3 per cent) of the likelihood of being in Droichead. Later in the chapter we explore other school characteristics, such as prior approach to teacher induction, which may have shaped the decision to join the programme.

Similar analysis was conducted for post-primary schools. As at primary level, school size is the main differentiating characteristic between Droichead and non-Droichead schools, with larger schools 13 times more likely to join Droichead than smaller schools. Taking account of school size, sector and gender mix, DEIS schools are somewhat more likely to take part in Droichead than non-DEIS schools. Participation does not vary by school sector or gender mix. Additional

analyses (not shown here) indicate no variation in participation by whether the school is fee-paying or an Irish-medium school. As with primary schools, only a very small proportion of the likelihood of taking part in Droichead is explained by these objective school characteristics (size, DEIS status and sector).

TABLE 3.1 School Type and Participation in Droichead, Primary Schools

	Years 1 and 2
	Coefficient
School size:	
Medium	1.673*
Large (Ref.: Small)	3.380***
DEIS school (Ref.: Non-DEIS)	-0.191
Gender mix:	
Boys only	-1.169
Girls only (Ref.: Coeducational)	-0.444
Adjusted R ²	2.3

Note: *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

TABLE 3.2 School Type and Participation in Droichead, Post-Primary Schools

	Years 1 and 2
	Coefficient
School size:	
Medium	-0.234
Large (Ref.: Small)	1.169***
DEIS school (Ref.: Non-DEIS)	0.652*
Gender mix:	
Boys only	0.349
Girls only (Ref.: Coeducational)	0.246
School sector:	
Vocational	0.352
Community/comprehensive (Ref.: Voluntary secondary)	0.006
Adjusted R ²	3.6

Note: *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

Based on interview data from the case-study schools, the following section focuses on the rationale for joining the Droichead pilot programme, the people involved in the decision-making process and the benefits and challenges associated with joining the programme. Before exploring the rationale for joining Droichead, it is interesting to look at perceptions of Droichead among the matched sample of non-Droichead schools. Four-in-ten of these principals described their knowledge of Droichead as ‘very good’ or ‘good’, a third saw their knowledge as ‘fair’ while a quarter described it as ‘poor’. Among principals in non-Droichead schools, almost half said they would be interested in taking part in the programme. Those in second-level schools were more likely to express interest than those in primary schools (65 per cent compared with 31 per cent). Reasons for not wanting to join Droichead centred on the additional workload involved and on concerns about assessing newly qualified teachers:

I think the workload is too much on principals today to do this job adequately and properly. (Non-Droichead principal, Wave 2)

There are simply too many initiatives going on in school at the moment. I really think I couldn't burn teachers with yet another one. (Non-Droichead principal, Wave 2)

As principal, I do not want to 'sign off' on a teacher. I see a role for the principal in the induction of new teachers. I am concerned about the reduction in inspectorate and I'm not sure there would be consistency throughout the country regarding induction/probation. (Non-Droichead principal, Wave 2)

[It] would change relationship with NQTs, who readily seek advice at present. (Non-Droichead principal, Wave 2).

A small number of school principals indicated that Droichead was not relevant to them as they had not had NQTs for some time.

3.3 HOW DOES THE DECISION TO JOIN COME ABOUT?

There is now an extensive literature on the development of organisational culture in schools (Kruger, 2003) and the role of the principal in this process (Singh and Lokotsch, 2005; Waters and Kingston, 2005; Kapp, 2000). A school principal influences the culture of the school by building a vision and setting a direction, supporting the staff and managing the teaching and learning programme in schools (Leithwood et al., 2008). Across all of the case-study schools, principals played an important role in introducing the Droichead pilot programme into the schools. In this context, it is worth noting that principals of Droichead schools were significantly more likely than those in a matched sample of non-Droichead schools to have themselves previously taken part in mentoring training (with 39

per cent having done so compared with 25 per cent in non-Droichead schools). Many of the principals in Droichead schools were described by other staff members as ‘open’, ‘supportive of change’ and ‘embracing new initiatives’. For example, a mentor in Cherry Lane post-primary school noted that the principal in that school had been ‘mad to get it [Droichead] into the school’. However, in some schools (Maple Street post-primary school, Chestnut Avenue primary school), mentors and other staff members rather than the principal acted as the main catalyst for getting involved in the programme. The advocates for participation were usually staff who had been involved in the induction process in the past, who supported participation in new initiatives or who had an active role in the broader Droichead framework. The deputy principal of Cherry Lane post-primary school (a non-PST teacher in the school) felt that:

It’s always important to get in on pilot programmes, any new programmes, I think it’s a great idea to get involved and plus I would have had some experience around mentoring and so anything to do with mentoring, we were really interested.

Pre-Droichead approaches to teacher induction also seemed to play a role in adopting Droichead in Hazel Way primary school: ‘There was a culture of induction practices going on in the school’ (Principal). Teacher induction processes in the case-study schools before the introduction of Droichead will be discussed in section five of this chapter.

In addition to pre-existing practices regarding teacher induction, the interviewees gave several other reasons for being interested in joining Droichead. In one school the principal commented on preferring the programme to the visit by the inspector: ‘We had the threat... of the inspector landing on us’ (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school). Elsewhere, a principal liked the support the programme offers to new teachers: ‘the basic tenets of the process appealed to me and that is why I kind of thought this is worth exploring’ (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school). Three principals (Sycamore Street primary school, Pine View post-primary school and Aspen Square primary school) felt that the staff of the school would be supportive of being involved in the programme:

My staff are very young, they are very vibrant, they are extremely enthusiastic and very positive. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school)

[We] thought this is a great idea because we have a very young staff. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Because we had this younger staff, we had a younger profile maybe as well, plus we had a lovely mix of more mature staff members who had a variety of experience behind them who could become the mentors if they were prepared to do it. (Principal, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

Being part of new initiatives was seen as progressive by some interviewees, including the principal of Maple Street post-primary school: 'We want to be a school that's progressing' (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school). Another principal commented on the benefit of the programme for the mentors: 'I just felt it would be good to have the structure around it [induction] and the support of the Droichead programme for the mentors' (Principal, Cherry Lane post-primary school). In addition to support, the programme was seen as having the potential to provide mentors with new skills: 'I saw an opportunity to get a lot of experience and, you know, pick up a few skills along the way that can help with my own career' (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school). On one occasion, the decision to join Droichead was influenced by the feedback from an inspector who had recommended that the school should improve on peer observation (Willow Close post-primary school). In all cases the schools had self-selected to be part of the programme. The mentor of school Birch Avenue post-primary school noted how self-selection into Droichead could be significant for wider roll-out across the system:

My fear is if it becomes a national induction programme and it is rolled out to every school, that choice is now gone and perhaps the goodwill that went with such choice might disappear and I think I worry about the atmosphere that is created. I think atmosphere... might be a little, I suppose, abstract concepts but they are very, very important about how you would perceive the programme. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

While the decision to join Droichead was mainly driven by the principals or mentors, schools varied in the extent to which joining the programme was discussed more widely with the staff. In Hazel Way primary school, the principal had consulted with staff but also with the NQTs and the board of management as joining the programme was seen as 'a major decision' as it was a pilot. While some staff in Holly Road primary school referred to having had discussions about whether to join Droichead, a non-PST teacher said that they 'were told we were doing it' and that the nature of the programme was explained to them at the general staff meeting (rather than having a broader discussion). A certain

ambiguity about the programme was also expressed by the other PST member in the same school:

It was kind of introduced... we have a teacher on our staff who is a mentor for the Teaching Council and goes to other schools, so we were kind of aware of it, and we kind of heard... about it and then it was introduced that we might, we were going to become a Droichead school, even though we had no NQT at the time. (Other PST, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Limited consultation with staff was also evident in Willow Close post-primary school where a discussion had taken place between the principal and some other teachers who were all in agreement that Droichead would suit their school. However, a non-PST teacher in the school felt that the issue should have been discussed more widely: 'I don't think we were told enough about it... I think staff needs to be more aware of what Droichead is'. Confusion about the purpose and nature of the programme was also evident in Birch Avenue post-primary school.

Several schools had received assistance from outside agencies in setting up the programme in their schools. One interviewee commented on the support of Droichead staff and NIPT in the process:

A facilitator came and helped the school to set up the structure.... we gathered up our PST team and took it from there and we got training and we just followed the procedures that were given... if we needed any questions answered, the NIPT was very supportive. (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

One-to-one assistance to schools rather than general meetings about introducing Droichead was seen as more beneficial by some schools.

As indicated earlier, some NQTs were also involved in the decision-making process. Where the programme had been introduced earlier, reports from previously probated teachers who had been part of Droichead in the school motivated the new NQTs to be involved:

When I started off here like I knew that it was a Droichead school ... I was delighted [to get in], like I really was delighted because I'd spoken to the girls who did it last year and they had really positive feedback from it. I'd also spoken to, like some of my friends had done the traditional Dip and they were under so much pressure and they had like the worst year of their lives. And then I was chatting to the girls here and they said that it was great, like just so much more at

ease, so I was kind of, I was excited about doing it that way. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Despite being open to introducing the programme in the school and perceiving its positive aspects, the interviewees highlighted several challenges regarding joining the programme including misgivings about judging new teachers on their teaching (sign-off), the workload involved and union perceptions of the programme. In Chestnut Avenue primary school the principal admitted having been ‘a bit nervous’ at the beginning regarding having to judge other people’s teaching. Staff in Pine View post-primary school also felt strongly about teachers ‘signing off’ NQTs.

I think the majority of staff were in favour of this mentoring program but they have a big issue about the signing off and I think that still is an issue.... that the principal ultimately will be signing off, in other words have I the right to sign off on someone’s career. That’s the staff, they still feel, some of the staff feel strongly on that. [Signing off], it shouldn’t be done by fellow teachers. (Principal, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

The principal in Sycamore Street primary school recognised that some other principals would be negative about Droichead because of the workload involved – ‘I can understand how principals just feel that they cannot take on one more thing’. In Beech Park primary school there was opposition within the school staff to joining Droichead, particularly in relation to the lack of compensation and the additional workload. A previous mentor in the school communicated her misgivings about Droichead:

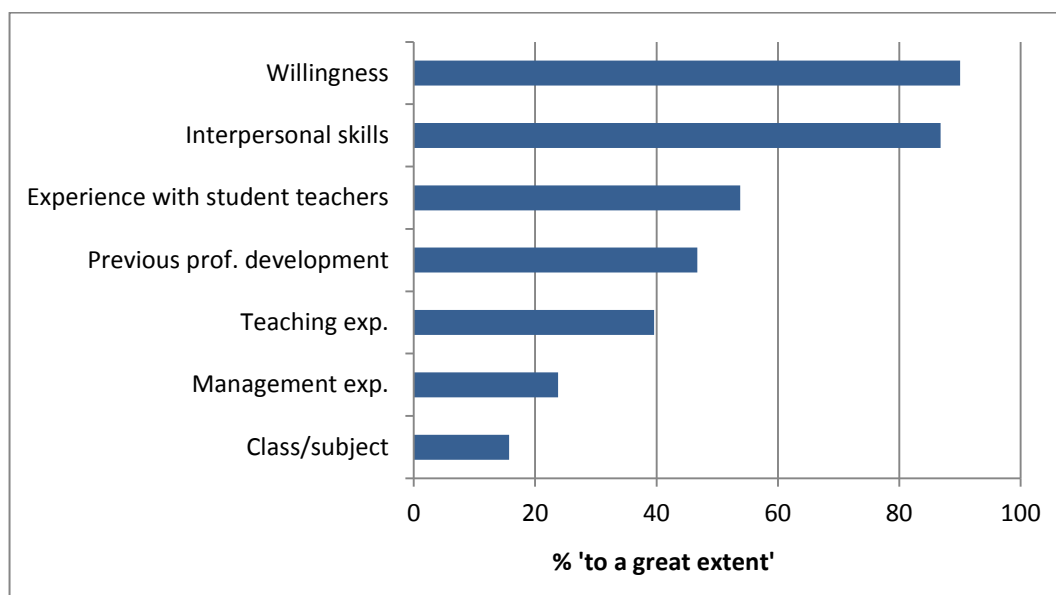
I am employed to teach here in the school and the children who I teach are my responsibility. So as part of this system that’s being piloted, like you have to leave your class, there’s a sub has to come in. That is preparation for you to prepare for them, to leave work for them, you know, and of course it has to be done on a regular basis. Then you have to go into another class and give your time in there and that is time that you are getting paid for to teach your own children. Then likewise you are looking for the goodwill of the staff again because that teacher has to go and observe people and that’s more time that she [the NQT] has to go out of her class and get somebody else to go in there. I just feel that, there is an awful lot of organisation and structure. (Mentor, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Chapter 1 referred to initial tensions around the programme. This tension was also evident in some of the interviews. When Aspen Square primary school first got involved, the union representative in the school and a small number of teachers had some reservations about joining the programme. The principal invited a Droichead representative to come and talk to the staff. That meeting was influential in encouraging participation and buy-in from the school staff. Elsewhere, the industrial relations situation made getting started with the Droichead programme difficult in some cases:

When we first introduced Droichead... it was during that period of time where there was industrial action. The Croke Park hours were not being engaged with, ... we couldn't hold them and Droichead, the pilot scheme we signed up to, to and we had planned to speak to the entire staff, sit down explain exactly what the steps were, step by step, and the problem with that was because we had no Croke Park hours, we couldn't actually explain to the whole staff together. Now we have a staff of [X], as I said, trying to get them all in one location when we are not engaging in any form of official meetings is a very awkward situation. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

3.4 HOW ARE PST MEMBERS RECRUITED?

This section discusses the recruitment of PST members. In the surveys, principals were asked about the criteria they used in selecting mentors and other PST members. The most highly rated criteria were willingness to get involved and having good interpersonal skills (Figure 3.1). Over half of the principals surveyed reported using experience of supporting a student teacher while on placement 'to a great extent'. Previous professional development was also mentioned by just under half of principals. Length of teaching experience was considered 'to a great extent' by four-in-ten principals while management (or co-ordination experience) was mentioned by around a quarter. The year/class group and/or subject taught were considered much less important, with half of the principals describing it as 'not at all' important. Among the mentors surveyed, over a third (37 per cent) had previously been a mentor in the school and over half (54 per cent) had received mentoring training prior to joining Droichead. A significant minority (32 per cent) of the other PST members had also mentored in the past but less than a fifth had received training for this mentoring. In the schools surveyed, members of the PST team were overwhelmingly drawn from the school staff, with only one-in-twenty schools having a Professional Support Team that included teachers from another school. Variation in the use of external support will be explored in greater detail using the school case studies.

FIGURE 3.1 Criteria Used for Selecting Mentors and Other PST Members (Principal, Wave 2)

The recruitment of PST members was further explored in interviews with staff in the case-study schools. In most cases staff members were asked (either through a direct approach from the principal or a general staff email) whether they would have an interest in being involved in the programme. Across the schools, mentors tended to be chosen based on having relevant professional development: ‘they were the only two qualified mentors in the school, so that was easy’ (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school). However, some schools were looking for additional characteristics. According to the principal of Holly Road primary school, ‘seniority was a big thing’ along with other characteristics when selecting mentors.

We’re looking for experienced and dedicated good teachers... solid people who are a number of years in the job, who would be good in giving advice. (Principal, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Previous experience in co-ordinating a programme or management experience was a criterion in Cherry Lane post-primary school. Another PST member was selected based on her length of career in the school; ‘it’s almost an acknowledgement of her wealth of experience’ (Principal, Cherry Lane post-primary school). Speaking about the mentor, the principal of the school also commented on her enthusiasm:

She’s fantastic in terms of her enthusiasm for it and it’s just to have a teacher that probably wouldn’t normally sit with an NQT is now

sitting with an NQT... she is so qualified, she's so experienced and such a good teacher. (Principal, Cherry Lane post-primary school)

In Hazel Way primary school certain staff members were approached by the principal to ensure one person teaching each age-group:

Because the teachers in the different standards we call it, the age groups, because they work really closely together anyway even if they weren't involved in Droichead or induction, I felt it was important there be somebody from each standard. And the mentor happens to be in [class group], and it just so happened that we were not going to be having an NQT teaching in [that class group]. So I asked for volunteers in the different age groups.... So I asked individuals and you know they were happy to volunteer to do it. (Principal, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In Beech Park primary school the principal felt that the person undertaking a role in Droichead should have an interest in it as well as specific experience in terms of teaching preparation and contribution to the school community which would be beneficial for the NQT:

Maybe I made a mistake in setting up my team. That I didn't pick a more mature PST member I kind of opened it out to people who were interested. The PST member has a great balance, we would have a lot of teachers here who are very academic and who spend hours here preparing stuff. The PST member has a fairly good balance... there's no nonsense about her and I kind of thought she I thought she would be a really good PST member. Because she wouldn't kind of be expecting perfection, you know, she would have a very balanced way of looking at things. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The principal in Ash Lane post-primary school emphasised the value of having staff support within the subject department (as mentor or PST):

I think it helps because I think they speak the same language.... I mean if you want them to observe good practice too, I think if there are people in their own department, that you know are really good, they are immediately seeing that, that's helpful to them, you know it is a go to, that they have a resource or how would you approach whatever. There is a professional dialogue then beginning to take place, which I think is good, rather than, you know while you might

go into a Maths class and look at good practice, how you, to make that jump between applying what you see in Maths class to what I need, what I'm doing in Spanish class, might be too much of a jump. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The staff in the case-study schools who were approached were generally positive about joining the PST:

I jumped at the opportunity, I thought it was a great opportunity to, you know, to further my learning, and to, you know, get involved with younger and newly qualified teachers, you know, to help them in any way I could. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

However, in some cases there was a certain reluctance by staff to participate, possibly stemming from insufficient information about the aims and nature of the programme. For example, at first there were some reservations in Aspen Square primary school regarding joining Droichead. Following the presentation from the Droichead representative to the school staff, opinions towards Droichead were more positive and staff were more willing to get involved. Similarly, in Maple Street post-primary school, initially reluctant staff members gradually came round to supporting the programme once they were clear about the aims and procedures. On one occasion, it was evident that not all PST members were happy to participate. For example, in Beech Park primary school the PST member who was approached felt that she would not have volunteered for the position, but felt unable to decline taking up the role of PST.

In two of the case-study schools (Cherry Lane post-primary school, Hazel Way primary school), membership of the PST team was expected to rotate. In Hazel Way primary school the principal indicated that he would see membership of the PST as fluid: 'We would be intending in future that other people would be involved with the PST, that these people wouldn't be there forever, that you know from year to year it would be reviewed' (Principal, Hazel Way primary school), whereas the principal of Cherry Lane post-primary school considered it important that '[the work] doesn't land on one person'.

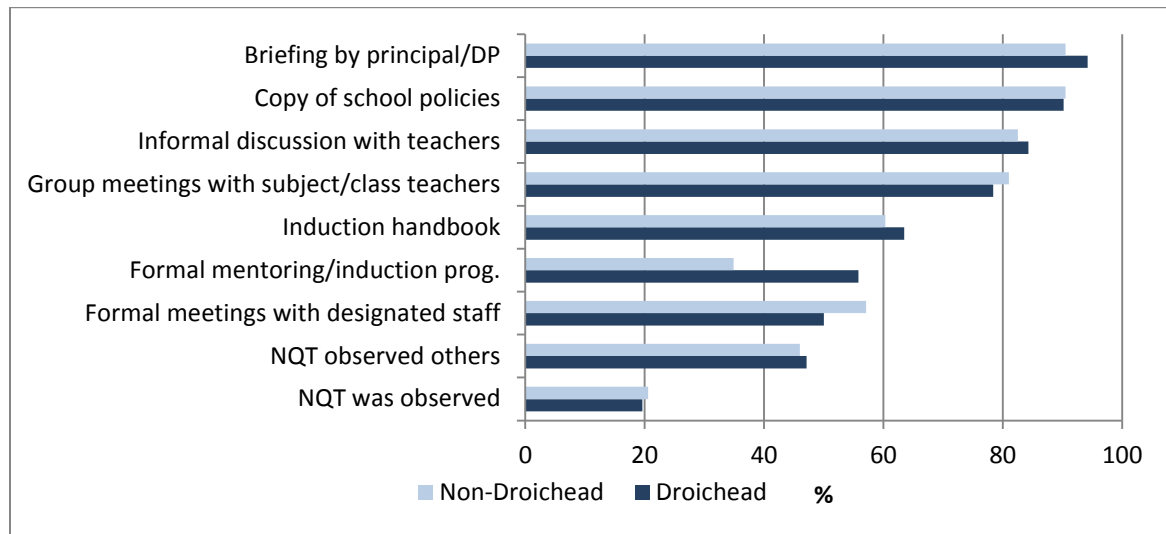
3.5 TEACHER INDUCTION PROCESS PRE-DROICHEAD

The decision to become involved in Droichead and the way in which it is implemented within a school is likely to reflect, at least in part, the school's

previous approach to teacher induction, issues which will be explored in detail in the school case studies. In the survey, principals in non-Droichead schools were asked about their current approach to teacher induction while those in Droichead schools were asked about the approach they used prior to becoming involved in the pilot programme. The most common approaches to teacher induction had been NQTs being given a briefing by the principal or deputy principal, NQTs being given a copy of school policies and procedures, and NQTs having informal discussions with other teachers (Figure 3.2). Schools also commonly relied on group meetings between NQTs and teachers of the same subject or year group. The majority, around six-in-ten, of schools gave NQTs an induction handbook. Formal meetings between the NQT and a designated staff member took place in around half of schools. Droichead and non-Droichead schools differ in one key respect. Droichead schools were more likely to have a formal mentoring/induction programme in place, even before joining the Droichead pilot programme (56 per cent compared with 35 per cent). This approach encompassed being involved in the national pilot programme on teacher induction and/or procedures and practices developed at the school level. There is some evidence therefore that involvement in Droichead is more common among schools that previously had a more formalised approach to teacher induction. There were also some differences by educational level. Post-primary schools were more likely to have an induction handbook for NQTs, to have formal meetings between the NQT and a designated member of staff, and to have the NQT take part in group meetings with teachers taking the same subject or class group.

Observation of, and by, NQTs is a core element of the Droichead programme (see Chapter 1). The survey data provide new evidence on the extent to which schools already used these practices as part of teacher induction prior to joining the Droichead pilot programme. In almost half (47 per cent) of schools, NQTs were given some opportunity to observe other teachers' classes. The extent to which NQTs themselves were observed teaching was much less common, but did occur in just around a fifth of schools.

FIGURE 3.2 Approach to Teacher Induction in non-Droichead Schools and Prior to the Introduction of Droichead in Schools Involved in the Pilot Programme (Principals, Wave 2)



Interestingly, principals in Droichead schools were more likely to report that they were ‘very satisfied’ with the approach to teacher induction (used previously) than those in non-Droichead schools (53 per cent compared with 15 per cent). Those who had a formal induction or mentoring programme expressed higher levels of satisfaction. Thus, the decision to join Droichead appears to have been driven more by positive aspects of the programme (see above) than by dissatisfaction with the approach already used to teacher induction.

The interviews in the case-study schools revealed that while new teachers received some support under the ‘old’ system, it was done in a less structured, sometimes informal, way. An increasing number of new teachers in Beech Park primary school necessitated setting up a mentoring system before the introduction of Droichead, stemming from another pilot project run by a teacher education college.

Over the years from the year 2000 we had two NQTs and then the following year we had four and then one year we had actually had six. So myself and another teacher had trained as mentors and we had set up a mentoring programme in the school. And the mentoring programme ... it grew with the pilot project which was being rolled out. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

School staff saw the school as having a good history of mentoring and took pride in their long history of, and engagement with, mentoring.

Everyone is very helpful in this school but that is down through the culture in this school of mentoring. We were one of the first schools to do the mentoring... everybody is exceptionally supportive in this school. It is down to that culture of the mentoring. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Prior to Droichead, the school greatly valued the validation that it received through positive reports from the inspectors in relation to the NQTs and the school mentoring process:

I would say too that like we had great relationships with inspectors and... it did give a great lot of credence to the school. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

A less structured and informal approach was evident in Hazel Way primary school. New teachers were supported by a number of staff members who organised observation and planning sessions and offered general help.

In the old scene we didn't have a formal PST. Now that's not to say that other teachers, other than the mentor and I and the deputy, weren't involved, they were very involved. But it was on a very informal basis – not so much on a planned basis. They would have been involved in facilitating observation of teaching and learning, and they would have been involved in assisting the mentor from time to time as well with observation of colleagues and planning together with them and giving them feedback. (Principal, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Any newly qualified teacher that came in that might be opposite you on the corridor you would have mentored. I suppose with this particular school, and when I started here as well, I found it very warm, that you know people were always willing to help, and you know there's a huge amount of teachers here, it's a big school, so you know there's always a friendly face around. (PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Strong support for new teachers and collaborative school climate prior to Droichead was also evident in Sycamore Street primary school:

Definitely our school was different from a lot of schools in the way that we kind of operated, we did work together an awful lot, we had an open door policy. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

However, the principal (who also had a background as a mentor) reported that while the teachers were helpful to NQTs prior the introduction of Droichead, the 'old system' was more 'superficial':

The Dip was the focus and just get to that day and then that's all that it means... before [Droichead] it was, 'are you ok'? You know 'can I do something, charts for you or can I'? It was more superficial (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

An unstructured approach to induction prior to the introduction of Droichead was evident in a number of the other schools. In Cherry Lane post-primary school and Willow Close post-primary school, one person had the main responsibility for new teachers. In Chestnut Avenue primary school this support was provided by the 'chief mentor' with another staff member to share the workload. Before Droichead the induction was often of a practical nature:

In terms of showing them around the school – we'd have a lot of them [NQTs] coming through our doors, and being I suppose the go to person, not officially a mentor as such but would give them advice, show them around the school, who's who. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school)

In addition, the principal in the school felt that under the 'old system' the NQTs tended to be left to their own devices: 'there was no such thing as come into anybody's classes. When the NQT was in their first year of teaching, nobody came in to see if they were doing the job right'.

In the past, Maple Street post-primary school did a 'semi-formal' induction with new teachers:

We always did our own semi-formal induction where we'd take the new teachers in and we'd talk a little bit about things and I then started producing a handbook over the last number of years, which was very helpful, with all the policies and rules and, you know, little

things like that. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In all of the case-study schools, the interviewees commented favourably on the 'new' system, highlighting the benefits for both staff and new teachers. The principal of Aspen Square primary school considered the new system more informative for a young teacher compared to the system overshadowed by the inspector's visits:

They [the inspectors] were very good and they talked to the teachers, but the difference now is incredible, it's much more, it's much more informative for the young teacher.

This view is echoed by the principal of Holly Road primary school who felt that the focus is not on the inspector's visit any more: '(the NQTs) are happier insofar as there is not this big visit taking place, it is gradual and ongoing'. In the same vein, the NQT commented on having less stress under the 'new' system: 'a lot of my friends went through the other system and they were stressed. And I would like to see it rolled out, I really would' (NQT, Holly Road primary school).

Elsewhere, principals valued the opportunity that individual schools now have to participate in the induction process and believed that they are better situated to support NQTs than inspectors:

Isn't it fantastic that we as professionals are giving back to the next generation of professionals our expertise instead of somebody that they don't even know coming in and examining them, I mean it doesn't make sense. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The general perception from the PST and NQTs in the school was that the 'traditional' approach to probation was not as authentic as providing mentoring and support within the school, an issue which is explored further in Chapters 4 to 7.

The new programme was also seen to allow for a deeper engagement with teaching and learning and greater collaboration/exchange of ideas. The PST teacher of Maple Street post-primary school felt that Droichead fills the gap that

had existed between initial teacher education and becoming a fully registered teacher:

I would see the main aims of Droichead as I suppose a stepping stone between initial teacher training and being a fully registered teacher. I think there has been a massive gap there for years... I personally walked in here to a full-time timetable in 2006. Was met at the door and handed a tutor group, straight away without any induction, without any welcome pack, without any. And certainly was very overwhelming, you know. So outside of the students and classroom issues you have an entire school system to learn, environment, you know rules, policies and there's no way of familiarising yourself with that if there isn't an induction policy. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

3.6 PRIOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CULTURE

This section focuses on prior professional learning culture in the case-study schools. Most interviewees across the schools commented on the collaborative culture in their schools. However, some differences could be observed in the extent to which teachers were open to having their classes observed, stemming from pre-existing practices in the school. Thus, schools that engaged in in-class-support or collaboration through subject departments before the introduction of Droichead tended to have less resistance to class observations. For example, Chestnut Avenue primary school was engaged in in-class-support whereby one lesson is assisted by several teachers; this was seen by the principal as encouraging having an open door policy. The principal felt that Droichead could encourage co-operation between teachers, especially in schools that have previously not encouraged class observations: '[if] it wasn't a school that had the culture of opening their doors to having teachers go in and observe, it might prompt that' (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school). Cherry Lane post-primary school utilised team teaching in a specific subject which, according to a non-PST teacher, enhanced collaboration between teachers. In Ash Lane post-primary school mentoring in the school pre-Droichead relied on subject department structures and observations conducted by the principal. The principal thought the 'old system' had worked well:

To be honest I think it worked very well, you know, it worked well here; it gave me an opportunity to observe and advise if that was necessary and also to link with the particular teacher. It linked the person very much in with their subject department, again with one particular person in their subject department, which I think was a good thing. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

More general pre-Droichead collaboration between teachers in supporting NQTs was evident in Hazel Way primary school:

*Lots of people get involved through observations and helping out in different ways, so we thought Droichead was the next step for us.
(Principal, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)*

In the same vein, in Hazel Way primary school the existing culture of collaboration in the school was seen as facilitating teacher induction: 'A newly qualified teacher coming in is very much part of the team' (Non-PST teacher). However, Droichead was described as reinforcing this culture, making more experienced teachers more conscious of their obligation to support NQTs and more open to commenting on and being commented on by others.

Several interviewees commented on the benefits of a collaborative culture in the school regarding professional development of the existing staff members. The mentor in Chestnut Avenue primary school felt that sharing professional experience benefits both the NQTs as well as more established teachers: 'you learn so much from it yourself; I would have found that you pick up ideas from them'. In addition, the mentor in the school noted that observing the NQT and being observed makes other staff reflect on their own practice:

Maybe check something out in a book, that you haven't looked at for a couple of years or go back to your curriculum documents... it does make you have to go back over your own practice as well... sometimes after 20 years you do stop reflecting a bit.

These views were supported by a non-PST teacher who noted that as NQTs go to training sessions, they bring new information back to the school, thus benefiting teachers who have not attended courses for some time. Interestingly, the mentors in the school thought that Droichead had not particularly improved the collaborative processes in the school as cooperation between teachers was already taking place before the programme was introduced.

In addition to learning from each other, the mentor in Holly Road primary school noted the benefits of Droichead-related training on their professional development: 'all the training we've got for Droichead... has enhanced us as people as well and enhanced us as teachers.' Furthermore, a non-PST teacher in the school felt that being part of Droichead has 'increased staff morale' and that

it is ‘a nice working atmosphere’ in the school. This view was echoed by a teacher not on the PST: ‘[Droichead] just leads to this open and sharing atmosphere that we kind of have anyway but it just kind of supports that’ (Non-PST teacher, Holly Road primary school). Teachers in Sycamore Street primary school felt that while there was always an open door policy in the school and opportunity of ‘bouncing ideas off other teachers’, the programme provided it ‘a bit more structure’. According to the principal in Willow Close post-primary school, the whole school is benefitting from the new approach:

The school talks, the people are now talking about going into each other’s classes... and people are talking about teaching and learning, whereas before kind of dirty words to be talking about teaching and learning in the staff meeting.

The distinctiveness of Droichead was seen by the principal and PST member as relating to a community of practice across schools:

I suppose what it didn’t do was maybe, which is happening now, was link NQTs who are in your school, with other schools, so there wasn’t a community of people talking about, you know their shared experience in maybe, even different type of schools. So in other words it was a bit insular. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Certainly the idea, over time anyway, that the school would change, that people would be encouraged to walk in and observe a class, and that would happen a lot more frequently than it maybe has happened in the past. So in that way I think it is very positive. (Other PST, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The survey of principals collected information on some aspects of teacher cooperation, including planning and engaging in professional learning activities. Droichead and non-Droichead schools were found to differ in two out of twelve of the dimensions. Droichead schools were more likely to facilitate observation of classes by other teachers, and teachers in these schools were significantly more likely to engage in joint activities across different classes.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at how schools reached the decision to join the Droichead programme. It is evident that joining Droichead was influenced by prior involvement in teacher induction and mentoring. Schools who joined the

pilot programme were more likely to have already had a formal mentoring or induction programme and were more likely to be led by principals who themselves had a mentoring background. The decision to join the programme appeared driven not by dissatisfaction with the existing approach but by the potential benefits of the Droichead programme. Principals were key actors in the decision to take part in Droichead, though in some schools mentors or other staff acted as the catalyst for change. The extent to which a prior history of mentoring and teacher collaboration influences the implementation of Droichead will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4

The Induction Process

4.1 INTRODUCTION

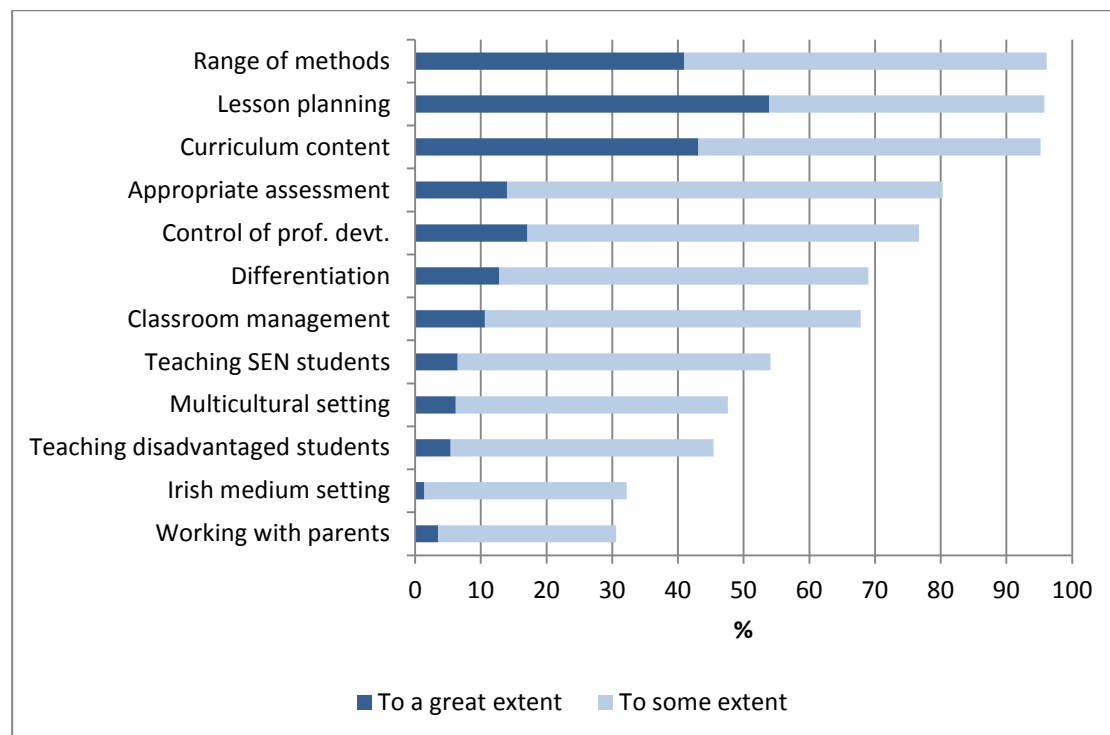
This chapter explores the experiences of Droichead and non-Droichead schools in relation to the induction process. The chapter is divided into a number of sections. The second section describes perceptions of initial teacher education (ITE) and the extent to which Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are prepared for teaching on arrival to schools. Section 3 describes the roles and responsibilities of different members of the school community involved in supporting NQTs. Section 4 provides insights into the frequency, timing and purpose of meetings of all participants involved in supporting NQTs. Section 5 explores the role of formal and informal support provided from non-PST staff. Section 6 details the frequency and timing of observations in Droichead and non-Droichead schools. Section 7 presents data on the involvement of NQTs in induction activities such as workshops, cluster meetings and collaborative teaching. Section 8 provides information on the use and perceived purpose of the professional learning portfolio in Droichead schools. Within most sections quantitative data are presented first; these data arise from surveys distributed to non-Droichead and Droichead schools. Qualitative data stemming from interviews carried out in the Droichead case-study schools are then presented.

4.2 INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER PREPAREDNESS

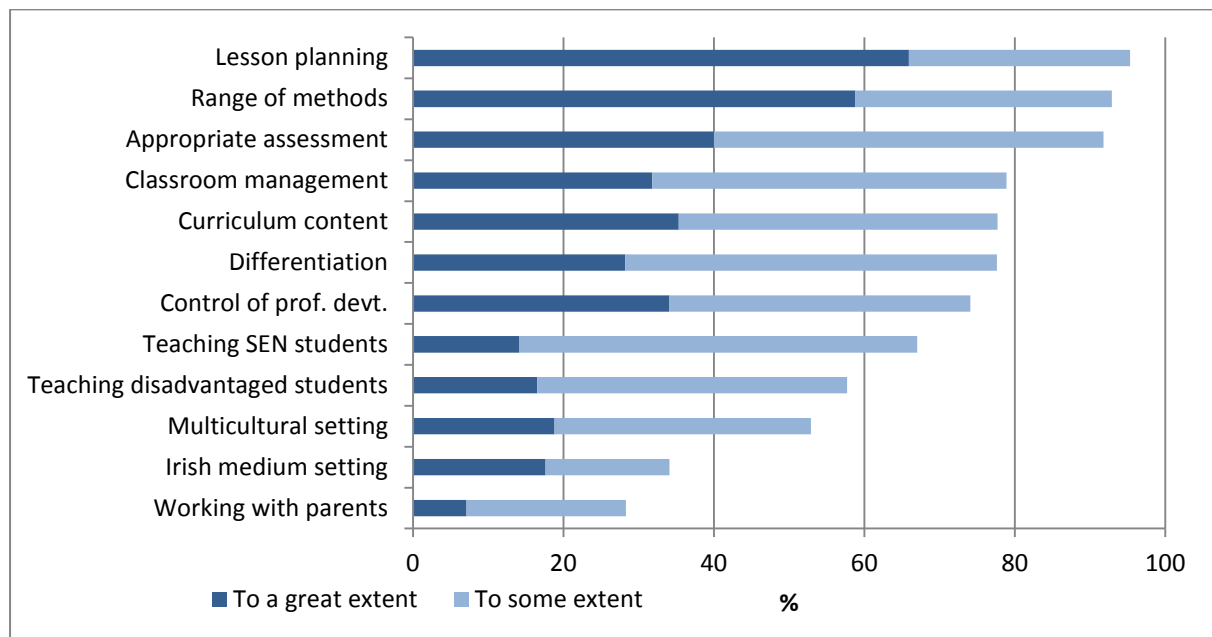
Principals in Droichead and non-Droichead schools were asked about the extent to which initial teacher education (ITE) prepares teachers for a number of different aspects of teaching. Analysis of data from this survey reveals that principals were most positive about the extent to which initial teacher education prepared NQTs in terms of using a range of teaching methods in an appropriate way, planning lessons and knowledge of curriculum content (Figure 4.1). The majority of principals felt that initial teacher education provided preparation in using appropriate assessment methods, catering to the needs of students of different abilities, classroom management and teachers taking control of their own professional development at least 'to some extent', but it is worth noting that only a minority of principals felt that NQTs were prepared 'to a great extent' in relation to these aspects of teaching. Principals were more critical of the extent to which ITE prepared teachers for dealing with diversity in terms of teaching students with special educational needs and from multicultural or disadvantaged

backgrounds. A small minority of principals felt that teachers were prepared for teaching in an Irish-medium school and only a small number felt that NQTs had been prepared for working with parents. Interestingly, patterns are broadly similar across primary and post-primary principals. However, primary principals are more positive about NQT preparation in terms of teaching in an Irish-medium setting. Perspectives on initial teacher education were broadly similar in Droichead and non-Droichead schools, though Droichead principals were somewhat more positive about preparation in relation to curriculum content.

FIGURE 4.1 Principal Perceptions of Initial Teacher Education as a Preparation for Teaching (Wave 2)



Newly qualified teachers were also asked about their views on the extent to which initial teacher education had prepared them for teaching. The relative ranking of different dimensions was broadly similar to that for principals, with NQTs being most positive about the range of teaching methods, lesson planning, assessment, and curriculum content (Figure 4.2). Unlike principals, their ratings of knowledge of curriculum content and classroom management were similar. Like principals, they were more critical of preparation for working with parents, teaching diverse groups (in terms of social and cultural background) and teaching in an Irish-medium setting. Interestingly, NQTs were generally more positive about the different dimensions of ITE than were principals.

FIGURE 4.2 Newly Qualified Teachers' Perceptions of Initial Teacher Education as a Preparation for Teaching (Wave 2)

In interviews in the Droichead case-study schools, the transition from ITE and perceived teacher preparedness were explored. Two components of preparation in ITE were frequently referenced: the development of subject matter knowledge (commonly referred to as ‘the theoretical’) and the provision of experiences that support the acquisition of pedagogical skills (commonly referred to as ‘the practical’). There was consensus that a large part of the remit in ITE was to develop theoretical knowledge relating to teaching specific subject areas; satisfaction was expressed about NQT knowledge and competence in theoretical and subject matter knowledge. The principal in Holly Road primary school was satisfied with this aspect: ‘they come in with a good theory background and that works, it seems to work fairly well’. In general, NQTs expressed their satisfaction with the level of content knowledge preparation provided in their ITE institution. They expressed satisfaction with their preparation in ITE and what they perceived as the strong subject matter preparation that equipped them to enter schools ready to develop pedagogical skills further: ‘I know what I need to teach but I just need to learn how to do that better’ (Cherry Lane post-primary school). The NQT in Aspen Square primary school stated:

I was well prepared for the transition [from college to school] because obviously in my college at teaching practice it was all a full day teaching, I know different colleges do it different ways but from day one in my college for primary teaching, like even our first day of teaching practice it was a full day of teaching. There was also a huge

emphasis on your planning and preparation so I felt going into it I was well prepared, going into the teaching.

Another NQT considered the three months of teaching practice placement ‘a massive eye-opener’. She was very satisfied with the course, but would have preferred to have more subject-related modules. The principal in Sycamore Street primary school, however, was concerned about the subject competence of new teachers; she felt that professional competence can be supported at school level but this is more difficult for subject competence. This view was echoed by the mentor in the same school who felt that there is a variation in the standards and confidence graduates have in Irish and Mathematics. The principal felt that there is a need for HEIs to ensure basic skills competencies, e.g. in grammar and diction:

My main concern would be surrounding the quality of the subject knowledge of the students themselves. I have had experiences of NQTs with poor English grammar, poor Irish grammar, insecurities around teaching of Maths, the core subjects that I would expect to be a very, very high standard, a bit worrying at times, that would come to my attention. So I would have mixed feelings about the teacher education side of things to be honest but I’m inclined to separate it out into two, I kind of look at the professional competence and then subject competences.... And I really feel that the ITEs should concentrate on guaranteeing very high levels of subject curriculum competence because... the rest can be enhanced and supported in school, the professional and what I mean by that is classroom organisation, assessment procedures, differentiation, other kind of things, reading initiatives, you know, team teaching, any of that type of thing, that can all be looked at on the ground. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The second commonly mentioned component was the preparation provided in ITE for the development of the practical skills of teaching. While acknowledging the valuable role played by ITE in teacher preparation, participants recognised that there are limitations to the preparation provided in ITE in relation to these practical skills. One shortcoming frequently mentioned was in the ability to prepare NQTs sufficiently to deal with behaviour management issues. The principal in one school felt that NQTs may not be sufficiently prepared for the amount of work necessary in a school: ‘that’s very much in at the deep end and it’s all about lesson plans [in ITE]... very little about classroom behaviour and management’ (Cherry Lane post-primary school). There was the belief expressed

that teacher education cannot provide adequate preparation in managing challenging behaviour in the classroom as the placement is ‘a little bit artificial and you are only in a school maybe for a few weeks’ (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school). The other PST in Willow Close post-primary school did not think that ITE offers adequate preparation in certain aspects of school life:

There’s always certain obstacles you’ll come across that they can’t train you for, even down to being able to deal with class management... I know they do go through it but I don’t think it prepares you enough for it (Cherry Lane post-primary school).

Similarly, a PST member in Maple Street post-primary school felt that NQTs are well prepared in terms of content but may have difficulties in relation to classroom management and coping with the workload in their first year:

Often I think maybe initial teacher education can leave a certain gap between reality and the idea of the role of a teacher. I think they can get very disillusioned with the workload in their initial year. But I do think that they’re well prepared content-wise. Maybe not always classroom management-wise but that can depend on the context of a school. You know their initial teacher education could be in, you know it could be in a very middle-class school or it could be, just a very different context. And it can be quite alarming when you go into a completely different environment then. And also they have a lot of, they’ve a huge amount of, I suppose, theory, I suppose, and things behind, a pedagogy in initial teacher education. When the practical on the ground tasks mightn’t be covered as well. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

The NQTs, when reflecting on their experiences in ITE, felt that while ‘you hear how you do it in the lectures’ (Chestnut Avenue primary school), it is essential to get classroom experience where you ‘get your own way of doing things’ (Chestnut Avenue primary school). They believed that there is more freedom in the school setting compared to the context of teaching practice where:

On teaching practice the teacher is sitting at the back of the room and you’re always going by their rules but when you actually have your own class you can set your own ground rules’ (Chestnut Avenue primary school, NQT).

Similarly, mentors, NQTs and other PST members identified the unique role that schools play in developing professional competences relating to teaching and

classroom practices (in other words, practical knowledge) and acknowledged that the first year teaching is a 'big learning curve' (Sycamore Street primary school, other PST member). This unique role in developing particular competencies was acknowledged by a mentor in Chestnut Avenue primary school. They thought that ITE prepares new teachers 'very well'; however, there are 'a lot of things you have to learn on the ground... because it is such a hands-on profession'. One mentor thought that ITE had prepared the NQT well for the work in the school. She considered that the NQT needed to develop only in some specific areas such as dealing with homework, bringing up issues at staff meetings, and parent-teacher meetings. The mentor in Willow Close post-primary school felt that while ITE provides good theoretical knowledge, there are shortcomings regarding the practical side:

That's [the practical side] where it falls down because that's where I think Droichead comes in because I think, from feedback from NQTs, it's hands-on, it's realistic and I think they need to merge together a little bit more in terms of theory and practice. It is the practical things when you come into the school that make all the difference. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The principal in Holly Road primary school would like elements such as school administration to be covered more thoroughly in ITE. Her perception was that 'they come in here with no experience of that'. There was also a concern expressed by one PST member regarding the preparation of NQTs for the micro-politics of staff in schools.

I think it (ITE) is preparing them well to what extent are students prepared in college I wonder sometimes for the I suppose the dynamics and the politics of a staff room. And that is a huge thing. (Other PST, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Three principals expressed their belief that some NQTs were better prepared than others for teaching. A number of different factors contributed to this belief. Firstly, there was the belief that the support and supervision provided at the ITE institution, from which the NQTs graduated, contributed to their levels of preparedness. Interestingly, at the primary level there was the perception that graduates from the more traditional institutions were better prepared. The principal in Aspen Square primary school perceived that the level of support provided by inspectors at traditional institutions benefited their graduates who come to her school better prepared as compared to graduates from newer institutions.

I think [blinded institution] turns out a great teacher... they genuinely do and the ones that come out of [there] are used to a good, when they go on teaching practice I think the inspectors that come out go through everything with them in great detail. If I could make a comparison say with [blinded institution], I would find them just a little bitwell the teacher knows when they're coming, so they can be prepared and it's, it's just a slightly different regime. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In contrast, the post-primary principal in Pine View held the contrasting opinion that graduates from the newer ITE institutions were better prepared than their counterparts in the traditional universities. She also referred to the level of support provided during supervision as being a determining factor.

You know it's amazing you'll see the differences between different colleges. And the level of support that colleges can offer. Yeah, we find the colleges that are block releasing, they are very well prepped and that would be more the practical subjects, I suppose they have been working hands-on with their subject for so long. Whereas the more academic subjects coming from the more traditional universities, if I can use that, sometimes don't get as much support as other colleges. (Principal, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

Secondly, there was also the perception that NQTs who had come through an undergraduate route were better prepared. A comment from a principal in a primary school stated:

If you have a girl going into [blinded institution] on five hundred points or four hundred and eighty-five, or whatever points that's needed for the teaching profession, they're very intelligent to start off with and it is their first choice because they could do anything with that amount of points. So then you have somebody that say goes to [an] IT on 220 or 230 points and is wondering, well sometimes wondering what will they do, like it can be interior design. So it's nothing related to teaching – or I've seen town planning – and then go and do a post-graduate with [blinded institution] or whatever, and it's, it's different – is all I can say – but that's my personal opinion. I see it from employing maybe six, seven and eight teachers every year, you do see the difference, the one who wants teaching... They'll say all I ever wanted to be was a teacher and some of them might have got enough points that would have given them

medicine or some higher points. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

This belief about the benefit of graduating from an undergraduate teaching programme was echoed by a post-primary principal who felt that it would be better to have teaching embedded in the undergraduate degree in order to prepare people for the classroom:

I would always have questions of how well it prepares them, you always see the people who are born teachers, you know, could teach anywhere, but then there's the people who struggle and for those people who struggle, who it doesn't come naturally to, I always would have questioned the H.Dip., how good it was. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Participants acknowledged and welcomed the greater emphasis and time allocated to providing school-based teaching experiences during ITE as a result of extended programme length at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The principal in Holly Road primary school believed that extending the programmes at ITE was a positive movement as it provided pre-service teachers with 'more practical experience'. Similarly, one NQT was fully supportive of the new two-year programme: 'the fact that you are longer immersed in the school ... helps to develop relationships' (Willow Close post-primary school).

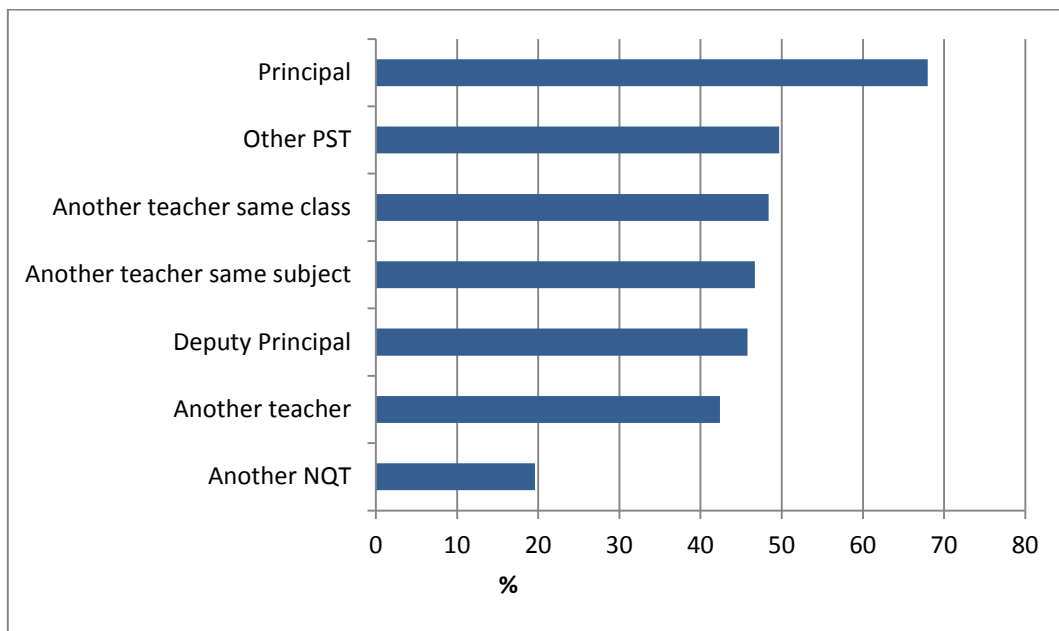
4.3 DIVISION OF LABOUR AMONG THE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT TEAMS IN SCHOOLS

In the surveys distributed to non-Droichead schools, principals were asked to indicate whether there was a designated person with responsibility for teacher induction and/or mentoring. Fifty-eight per cent of principals reported that there was a designated person with responsibility for teacher induction. Second-level schools were somewhat more likely to have such a designated role (65 per cent compared with 52 per cent) while smaller schools were less likely to have such a co-ordinator (38 per cent compared with 61-66 per cent). In the school year 2014/15, 55 per cent of these co-ordinators were involved in supporting beginning teachers. A third of the group had mentored at some point in the past. Over three-quarters of teacher induction co-ordinators in non-Droichead schools reported that they had received training for their role in supporting NQTs.

In the surveys distributed to Droichead schools, only five per cent of principals reported that their PST included a teacher or teachers from another school.

Principals were asked how they would see the PST operating in the future in their school. Over half (52 per cent) indicated they would build up a larger PST team, with a further fifth indicating they would rotate membership. The qualitative data reported in this chapter provide greater insights into schools which had larger teams and were training a second team. Only a tenth suggested that they would maintain the same team with a further sixth not being sure what they would do. The vast majority (88 per cent) of other PST members felt that they had a clear idea about their role in the team. Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the mentors, principals and other PST members follow.

Almost all newly qualified teachers in Droichead schools had been allocated a mentor by the time of the survey. In half of cases, their mentor was teaching the same class group or subject as they were. All NQTs indicated that they had received important guidance and assistance from someone in the school other than their mentor. Such guidance was most frequently received from the school principal (Figure 4.3). However, the other PST member, other teachers (whether teaching the same subject, same class or otherwise) and the deputy principal were named as important sources of guidance, indicating the way in which formal induction processes must be seen as located within a broader informal school climate. A fifth of NQTs named another NQT as an important source of support. Follow-up information collected from the NQTs in the case-study schools indicated that, in many cases, they received support from a relatively large number of staff across the school. The section relating to the role of formal and informal support from non-PST staff (Section 4.5) provides more in-depth insights arising from the case studies into the range of support structures available to NQTs in Droichead schools.

FIGURE 4.3 Important Source of Guidance other than Mentor (NQT Reports, Wave 2)

The data which follow in this section relate to the role and responsibilities of the principal, mentor and other members of the PST in providing support in Droichead schools. The opportunities for, and experiences of, professional development for principal, mentors and PST members are also outlined.

4.3.1 Role and Responsibilities of the Principal

As evidenced from interviews carried out in Droichead schools, the principal's role took on two forms. In approximately half of the schools, the principal described their role as being an 'overseer' and almost peripherally supportive to the process; this involved providing support for the process in terms of their membership of the PST team, attending PST meetings, liaising with outside agencies, and in providing administrative support in arranging release time and in generally 'overseeing' (Hazel Way primary school) the process. The principal remained peripheral for a number of reasons, including a high level of trust in the PST and an awareness that an overly involved principal may shift the power dynamic and alter the experience for the NQT. As one principal mentioned,

I don't want to be the big brother hanging over them, I just want to make sure that if there was an issue or anything at all that the door is open and that they can come and get support and advice. (Pine View post-primary school, Principal)

In another post-primary school, the management purposively stepped back from the process so as to maintain a management-PST balance in NQT support:

[The deputy principal had] kept the co-ordination element to it.. but this year I would have taken over that more and the DP would have stepped back a little bit from it. So that the staff would kind of take it over more than necessarily that it becomes directly from management. I think sometimes if management have a very heavy role within it sometimes it takes a bit more of a threatening role. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The way in which the presence of the principal was viewed by the NQT was also mentioned by a principal in Maple Street post-primary school who stated that he felt that NQTs were more nervous about being observed by him than by other members of the PST:

It took me a while to realise that the NQTs were probably very much open to the mentor and PST going in to their class or them going in to them, but when I walked in it was a different story and I didn't see that from my point of view, but they saw me as the principal of the school coming in to their class. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In other schools, the principal described their role as being more evaluative. These principals were very central to the work of the PST, had a great deal of interactions within the PST and frequently mentioned the signing-off process as 'quite a responsibility' (Chestnut Avenue primary school). The majority of NQTs referred to the open door policy that their principal promoted, felt supported by the principal and felt they could 'pop in to' the principal to seek advice at any stage during the Droichead process. In Ash Lane post-primary school, the principal was described as having an open door policy and being very approachable:

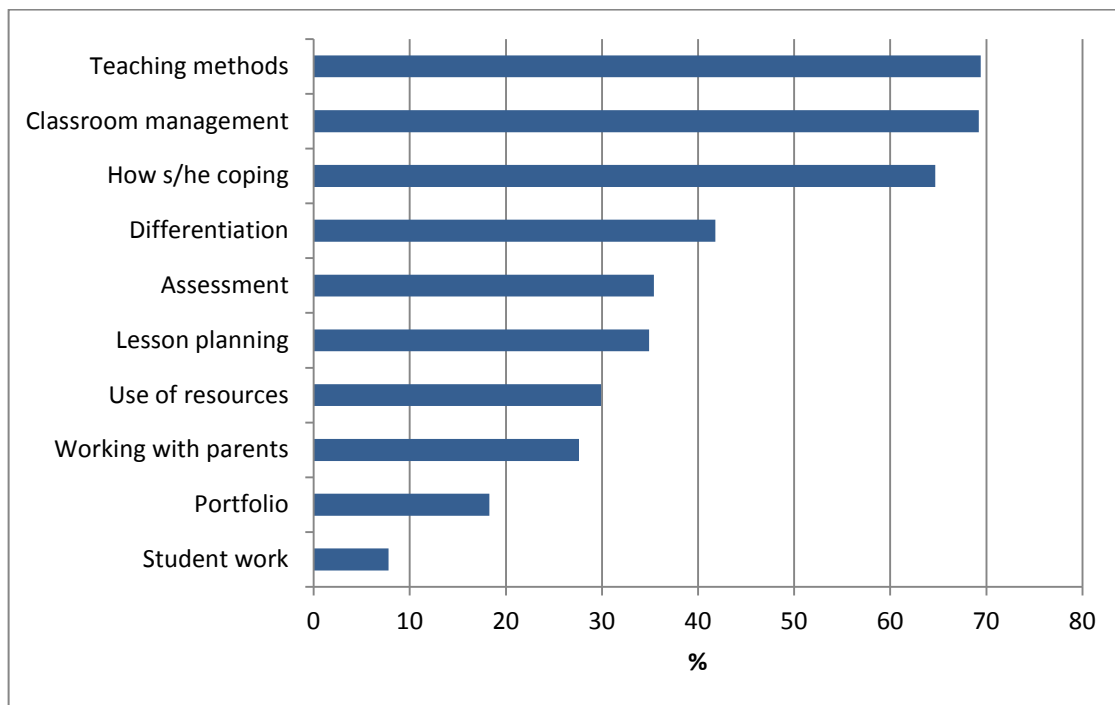
The principal is brilliant, he told us on the first day that he operated an open door policy, which I've definitely taken him up on, so I have no problem popping in to him, if I needed to just ask a question or if I'm wondering about something. He's great, like he's definitely a principal who integrates with the staff, he's in the staff room, I feel as though he is available to us. I have no problem approaching him about anything, he is great on the email as well. So if you can't get him or you know if it is outside of the school day or I'm at home or

I'm somewhere else, he's very accessible so. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

4.3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor; the Mentoring Process

The surveys provided quantitative data relating to the mentoring process in Droichead schools. The majority (81 per cent) of mentors had mentored NQTs in the school year 2014/15, with 44 per cent of all mentors supporting two or more NQTs, while 59 per cent were mentoring an NQT in the school year 2015/16. Mentors in second-level schools and in larger primary schools supported a greater average number of NQTs. The most commonly discussed issues were teaching methods, classroom management and how the NQT was coping with the job (Figure 4.4). Differentiation, assessment and lesson planning were discussed 'to a great extent' in a third or more of cases. Working with parents, the professional learning portfolio and examples of student work were less likely to be discussed in mentor-NQT meetings. Interestingly, even though the survey data report the low frequency of conversations relating to working with parents, interviews carried out in Droichead schools (reported in Sections 4.4 and 4.5) reveal the great value NQTs reported from discussions with the PST and mentors relating to working with parents.

There were some differences by school type in the kinds of discussion between mentors and NQTs. Teaching methods were a more frequent topic of discussion in primary schools (86 per cent 'to a great extent' compared with 59 per cent in second-level schools). Professional conversations in primary schools were also more likely to involve a discussion of assessment approaches and of differentiation of learning. Mentors in DEIS schools were more likely to discuss classroom management with their NQTs (82 per cent 'to a great extent' compared with 67 per cent in non-DEIS schools) as well as differentiation of learning (60 per cent 'to a great extent' compared with 38 per cent).

FIGURE 4.4 Issues Discussed with NQT (Mentor, Wave 2)

Mentors were asked how much time they spend per week on mentoring activities. Analyses here are confined to those who had one or more NQTs in 2014/15. The average (median) amount of time was an hour, with the majority (72 per cent) of mentors spending an hour or less per week and a fifth spending two or more hours. Not surprisingly, mentors supporting more NQTs tended to spend longer on mentoring activities.

Two-thirds of mentors reported their professional relationship with the NQT as 'excellent' with all but one of the remainder describing the relationship as 'good'. The perceived quality of the relationship did not vary by whether the school was primary or post-primary or whether the NQT was teaching the same class/year group as the mentor.

Both mentors and PSTs referred to the mentor role as very defined with clearly laid out expectations, roles and responsibilities as opposed to the other PST role which was less clear. There was consensus among all participants in the Droichead process that the mentor carried the greatest workload in terms of organising and co-ordinating the majority of tasks. This was acknowledged by NQTs and PSTs who communicated that 'the workload falls negatively onto the mentor' (Aspen Square primary school) and by the following PST member who had experienced the mentor role earlier in the year:

The main difference is the amount of interaction you have with the NQT really, you know, when you're the mentor you're so involved. You know you're right in the middle of everything, you know you're doing your meetings with the mentor, you're doing the activities and all those kind of things... As being the other member [of the PST], I suppose, you take a back step a small bit. (Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Tasks incorporated responsibility for planning and scheduling around the Droichead process: arranging timelines, scheduling observations of the NQT, co-ordinating observations for the NQT in other classrooms, taking initiative on CPD workshops and arranging substitute cover. The mentor also had responsibility for the NQT in terms of offering support and 'being there' (Cherry Lane post-primary school) so that 'the NQT is not at sea' (Chestnut Avenue primary school). This incorporated tasks such as introducing the NQT to basic organisation and running of the school, informing them of school events, problem-solving issues that arose for the NQT, carrying out observations and providing feedback on observations. In some schools the tasks extended beyond school level activities:

She is very approachable, she's very thorough, she's on the ball like with everything, in fairness like, I mean we went to cluster meetings and the next day she'd have the notes for everybody, you know, this is what was said at the cluster meetings and anything that was mentioned, what we should do, like she's it done. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The mentor served a supportive role in the process in all schools. The mentor served as a link or bridge between the NQT and the PST and served as the 'initiator' (Holly Road primary school, other PST) of the process at the start of the school year and acted as the 'go to' (Willow Close post-primary school) person for the NQT. Whereas this mentor role was formal in relationship to the organisation and co-ordination roles, the mentors described their relationship with the NQT as being informal and as providing support and care and developing a rapport with the NQT. The mentor in Ash Lane post-primary school saw her role as advisory, to provide support with the minor everyday questions and as a point of contact:

I hope my role is that I'm just I'm here in an advisory capacity, as I would say to the NQTs, I don't know the answers to everything either, they might ask a question, that I might have to check but I just have put myself out there as the person that they can come to with even, like what they would, what we would nearly all kind of classify, where do we get a pen or where do I get the markers, do I have to

buy them. Just the very simple questions, that they might feel that they can't really ask the principal or the vice principal for fear it might make them look a little bit inadequate or whatever. So just [a] supportive role. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

As one mentor stated, 'my role is informal, it has to be because you'd frighten the life out of them [otherwise]' (Cherry Lane post-primary school). The NQTs had extremely positive feedback on the support they received from the mentor. While much of the support was identified in terms of the tasks the mentor carried out in order to facilitate the Droichead process and the advice they provided, it appeared that the presence of a mentor to act as a sounding board was often sufficient:

Sometimes it is not ever about her, like her having the answers to everything, sometimes I think she does a great job of just being somebody that I can nearly vent to and I feel like I can talk myself through things with her. And I think she is very good at that, so rather than her giving me the answers to every question or problem that I might have, sometimes she is nearly just a sound board as well for me to talk out those things but there are loads of things. She is just a huge help to be fair. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Despite the high workload associated with the mentor role, many enjoyed being involved as a mentor and found it also benefited their own relationships within the staff:

So it does quietly and rightly, it does kind of give you an extra level of awareness of certain things in the school. And also think as well it builds great relationships with management because you are working very closely with them, you are building better relationships with other members of staff like the other two PST members now neither of them are in my subject areas. I would not have worked with them regularly but now I have no problem with, you know, a very good working relationship with them. Have no problems, I have gone to conferences, gone to them, you know, with everything so yeah it really does build a lot of very interesting connections and very solid connections I think with school as well. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

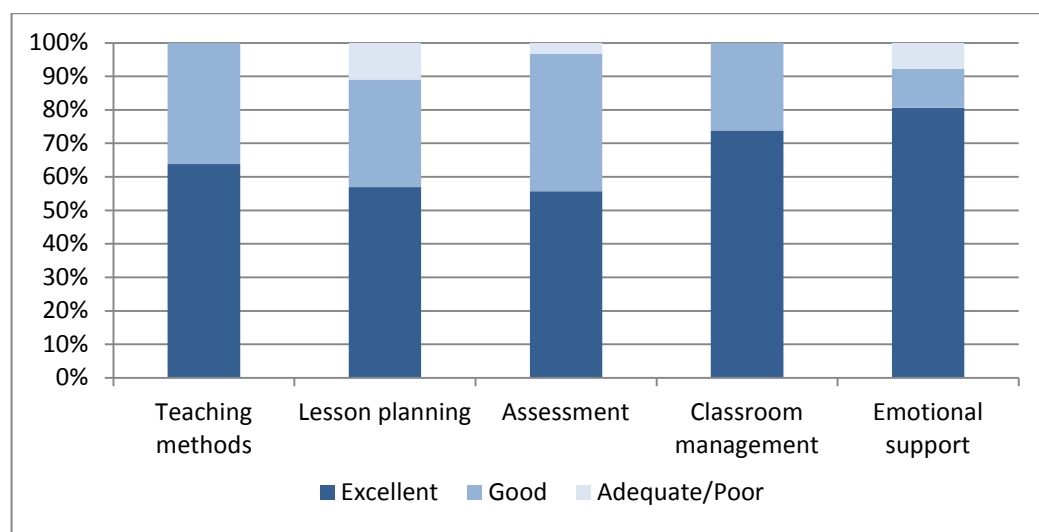
4.3.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Other PST Members

The survey data revealed that other PST members reported spending an average of an hour a week on induction activities, with 63 per cent spending an hour or less a week. Unlike mentors, hardly any other PST members spend two hours or more a week.

NQTs were very positive about the support they had received from the members of the PST team, with the majority rating the support as 'excellent' across different dimensions. The proportion deeming the support as excellent was somewhat higher in relation to emotional support and classroom management. Only a handful of NQTs considered the support as adequate or poor, with this being slightly more common in relation to lesson planning and emotional support.

All but one of the NQTs reported that they felt comfortable bringing difficult teaching problems to the team and reported that the team had provided tips on teaching techniques. Almost all NQTs felt they had received support and guidance in relation to working with parents (90 per cent), school policies (94 per cent), and effective classroom management (96 per cent). The vast majority also reported that the team helped them to improve independently and supported them in trying out different teaching methods (89 per cent and 91 per cent respectively). NQTs felt they were given the opportunity to draw their own conclusions (92 per cent) and that the team had ideas which prompted reflection (92 per cent). As with the patterns presented in Figure 4.5, NQTs were slightly less likely to agree that they had received help with lesson planning (84 per cent).

FIGURE 4.5 Perceptions of Support Provided by the PST to the NQT (NQT, Wave 2)



Interviews with non-PST members revealed that the consensus was that the role of the PST was considered a more distant and 'objective' role compared to that of the mentor who was seen as 'rooting' for the NQT (Sycamore Street primary school). This role was an evaluative role where the responsibility for formal observations was placed on the PST members. The experience of being a PST member varied considerably between schools. In the majority of schools, the evaluative role was viewed positively and appeared to be relatively unproblematic for PST members. When asked if she was concerned about the evaluation component of her position, one PST stated:

No, absolutely not. I really am not and I know people get bogged down in it but I know we've had mentoring always in this school. We've always minded new teachers ... it's just your natural instinct just to look after new members of staff and to guide them along. And that's where I would see it, I think it's hugely valuable but the assessment, well, that's a principal's [task], ultimately the decision lies with the principal. (Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

In contrast, in one school where tension developed during the mentoring process, the PST member communicated reservations around the role due to the responsibilities associated with the evaluation process.

I do have the evaluation part, like that the mentor doesn't have. But at the end of the day, I had to sign off on her... which is a big responsibility, I think. I am unsure about it reservations about it, I suppose. There is just so many, like it is a big responsibility on your part to essentially be judging someone else's teaching career. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Apart from evaluation, the roles and responsibilities of the PST members varied between schools and hence their perceptions of the role varied. In one school, as compared to the highly defined role of the mentor, the PST role was described as being more 'vague' (Sycamore Street primary school) with efforts being made to try and integrate the role more fully into the Droichead process. In contrast, in another school the PST member felt her role was more defined since the instigation of Droichead and the responsibility for the evaluation role being placed on the PST. Prior to Droichead this PST felt she did not have much of an identity within the mentoring process and that she was 'just tagging along a little bit' (Holly Road primary school). In two schools (Willow Close and Maple Street post-primary schools), the other PST member occupied a defined role in that they

took on the responsibility of organising PST meetings within the school and liaising with outside organisations and supporting the communication between the school and these organisations relating to the Droichead process. In Willow Close post-primary school, the role of the other PST was to organise the PST meetings, deal with the regional district officer and attend cluster meetings. She would then pass the information back to the school through meetings or 'professional conversations'.

Well to liaise first with the NIPT and with the regional development officer, that's the primary responsibility and to feed back to the rest of the Professional Support Team, principal and the mentor. And then any kind of, I suppose, circulars or updates in training, whether it be cluster meeting dates or continuous professional development meetings to let them know of that. I also would see the link person as, I suppose, a person to whom the NQTs can turn for support and advice perhaps on a particular subject area. Or perhaps over any other difficulties to do with the school environment that they're experiencing. And they are aware, I suppose, that I'm observing them differently to the mentor. And that I'm signing off at the end on their progression and capacity.... There's definitely far more administration than in the role of the mentor, your continuously getting emails from the RDO or from the Education Centres wherever the cluster meetings are being run. There's regular updates, you're kind of making sure the hours are being recorded. How the hours are used. Making sure I suppose any latest templates that are available that the NQTs know where they are and have access to them. And then you're also establishing relationships perhaps with other subject departments and the NQTs so they can observe outside their subject area. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

4.3.4 Professional Development and Support

The survey data reveal that the vast majority (91 per cent) of mentors had received professional development for their role in Droichead, with 94 per cent of this group being very satisfied or satisfied with this training. A similar proportion of other PST members had received professional development, with 94 per cent of them being very satisfied or satisfied with this training. In terms of external support, most (80 per cent) principals in Droichead schools reported that they had met NIPT associates on three or more occasions in the school year 2014/15. In addition, 57 per cent had met with other members of the NIPT on three or more occasions. Around a tenth of principals reported that they had received support from the inspectorate in relation to Droichead.

Interviews in the case-study schools revealed positive feedback in relation to the support provided for the PST; the majority of PSTs in participating schools described themselves as ‘satisfied’ (Willow Close post-primary school, Beech Park primary school, Hazel Way primary school) or very satisfied (Ash Lane post-primary school, Aspen Square primary school, Birch Avenue post-primary school) with the support. Others described the support as being ‘good’ (Chestnut Avenue primary school, Sycamore Street primary school). Workshops were useful, according to one principal:

Especially putting us in the role of NQT, and asking us to come up with objectives, and for a lesson... and learning outcomes... I’m [a] good while out of the ITE, so that was an eye opener for myself and a lot of other principals there. (Principal, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Just one, very experienced PST member, described the training as ‘a lot of it was time filling’ (Pine View post-primary school). The provision of in-school training by regional staff (Cherry Lane post-primary school, Holly Road primary school, Pine View post-primary school), the NIPT (Sycamore Street primary school) and other external facilitators was described as particularly helpful (Chestnut Avenue primary school). Two principals mentioned the importance of the bursary provided in supporting Droichead in their schools.

There was consensus around the value of the mentor training, in particular, with many mentors and PSTs describing it as excellent. Some more experienced mentors and principals identified the mentor training as particularly beneficial for mentors new to the mentoring process. Mentors and PST members found the folder of materials supplied at training very helpful, in particular the forms for observing, the guidelines for planning and other protocols around elements of the Droichead process. They ‘absolutely picked in and out of that on a very regular basis throughout the year because there are a lot of things that have to be developed’ (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school). Many principals and mentors recommended that all PST members should receive the mentor training and in some schools it was the practice that the entire PST team would take mentor training.

I think the mentoring programme is fantastic, it’s very clearly laid out, there is a clear structure, you have your folder which is very clear, there is the calendar in the back of it, of literally week one, this is what, do you know this is what you should be telling your NQT week two and it goes through every month, through the whole year of right, this is what needs to be done and it is so clear, so concise,

the folder is absolutely, it is fantastic. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

One experienced PST member felt that there would be benefit to having someone with experience come and visit the schools and provide support and feedback 'once the policies are in place' (Pine View post-primary school, other PST). There were a small number of schools who expressed the desire for more support to be provided for PSTs and principals in the area of developing classroom observation skills and in providing feedback (Beech Park primary school, Holly Road primary school, Hazel Way primary school). One school in particular, which experienced some difficulties during the mentoring process in terms of providing feedback to the NQT, communicated their lack of confidence in observing and probating teachers. While the other PST and principal in this school felt experienced in providing mentoring for NQTs and valued their long history in the mentoring process, both communicated misgivings about their level of qualifications and experience in observing NQTs and in having the final decision-making responsibility in probating a teacher. They expressed the desire that members of the inspectorate share their expertise with the PST team relating to what to look for when observing NQTs and suggested that the inspectorate remain connected with the probation process in a consultative role during the 'hand-over' period.

This is kind of pilot right and we are kind of pushing everything now on to the school but like why not just gradually ease out the inspectorate out of it. And give the teaching profession the benefit of the expertise that the inspectors have seen in classrooms But I think the inspectorate could be involved in a more consultative kind of popping in to see how are you getting on you know I think it needs that outside observation or consultation of some sort. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

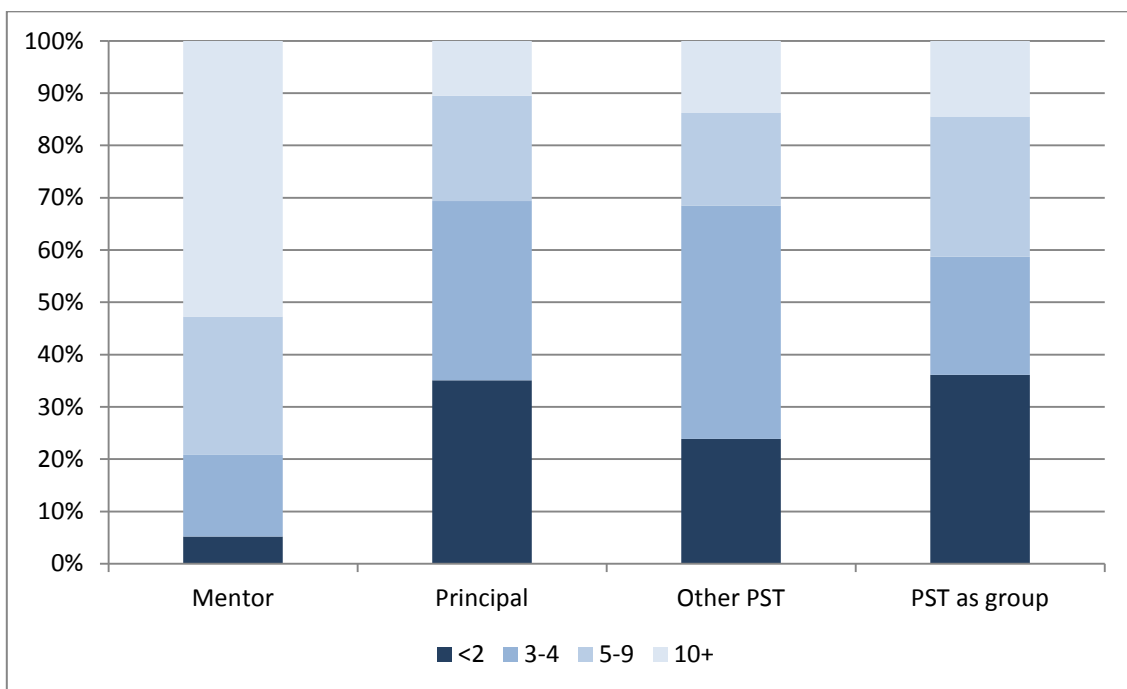
The other PST member in this same school felt there would be benefit from having training around the 'professional conversation'.

Maybe there needs to be a lot more training in having the professional conversations. Like it is great, it is easy to say everything that is right, do you know everything that is going well. but to try and say something ... like [noticing there] was quite a big grammar error, it is quite difficult. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

4.4 FREQUENCY, TIMING AND PURPOSE OF MEETINGS

In the surveys distributed to Droichead schools, mentors were asked about the frequency of meetings over the school year 2014/15, specifying individual meetings between the NQT and the mentor, other PST member or principal, and group meetings of the PST. As indicated in Figure 4.6, NQTs met most frequently with their mentor on an individual basis, with over half of mentors reporting ten or more such meetings. In two-thirds of cases, NQTs had four or fewer individual meetings with the other PST member while in 70 per cent of cases the NQT had four or fewer individual meetings with the principal. In four-in-ten cases, there were five or more group meetings involving the NQT and the PST. On average, the frequency of meetings was less in second-level schools, with the greatest differences in relation to individual meetings with the mentor and principal. There was no evidence of substituting one type of meeting for another; in fact schools having more individual meetings also had more group meetings, and schools having fewer individual meetings had less group meetings or meetings with other members of the team.

FIGURE 4.6 Frequency of PST Meetings with the NQT (Mentor, Wave 2)



Principals in non-Droichead schools were asked about the frequency with which they and the designated person or teacher induction co-ordinator met on an individual basis with each NQT. Not surprisingly, meetings between mentors/co-ordinators and NQTs were much more frequent in Droichead schools; in three-quarters of Droichead schools, six or more meetings took place compared with 41

per cent of non-Droichead schools. However, the number of individual meetings between the principal and NQT did not vary markedly between Droichead and non-Droichead schools, suggesting that the distinctive aspect of Droichead relates to the involvement of the other members of the PST.

The survey data also reveal that meetings between the NQT and the PST were usually scheduled in a range of ways, including during the school day with cover from a substitute or other teacher, during break time and outside school hours. Only a quarter of mentors reported that no meetings took place at break times and only a fifth indicated that no meetings took place outside school hours. Schools with very frequent meetings between the NQT and mentor were more likely to schedule meetings outside school hours and less likely to rely on substitute cover. Similarly, four-fifths of principals indicated that they used time outside the hours allocated under Droichead for meeting times. This pattern was more common in primary than in post-primary schools (91 per cent compared with 73 per cent). Principals were also asked about the extent to which they used the hours allocated under Droichead to cover meeting times. Just half used these hours 'fully', 43 per cent did so 'to some extent' while 6 per cent reported that they did not use the hours. Primary schools were more likely to fully use their hours, with 65 per cent doing so, while using the hours 'to some extent' was the most prevalent pattern for second-level schools, with 59 per cent doing so. Reasons for not using all of the allocated time centred on teachers not wanting to miss class time and the method of allocation not facilitating using only a few hours at a time:

Cover comes in full day blocks. Sometimes you need a meeting etc. for an hour or two but not a full day. (Principal survey, Wave 2)

Our mentors preferred to meet outside of timetabled hours as they did not wish to affect the T[eaching] and L[earning] of their students. (Principal survey, Wave 2)

Records of meetings between the NQT and PST were kept in four-fifths of schools.

The qualitative data arising from interviews largely support the quantitative data in relation to the timing and scheduling of meetings. However, it also provides unique insights into the occurrence of informal meetings within schools. Across all Droichead case-study schools, there are interview data to suggest that the NQT meets frequently with the mentor or PST team – in many cases almost on a daily basis:

The meetings with not just my mentor but the other members of the team were an important source of support. I constantly felt supported and that I could ask any question and would receive feedback. They valued my opinion and I felt that it was a great learning experience for everyone. (NQT, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Meetings were a mixture of formally scheduled meetings where the focus and agenda were clear and informal meetings where a member of the PST might ‘pop her head into the classroom’ (Hazel Way primary school) or chat ‘over a cup of coffee in the staff room’ (Pine View post-primary school).

We walk up, and we walk down together, and we’re out in the yard, and sometimes when we’re on the yard together like we would have a chat and say – so it’s a bit off the cuff, it’s not really scheduled. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In most schools, the mentor-NQT contact centred on informal meetings and follow-ups on a regular basis.

I try to link in with them at least once a week, but it might be just a simple, you know, how are you getting on, is everything okay or it could be a long lengthy discussion about something that hadn’t been working or something that they needed help with. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In many schools there was also informal contact between the other PST member and the NQT:

There certainly would always be questions or even just quick chats in the corridor. How are things today, did you sort that issue or did that work for you, that idea or how did you feel about that after. We’ve certainly had those kind of chats throughout the year. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In approximately 80 per cent of the schools visited, formal meetings of the PST team occurred 2-3 times per term. The remaining schools had more frequent meetings approximately every two weeks. In these schools, meetings were more frequent at the beginning of the year, on a weekly basis, and then reduced once

the process was running smoothly. The only exception was one small post-primary school that had had regular formal meetings during their first year of involvement in Droichead; during the second year, however, the full team met formally only once and all other meetings happened informally.

The frequency of meetings between NQTs and their mentor was often determined by school level or physical location of staff within a school. In post-primary schools where the mentor and NQT were teaching the same subject, informal meetings took place daily in the classroom or staffroom. The NQT and mentor in Cherry Lane post-primary school met frequently as they teach the same subjects:

We'd be kind of continuously checking in every day... break and lunchtime, after the 5th year class...we'd swap ideas, we'd share a desk. (Mentor, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

Similarly, the NQT in Willow Close post-primary school met with her mentor every day as she is in the same subject department. The interaction was quite informal and discussions focus on teaching and planning. Another NQT in the same school (Willow Close post-primary school) had regular informal meetings with their mentor approximately once a week.

In other large schools, where there were multiple NQTs allocated to the same mentor, or where the mentor was located physically distant on the same campus, formal meetings were scheduled between the mentor and NQT weekly or fortnightly. In two of these cases, the mentor and PSTs meet with all NQTs monthly and individual NQT meetings also every fortnight. In Ash Lane post-primary school, the mentor tried to meet the NQTs as a group because she felt that would lead to them sharing experiences among themselves, though it can pose difficulties in terms of release time and cover:

I would try and meet them together because I have found at the start of the year, I was meeting them individually or maybe in twos or whenever, you know, sometimes it didn't work with classes and stuff. And then I found that actually meeting them as a group, which was harder for release time, even though the release time was there but we may not have the teachers to cover. So it was harder for release times, so maybe not everybody would, like I might be free or one of the NQTs might be free. So in that respect, I suppose maybe you are taking up their time but I found it more beneficial because they chatted among themselves. So if a difficulty came up, they'd say well

I did this in my class and it worked... So I felt that they were engaging more together and I felt that meeting the three of them together helped them all see that they are all, there is little difficulties for everybody and that it is not plain sailing and even for me I would give my experience of certain classes or experiences as well. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The NQTs were positive about meeting together as a group:

It's good to bounce ideas off people, I suppose, and you know ninety-nine percent of the time if I think something, you know, about a topic or about something that I'm having trouble with, the others find it as well. So you know it is good to kind of bounce ideas off them, as I said, and get their input on it. So I would prefer the group setting I suppose, yeah, I found it better. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I get on very well with everyone because we started as such a large group of new teachers and I mean that was a mixture of NQTs and people doing maternity and Dips and different kinds of bits and pieces, I guess we were always put together as a group, at the start. And I mean they would certainly be people that I would turn to if I wanted someone advice or like, I guess we, you know we help each other as seeking help from different people who are more senior than us too. So those people as well. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Formal meetings generally occurred before or after school time for approximately 30-60 minutes. The principal in Maple Street post-primary school was critical of scheduling meetings during class time, with teachers missing class as a result:

If we're telling them from this team that you can only meet me during when you have a class and we'll free you up for the class, we'll pay a sub and you can go out, I think that's sending out the wrong signals and I said that yesterday to the feedback for, for [name removed]. I just felt that's not good, telling people that if you want to meet with me we can only meet when I'm timetabled and you're timetabled and then the mentor has to go and get two subs to do that. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

There were multiple purposes and foci of meetings which tended to be similar across all schools. The agendas appeared to be sufficiently flexible to fit with the emerging needs of the NQT and requirements of the mentoring process. One PST described the meetings as ‘a recap of everything: literally where we are – how we’re getting on with this, what’s next to do, what training is coming up, or what do we have to do and things like that’ (Holly Road primary school). A main emphasis was on information sharing in relation to the Droichead process and practices and planning for upcoming Droichead-related events such as observations, workshops and so on.

Our last PST team meeting was a feedback session on our school visit from our associate and we just chatted about the challenges or the difficulties. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

A second focus of meetings was on supporting and problem-solving emerging issues and difficulties for the NQT; on sharing information relating to general school calendar events such as sports day, and issues generally related to providing support in working with parents, behaviour management, and teaching and curriculum issues.

Well just, I suppose, difficulties they’d have, you know, whether it was with, as I say with parents or with timetabling, you know, it could be anything, classroom strategies, timetabling, specific curriculum issues, I suppose, more often maybe behaviour issues, or, you know, dealing with parents, that kind of thing, you know. You know, like I suppose the first big one would be the parent-teacher meeting, you know, and strategies for dealing with that, and we would, you know, again provide them with strategies for that, and, you know, another teacher would sit in with them and go through the notes and that kind of thing. (Deputy Principal, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In Ash Lane post-primary school, some of these meetings focused on very practical issues such as dealing with house exams and parent-teacher meetings. One of the NQTs, for example, mentioned a discussion of the mock exams which he found particularly helpful:

Our mentor sat us down in one of our meetings and literally, you know, bisected everything we needed to know in terms of – where to be? What to do? Which put us completely at ease, we knew exactly, I mean we had previously not really known that, and you know we could have – no I’m sure we would have been told, and we could

have gone to someone to find out what to do. But it was just great to sit down and our mentor actually just told us everything we needed to know. So I came out of that meeting so relieved I suppose, you know. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The third emphasis was on discussing progress of the NQT, discussions around teaching and learning and on observations and reflections on practice.

Over half of the schools mentioned the importance of transparency and confidentiality around the conversations that occurred within meetings. NQTs communicated that they found meetings supportive and constructive and ‘What I loved about it was that I was included in the whole thing from start to finish, you know, there was no secret meetings’ (Holly Road primary school). PST members mentioned the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the discussions. PST teams in larger schools held large meetings with all NQTs to discuss generic issues and smaller meetings with individual NQTs because ‘if one of them had a problem, you couldn’t discuss the problem in front of the other NQT’ (Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS).

We never met without the NQTs because it’s a whole, it’s the whole thing about the process and the openness and there was no, no, you know, there was no talking about anybody behind their back, anything that was discussed was discussed between the five of us. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In schools where meetings took place without the NQT, the PST members were very careful around the nature of the conversations that took place and that profession practices were adhered to.

We have met we have met as a PST without the NQTs four times this year. I would want to just add a point to that that within those meetings even though the NQTs weren’t present it was entirely above board you know there was there was nothing ever said or done you know. [We were] ... very, very careful, I think there was an entirely professional and ethical approach taken here in the school.

Q: How did that happen, where did that come from, do you think?

I think it came from the training, ok I think it came from the guidelines that were laid down in terms of having a professional conversation you know so I mean for the dignity for the whole process and the NQTs as well. They always took place as soon as

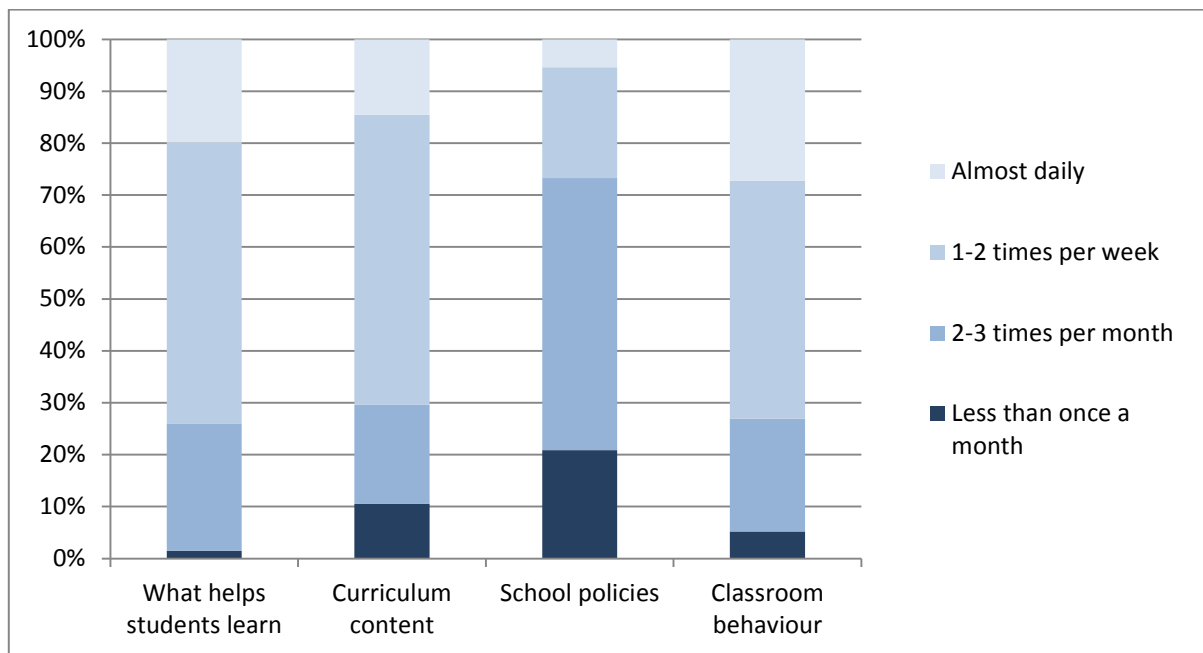
possible after a lesson and never in the staffroom never within earshot of other people and always in a private place yeah. (Other PST member, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Several PST members referred to the workload associated with the meetings:

It is quite time consuming really, it's very valuable and it's very worthwhile but it does take a lot of time between meetings, like I met the NQT that I was mentoring, I met her weekly, you know, because she was in a very short time, she was only within the fifty days. So we met every week to try and you know give her as much scaffolding and support as I possibly could. And I suppose the observations, going into observe her, the post meetings, pre-observations all that takes time, you know and to prepare for all of that too, so it is quite time consuming but as I said it's valuable, but it's a lot of work involved. (Sycamore Street primary school, PST, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

4.5 THE ROLE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT FROM NON-PST STAFF

In the survey data, NQTs reported on the extent to which they had conversations with non-PST members about different aspects of teaching (Figure 4.7). Such conversations more frequently involved a discussion of managing classroom behaviour, though the majority of NQTs reported discussing what helps students learn best and curriculum/subject content with other colleagues at least once a week. School policies were discussed relatively infrequently with non-PST teachers.

FIGURE 4.7 Issues Discussed by NQT with other Non-PST Teachers (NQT, Wave 2)

Interviews with participating schools indicated that other teachers, not members of the PST, regularly provided support for the NQT. Interviewees frequently mentioned the availability of ‘whole school support’ for the NQT (Ash Lane post-primary school, Beech Park primary school, Sycamore Street primary school, Pine View post-primary school) and an ‘open door policy’ (Sycamore Street primary school, Ash Lane post-primary school). One principal referred to the informal mentoring support provided for NQTS as:

The unquantifiable informal meetings, that is really what you want to do.... to be linked in with subject department people and to be over coffee if they’ve queries, if they are talking about education or classroom management, I think that is where they learn. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Schools, in general, prided themselves on the culture of support in their schools and recognised the importance of a supportive environment for the NQT and for a successful mentoring experience. Many schools referred to their long tradition of informal support for new teachers joining the school. There was a shared belief and pride in schools which was echoed by many staff members. For example, the mentor in Maple Street post-primary school stated, ‘I think in the culture of this school we’ve always had a long tradition of older teachers looking out for younger teachers’. This was supported by comments from a non-PST teacher: ‘We’re a very small staff so we’ve a good community spirit here and everyone

kind of looks out for each other' and the NQT; 'the staff is really a close knit staff here'.

In larger primary schools, support was generally provided in the form of grade-level teams who engaged in co-planning on regular occasions. In such primary schools, these co-planning meetings generally took place every two weeks or monthly; in these meetings teachers and NQTs shared planning documents and resources. Such plans were frequently stored digitally via digital sharing platforms (such as a Local Area Network, Dropbox) and thus easily accessed by NQTs.

With the other... [class] teachers I got so much support off them as well from the start of the year like with the planning, just even for the very first day of the kids coming in with their parents I was saying like 'oh what will I do!' And you know telling me exactly, you know, how to be. So if there were any problems or anything I could always go to any of those too. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Larger primary schools had larger teams that extended beyond grade level teams that also planned and provided support.

Oh there would be very much [collaboration and support]. As I say we all support, plan together in groups already, teachers plan at class-level. They all, they plan together, they would you know meet regularly and do their fortnightly or monthly notes plan. ... Like we have intervention groups, so the resource teachers would meet with the class teachers and plan for that. So there is continuously meetings, you know about different things, so there is a lot going on. (Non-PST member, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In smaller primary schools, support was frequently provided by teachers in other classes who had specific expertise.

We have a very kind of open door policy throughout the school, that it doesn't always have to go through the mentor if an NQT wants some advice, you know they can go straight to somebody that they know is particularly strong in the P.E. area, or somebody who has great ideas for art. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Support in post-primary schools was generally provided in subject departments. Teachers within subject departments frequently met to engage in common planning for assessment and to discuss progression through content. NQTs also contributed to planning: ‘they might be assigned a part of the common assessment to work on, such as a first year Maths test for Christmas’ (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school). In Ash Lane post-primary school, the mentor referred to the importance of subject departments as a source of support for NQTs:

We have regular subject department meetings and we would plan, which are very helpful actually for NQTs because at the start of the year, they would be involved in the subject departments. ... So you know, I would give them a base teacher with their subject as well, I would ask for, you know a French teacher, you know this is student X or student teacher X or whatever and can you keep an eye out for them this year. So at those subject department meetings, you know we’d be updating yearly plans and they would all know where to get a copy of these. So that they would be able to keep with the schedule of the year, so yeah there would be great cooperation among teachers here. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

At subject department meetings we’d be updating yearly plans and they [NQTs] would all know where to get copies of these so that they would be able to keep up with the schedule for the year. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

In Maple Street post-primary school, the subject department was seen by one NQT as an important source of support; however, another NQT in the same school also drew on support outside the subject department:

We’d have a meeting, like at the beginning of the year we’d have a few meetings throughout the year and then constantly, even one of the girls would just say to me ‘how are you getting on in that chapter, where are you at in the plan, I’ve got work sheets, we kind of share a lot of resources in different things so there is a lot of support there. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

There’s some other teachers that I’d usually go to. There’s one other, one of the other resource teachers has been in the school a few years, so when I started off I went to her for a bit of advice because I felt like I wasn’t fully aware of what resource was or how I could do it, so I went to her and she gave me just some tips and hints and

some of the students she had as well and how to kind of handle them and stuff like that. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

As can be seen from Maple Street post-primary school, the support was not limited to within subject departments. In one small post-primary school, the small school size and strong ethos around mentoring were posited as the reasons for the large non-formal support network for NQTs that existed outside of the PST.

The [NQTs] would in this school [have support outside the PST and mentor] because it's the nature of our school and the size of our school. So like have you been up to our staffroom? It's one table, it's one table, we are one and very much one, it doesn't, I know at some schools it splits off into groups or NQTs are left or Dips or whatever are left in a separate room or separate section, there's none of that here. ... It's just the nature of this school that people look after each other, I think they do. And I think it's just always been the way, when I started here they were nearly all older males, that was the way the school was all older men that had been here forever. And they would have taken me under their wing and that just continues. It does continue, because it's tough to teach and I think you know it can be tough, all teaching can be tough but I think people realise that and look after new people coming in, I think that ethos is just in the school. (Other PST, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

NQTs also received support from other NQTs in their school. There was also evidence of non-PST members providing indirect support by supervising an NQT's class when they were doing an observation or receiving feedback (Holly Road primary school). Informal support during the induction process was seen by some NQTs as setting the tone for their post-Droichead role in the school, making them feel more confident about asking for assistance as and when required:

I found that it was a very supportive structure which I continue to benefit from this year also. I find that having had the experience of seeing different practices in place – I find it easier to ask other members of staff on different strategies that are being used in the school and in specific class groupings. (NQT, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Taking part in Droichead was a very positive experience for me. I am still working as a teacher in the same school. This gives me great

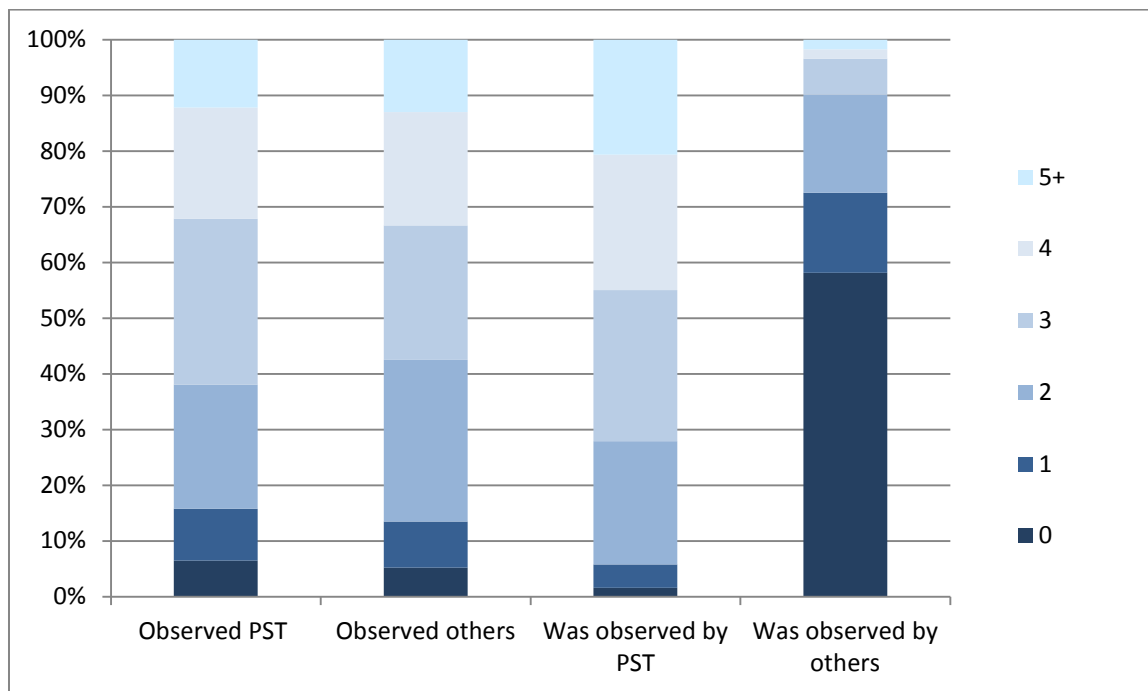
affirmation and confidence that I am valued by the principal and staff at the school. The staff continue to support and assist me as I do them. It's a team effort. (NQT, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

4.6 FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF OBSERVATIONS

Survey data provided information relating to the frequency of opportunities for NQTs to observe and be observed. Mentors were asked about the number of opportunities NQTs in their school had to observe and be observed by other staff. The most common pattern was for NQTs to observe members of the PST on two or three occasions. A similar frequency was evident in terms of observing non-PST teachers. Those in the primary sector had more frequent observations of other teachers than NQTs in the post-primary sector. NQTs were typically observed by members of the PST on two to four occasions, although a fifth of schools allowed for five or more such observations. These observations were somewhat more frequent in primary schools. NQTs were less likely to observe teachers outside the team, with no such observations occurring in 58 per cent of cases; where they did observe other teachers, the typical pattern was one or two occasions.

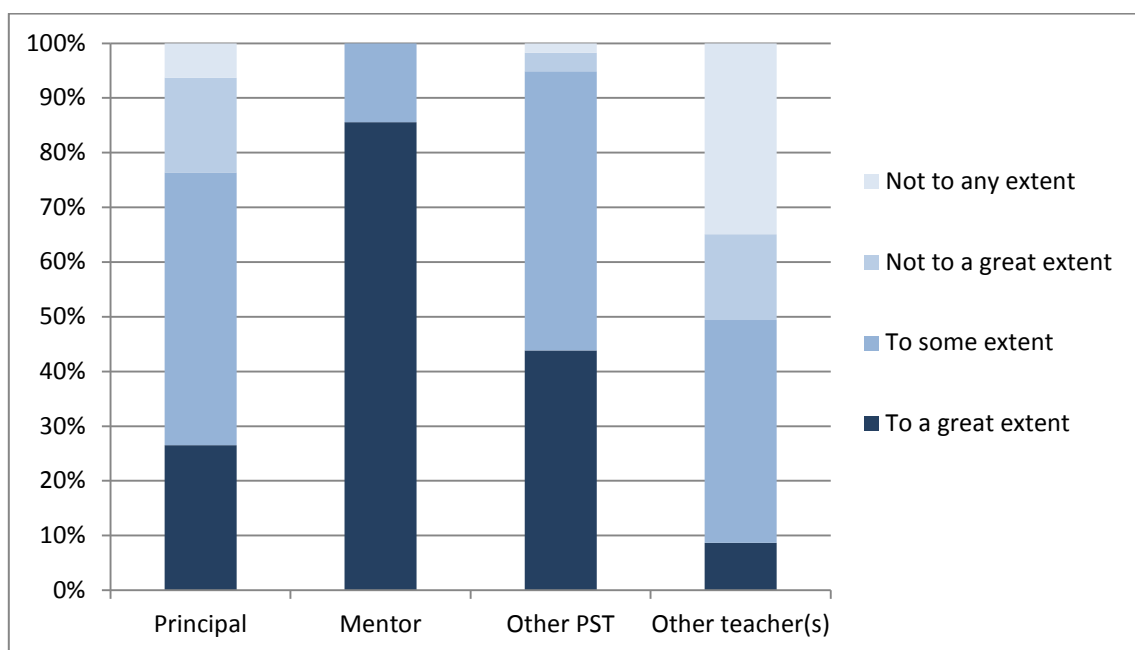
Principals in non-Droichead schools were also asked about the number of opportunities open to NQTs to observe and be observed by other teachers. The differences were more marked than in the case of frequency of meetings. In 42 per cent of non-Droichead schools, NQTs had no chance to observe other teachers while this was reported in only 2 per cent of Droichead schools.⁴ Around half of NQTs in non-Droichead schools were not observed by other teachers. This was the case for a slightly higher proportion of Droichead schools (58 per cent), but in the latter case observations were undertaken by members of the PST.

⁴ The latter proportion refers to the chance to observe non-PST teachers to give a fairer comparison with non-Droichead schools.

FIGURE 4.8 Frequency of Observations (Mentor, Wave 2)

Almost all principals reported that their schools had used the NIPT observation template. Of those who used the template, 70 per cent found it 'very useful', with the remainder finding it 'useful'. Primary principals were somewhat more likely to describe it as 'very useful' than their second-level counterparts (79 per cent compared with 64 per cent). Among mentors, 94 per cent reported using the template with all finding it very useful or useful. Among other PST members, 98 per cent stated that they had used the observation template with all finding it very useful or useful. Records of observations were kept in two-thirds of schools.

In terms of feedback to the NQT on their teaching, mentors reported that they themselves had the greatest involvement in this role, with the vast majority giving feedback 'to a great extent' (Figure 4.9). Mentors reported that they usually gave feedback at a later scheduled meeting (67 per cent) rather than immediately after the class. In the majority of cases, principals and other PST members had at least some involvement in providing such feedback, with greater involvement among other PST members than among principals. Schools differed more in the involvement of other teachers (that is, those not on the PST); in around half of cases, other teachers had at least some involvement while in others they had no involvement at all or were not very involved. In primary schools, principals had a somewhat greater involvement in providing feedback than in second-level schools while principals in smaller schools tended to be less involved in giving feedback.

FIGURE 4.9 Involvement of Staff in Providing Feedback to the NQT (Mentor, Wave 2)

The vast majority (94 per cent) of NQTs reported that members of the PST provided constructive feedback, with 63 per cent strongly agreeing that this was the case. All felt that members of the team were themselves open to learning new teaching strategies. The vast majority (88 per cent) felt that the team ‘tells me what I need to improve’, with almost three-quarters reporting that that the team ‘tells me what I have to do differently in lessons’. A smaller proportion (60 per cent) felt that ‘the team has specific ideas about how I should teach the lesson content’, reflecting an emphasis on independent development.

The remainder of this section reports on qualitative data arising from the case studies. Analysis of the qualitative case-study data reveals that observation was perceived as one of the most beneficial aspects of Droichead. The observation process was extremely positive in terms of the benefit of being observed, and in having the opportunity to observe other teachers.

4.6.1 Observations of the NQT

The frequency of formal observations by the PST was standard across the case-study schools, with most NQTs being observed 3-4 times across the process, and in one school 6-8 times. In many cases, emphasis was placed on matching observations to the identified needs of NQTs and in providing as many observations as was necessary.

How many times are they observed? As often as they want. We usually do two or maybe three and then during the professional conversation if they want another one there's no problem. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In some primary schools there was a desire, on the part of the PST team and/or the NQT, to observe what was referred to as the 'core subjects' being taught in addition to other subjects that had been identified by the NQT. The NQT in Holly Road primary school stated that she had a lot of input into which lessons were observed and that she 'wanted the core subjects done'. In Sycamore Street primary school the principal stated:

Nowhere does it say that it is obligatory to observe the core subjects but we felt that it was necessary to do that. So we decided that it was going to be the three cores and one other.... We would have looked at transitions between subjects as well but nowhere does it state that.

4.6.2 Providing Feedback – Perspective of the PST and Mentors

Approximately half of the schools referred to the NIPT observation guidelines and the template as being helpful. One PST member stated that:

There's a lot you want to try and kind of write. It [the template] is great though for getting you to kind of focus your ideas, and focus what you want to say, rather than have loads of little bits on pieces of paper, and trying to feed that back to someone.

In one school which had developed its own observation protocols over the years, the PSTs changed to using the Droichead template which they found more useful (Ash Lane post-primary school). There was variation within and between schools in terms of use of the NIPT template. In Maple Street post-primary school, the principal did not use the NIPT template but the other PST members did. The mentor found the template useful:

I think it was really good and we kind of picked out the areas of focus and then how we'd, what I did was I made, with the permission of the teacher, I scribbled down notes for myself and then when we had our feedback meeting we discussed all the areas that I had observed, we chatted about it and then we wrote up the piece, we filled out the actual template going in to the folder together. And we both signed

off on it and then I just tore up those notes. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Conversations with other PST members benefited team members in terms of presenting a more co-ordinated approach to observations. During the PST meetings:

We kind of talked about 'what we're going to look for' and we did kind of correlate with each other and say 'oh that was a good thing to say'. Say for the first one we went in a little bit, I won't say 'blind', but we went in with our own experience, and then... we compared our observations with each other... so the second time we were a little bit more, you know, together in terms of what we were looking for. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In some schools the NQT provided a summary of the lesson to the observers beforehand and identified the desired focus of the observations. The focus of the observations was usually identified in advance and observers noted the importance of knowing what aspects to observe in advance of the lesson:

I think it is really important that you are going in there with an area picked out... whether it be classroom management or active teaching methodologies. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school)

When I was coming to observe them I was saying like what would you like me to look at, and then they'd say I'm not so sure about my questioning or I'm not so sure....so that's what I would have looked at. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

They tell me the objective of their lesson, in terms of content and then we agree on a focus of the observation. It might have nothing to do with content, it could be classroom management, it could be differentiation, it could be, you know, supporting or reinforcing the school environment or discipline or it could be anything or it could be a combination. Now I focus on those but obviously if anything else is highlighted I will mention that in feedback, in the recommendations to focus on for the next one.... I have focused on differentiation certainly for two NQTs, classroom management has been another issue.... Another big issue I think has been establishing routine in class and recapping at the end so the start of lessons and the end of lessons, so kind of framing lessons. Making sure the kids know what's coming next at the start, know what they're going to, how much time

they have and then at the end what they have achieved in the 40 minutes. And that's kind of been a recurring thing we've looked at with them as well so. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

While many of the observations focused on the treatment of the content, other observation focused on classroom management, classroom climate, relationships with students, management of learning and on different dimensions of the teaching process.

Just to see you know the flow of lessons, her classroom management, how prepared she was, you know the resources that she had, her relationship with the children – just the kind of key components that, just that everything seemed to be kind of going, that she didn't seem to be struggling, and that she was at ease with what she was teaching. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In the observations I would go by the template but I suppose in my own mind I would be looking for time management, I'd be looking for interaction between students. Like what's the atmosphere like in the classroom, I would be looking for different teaching methodologies. And just overall, I suppose, how the information came across was it a good class, was it, you know did I feel that the information was communicated effectively. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I look for firstly their classroom management, how they're managing. I also check the subject matter, you know, make sure it's accurate and that things are written on the board correctly.... But it's, it's not only the pacing and the, the subject matter, it's about learning because I remember when I was in [ITE] you'd go in and you taught for forty minutes, if I'd observe a class, and you'd say what did they actually learn at the end of that and – it was a great class, it was very entertaining – but nothing was learned. So that's what I'm always looking for here, what learning is taking place. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Members of the PST team spoke about the importance of the post-observation feedback in terms of the nature and timing of the feedback. Schools reflected on the nature of their feedback and how it was received by the NQT and adjusted

their approaches to providing feedback if necessary. In the following quote, the principal felt that initially they had taken a wrong approach with the feedback:

The big mistake that we made initially too was to launch into what we felt, how it had gone, instead of asking the NQT how did you feel it had gone.... because half the time they know what's gone wrong, they will say it to you, rather than you having to say it to them. (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

A primary concern was the timing of the pre-observation and post-observation meetings. All participants expressed the desire that the post-observation feedback occur as soon as possible following the conclusion of the lesson. Many PST members and NQTs expressed their disappointment that quite often the feedback happened 'the day after or two days after' (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school) the lesson. One rationale was to reduce the level of anxiety for the NQT:

it's so important that it is done so as quickly as possible after the observation as well you know that you know neither you nor indeed the actual NQT has time to worry about it or stew it over (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school).

Another PST in the same school noted the importance of having a prompt follow-up professional conversation for feedback to NQT framed by NIPT approach/guidelines:

I think it came from the training, ok I think it came from the guidelines that were laid down in terms of having a professional conversation, you know, so I mean for the dignity for the whole process and the NQTs as well. They always took place as soon as possible after a lesson and never in the staffroom never within earshot of other people and always in a private place yeah. (Other PST, Birch Avenue post-primary school)

The principal of one school referred to time pressure as the primary disadvantage of the observation process whereby it was not possible to give feedback right away but after the school day:

If you don't feedback straight away, you kind of get a bit fuzzy, even though you have it written down. And also it kind of left them

wondering how did they do all day. (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

This concern was also expressed by an NQT who mentioned that due to time constraints they often did not get the feedback until later in the day, something that they felt may impact on the feedback itself: 'they [PST members] would nearly forget little things, that they mightn't have, that they might have wanted to say to you' (Chestnut Avenue primary school, NQT). One school used all of the dedicated Droichead release time to provide support for teachers around the observation process.

Other challenges existed in relation to the observation process. One challenge was observing classes outside one's subject area.

I suppose I would be concerned about, like when I'm obliged to observe them in subjects that I'm not familiar with. Like this week like I'm going into Maths, my weakest subject and French, you know so I'm only looking there really at classroom, you know management and timing and that type of thing. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Members of the PST in two schools spoke about the need for additional professional development in the area of carrying out observations and providing feedback. Interestingly, both of these cases have experienced some tension around the observation process and felt they could be better prepared to provide less-than-positive feedback to NQTs.

I didn't want to insult the person, but yet, you know, I had to say stuff. Giving the feedback was a challenge for me personally. (Principal, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

4.6.3 Being Observed and Receiving Feedback – NQT Perspectives

Most schools provided the NQT with some time to settle into the school and observe their own mentor before they were themselves observed. Many NQTs valued the informal observation that the mentor carried out prior to the formal observation from the PST member.

It was good, like she'd come in to us and observe us before our actual observations ... it was nice to have like another set of eyes. It was kind of, almost like a trial observation because you got to kind of fix any mistakes before your real observation, which is nice... but it was

good to have that chat with her and kind of give you an idea of where you're, if you're going in the right direction or the wrong direction. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Two NQTs interviewed did experience discomfort being observed and felt an element of judgement involved. One NQT in Ash Lane post-primary school, although she felt the observation and feedback were carried out in a positive and respectful way, felt uncomfortable about being observed and 'judged':

You feel like you're coming through so many things and so many things and it is never ending. So you do kind of feel like even coming to the end, we do, we have to do another observation and I know it is all in the spirit of your own growth but it is still, it is undeniable that there is still the stigma of you have to pass through this in order to be. You know there is an element of judgement there. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

With the exception of the aforementioned cases, the experiences of NQTs in relation to receiving feedback and the benefits of the professional conversations were almost unequivocally positive. NQTs found the feedback was structured (Cherry Lane post-primary school), informative (Cherry Lane post-primary school, Holly Road primary school) and presented in an informal and friendly manner. They reported that the feedback was constructive (Sycamore Street primary school, Beech Park primary school, Holly Road primary school) and boosted their confidence (Willow Close post-primary school).

When we had the conversation afterwards that really boosted my confidence... it was a massive boost to have your boss kind of turn around and say you have done a good job. (Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

They were both really, very positive and again, I mean that reinforcement is important as well, because you do question yourself and you do wonder if you're doing things right and sometimes it's nice to just have somebody say, I think that worked really well. So yeah they gave really, you know helpful feedback and constructive feedback that I thought was valuable. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The openness around the process of providing feedback was frequently mentioned:

And the two of us sat down with everything that you've taken, all the notes and all the jottings and everything, there's nothing hidden, it's what you've observed that day, and then you write it neatly into like a proper template, and then we both signed it and gave a copy to her, and everybody on the PST has a copy of your observation then. (Other PST, Holly Road primary school)

Several NQTs spoke about their initial nervousness when being observed, but described that this became easier over time.

I think at the start it was really, really nerve-racking, and I hate when you'd be setting up class and your hands would be shaking and I'd be like 'oh no', because especially going straight in from college I was like I know there's so many things that I'm not great at and this person has been teaching for ages and they're coming in and they're going to know straight away everything that I'm doing, the small things that I'm doing wrong, so it was really, really nerve-racking at first, but then after a while when you realise that they're just there to support you and they're saying well, you know, you're going to be like that at the start, you know, you'll be grand, it kind of eases you in to it, but it's just the initial nerves of it all. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

I was a little bit apprehensive. But as the year went on I felt it, it was fine, I think it was just that initial 'the principal's coming in and the PST is coming in', but I think as the year went on you got more comfortable and you didn't mind it. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

4.6.4 Opportunity for NQTs to Observe

The opportunity to observe other teachers was identified as being beneficial. One principal stated:

That's what they love. If you ask them they'll tell you, if you ask them what did you enjoy or find most beneficial about the Droichead programme they will tell you it's the observation of other teachers. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The majority of NQTs carried out four or more observations with some NQTs observing up to 6-7 times. Particular emphasis was placed on matching observations to the identified needs of NQTs, providing as many observations as was necessary and extending the opportunity to observe beyond the 'sign-off' time.

It was just interesting to see the way it's thought of as a year-long process even when you're signed off, you can continue on with the observations if you like. So I know another NQT here, she's finished and she's been signed off but she's gone on still a few observations ... You're not just, yeah. Yeah, so that was kind of useful for us, just so I know that even coming to the end like it's absolutely no hassle if I go to anyone in the PST and say can I do another observation and that's fine. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

One of the PSTs in Hazel Way primary school felt there should be more time for observation:

I think the three days that are allocated, I don't think that is enough, I mean it's kind of crammed in really. Whereas I think if there was more observation, you know if the teachers, if the NQTs got a chance to see maybe two or three, a set of P.E. lessons, from like you know whether it be basketball skills, up to playing basketball, how the teacher, do transition, and then maybe you know through a set of Irish lessons, English lessons, I think there's not enough probably. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In Maple Street post-primary school, it was also left open to the NQT to observe additional classes/teachers if they wished.

Often for the observations we've tried to have the NQTs observe a class they teach themselves with another teacher. So they see the dynamic, they see the same students but how they react to another teacher. I thought that was helpful. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Selection of the specific classes being observed was driven, on the most part, by the needs and interests of the NQTs. In primary schools, some NQTs observed specific subject areas or class levels where they felt they needed some support.

For others, they chose to focus on a variety of year groups or on what they identified as core subjects.

We asked her, you see at the outset to identify things that she feels that she would like to learn about and because she was in seniors, she really wanted to see a junior class in operation. So she viewed, she observed a teacher who was an accomplished teacher, teaching phonics I think in a junior infant class. And then she viewed, she said she was a bit nervous about PE, so she viewed the fifth class teacher teaching P.E. to a similar age group. You know for station teaching, so that she would know how to do P.E. and then she viewed Gaeilge in another class. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I loved that part of the Droichead, getting to see other teachers teach, it's amazing ... And seeing my mentor teach was great but getting to see lots of teachers throughout the whole experience; I even got to spend an hour in the autistic unit here. Which, you know, was amazing for me too. And you get to choose, my mentor would always come and say what do you want to see? So you get to choose what level you want to go to and I got to shadow learning support as well, so I got, I kind of tried to cover every kind of part of the school. I did what else, a class in the juniors, first, third and then like one of the higher classes, sixth I think it was. But it was nice that you, you weren't told where you were going, that you got to decide, because maybe some people might want to see five lessons in a junior infant classroom, you know, that's their thing. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Similarly at post-primary level, the focus of observations was not always content-driven and extended to pedagogical skill development. In the following post-primary school, the NQT observed two lessons in her subject area and other lessons to focus on more generic pedagogical issues. One observation was with a 6th year English class to observe classroom management in action:

It was literally to see how that teacher kept them quiet for the 40 minutes and that actually really helped. (NQT, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

Observing other teachers was a very positive experience with NQTs describing it as interesting and informative and providing valuable insights into how other teachers deal with management of content and management of student

behaviour. Many NQTs found that the experience of observing was reassuring for them when they saw teachers who demonstrated similar teaching approaches and styles. They also experienced relief when they observed more experienced teachers struggle with similar issues in their classrooms. An NQT stated her relief and the feeling of reassurance to find that certain things do not happen only in her classroom:

I think it is very open – I think it’s very transparent – and I think it’s definitively the way to go because there’s no closed doors, just you know, invited in. (NQT, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I think I’ve learned a lot. First of all with different things – at the beginning I was a little bit nervous, especially with when I went to see an experienced teacher, I was worried about the classroom management thing – but I think I’ve found that I wasn’t the only one and yes these challenges do arise even though just not because I’m a first year out, they do happen every day in the class. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Hence, observation was also seen by NQTs as providing a more realistic perspective on classroom teaching:

I suppose it was useful in that it helped me to realise that, I suppose that, you know there are, all lessons don’t go perfectly in other classes, you know so. You know some lessons went really well and I learnt loads from that but I also learnt I suppose, that in some classes, things maybe didn’t go to plan on the day or you know one teacher had planned something that didn’t work out quite as well, as she wanted it to. So I suppose, I learnt that, you know every classroom is the same and that some things go well and some things maybe don’t go as well as you expect. So it was useful for me to see, I suppose that, some of the, the difficulties I was having were in other classes as well. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The NQTs found the observations helpful and observed techniques that they later tried themselves. The frequently referred to ‘tricks’ and ‘tips’ they received when observing other classrooms. One post-primary teacher stated:

That’s why you know observing them I found very beneficial you know, that I certainly learned some things that you know, that I may not have seen before, or some techniques or little tricks or whatever

they might have been. Ahm, just, yea just looking at them and seeing them do it, and trying to apply it myself. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Another thing was that when I actually went in to observe another member of staff, even just simple things like a PowerPoint, the way it was laid out and different things that I would have not have even thought of doing, like instead of having it as Word she had it as pictures for the students that maybe wasn't great at English or English wasn't their first language, I thought that was really good. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

There are some data to suggest that the activity of being observed was not a trivial matter for participating teachers in some schools. One NQT stated that she found observations interesting and while feeling nervous herself, she noticed that 'the teachers were nervous being observed as well, it was being human' (Holly Road primary school). For some of these teachers being observed, they felt the pressure to perform while they were being observed and altered their teaching for the duration of the process in an effort to model more active learning methodologies.

She sat in on Irish I think it was with me... I probably did too much in that lesson; I wanted to show her different things, You know, em, because after she said to me, em, would you get all that done in a normal lesson like on a day to day basis? And, I kind of, you know thought about it and said actually no I wouldn't, I was trying to show you snippet of each part. (Non-PST teacher, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

This pressure came from an awareness of 'being observed and whatever she [the NQT] would take from that, might go on to inform her own practice, so there was a big responsibility' (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school) and a desire that it was 'a productive lesson that she was going to get something from' (Sycamore Street primary school, non-PST). One teacher referred to the nervousness he experienced about being observed:

I found I suppose I was actually nervous the first time, it might seem ridiculous having gone into so many but obviously anyone I suppose critiquing your work or even observing your work, you know it can be undermining. But I will say I tried to I suppose not create the master class if you know what I mean or have this artificial context because

the students particularly here would point that out in a minute anyway. (PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

4.7 INVOLVEMENT IN OTHER INDUCTION ACTIVITIES

4.7.1 Workshops

The survey data reveal that the vast majority (95 per cent) of NQTs had attended at least one of the induction workshops at the time of the survey, with around half having attended at least six such workshops. Because the NQTs had not all completed their required number of workshops, their responses in relation to the topics covered should be treated with some caution. However, looking at topics which were not covered at all within the workshops, the most frequently mentioned were getting involved in professional activities (50 per cent), teaching in a multicultural setting (49 per cent), strategies for undertaking research or inquiry in their own classroom practice (43 per cent) and teaching students from disadvantaged backgrounds (40 per cent). It is worth noting that teaching diverse student populations (in terms of socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds) was also identified as a potential gap in initial teacher education by principals and NQTs. Among the workshops already taken, NQTs were most positive about the session on working with parents, described as ‘very helpful’ by 43 per cent. NQTs were somewhat more critical of the sessions on catering to the needs of student of different abilities (30 per cent ‘not very helpful’), teaching in a multicultural setting (30 per cent ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ helpful), engaging in lifelong learning and development (27 per cent ‘not very helpful’), teaching students from disadvantaged backgrounds (25 per cent ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ helpful), classroom management (23 per cent ‘not very helpful’) and teaching students with special educational needs (22 per cent ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ helpful).

Interviews in the case-study schools provided valuable insights into NQT experiences of workshops. NQTs were required to complete six workshops; however, a quarter of schools had NQTs that completed all or almost all workshops. In general NQTs identified specific workshops which were very useful and provided them with unique insights and helpful information that they would not otherwise have had access to. Nonetheless, there was consensus in three-quarters of the schools that some workshops were more useful than others. This was not related to the quality of the information presented in the workshop; rather, it referred to duplication of material presented in the workshops with materials previously covered in ITE. This observation was common in both primary and post-primary schools. However, there is no consensus within the data relating to where the duplication was occurring. This may be due to the variety of ITE providers and thus the variability in experiences of NQTs.

I found some of them useful and I found some of them not so useful and I felt that we were of rehashing a lot of things that we had already done, we'll say part of our teacher training. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

It is interesting to note that there was more variability between schools in terms of their satisfaction with the workshops and less variability within schools. In many cases, all staff within several schools were very happy with the support provided for NQTs by workshops. In some cases, staff of a school were critical of induction workshops for duplication. In such schools, the dissatisfaction tended to be shared across all members of the PST and the NQTs. The example of Ash Lane post-primary school is one school where there was dissatisfaction with the workshops:

I think there's a frustration there certainly on our staff, I mean most of them are going back over material that they've covered in post-graduate courses because a lot of them are only just out. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

And that they feel that they are pressurised to attend these [workshops], they feel it is taking some time, that they could be used to plan for their school day. ... there is really no link between their PME, well I know it is a PME now and the material covered in the workshops. So they feel a lot of it is repetitive. If they are to attend workshops that the workshops should be purposeful and relevant and it shouldn't be an overlap of what they've done last year. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

They feel some of it is repetitive and that they are just ticking a box. (Other PST, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

However, as one NQT stated herself, the usefulness of the workshop also seemed to depend on the stage the NQT was at in the Droichead process. If the workshop focus did not relate to the NQT's school situation, they seemed to pay less attention to it in the workshop:

I find the planning one good but a lot of my friends weren't starting their Dip until January. So they were at the meeting but they weren't you know paying attention, they couldn't comprehend what it was about... and then like when they had to start, they were like oh that meeting, might have been useful now. (NQT)

Four workshops received frequent mentions in terms of their perceived benefit – Mathematics/numeracy, child protection, classroom management and working with parents.

Some of it now was very good you know. The Numeracy one, and again I'm not just saying that because I'm a Maths teacher, but I found that, and others did, found that fantastic, it was absolutely brilliant, you know, it was well worth my while going to that. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I found some of them were really good but some of them were just kind of like top ups of what we did in college, so I found the classroom management one and the child protection one, they were the most kind of relevant. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In particular, the use of active methodologies such as role play, as part of the workshop, provided valuable skills for NQTs. Two NQTs in Hazel Way primary school and one in Ash Lane post-primary school were especially positive about a session on parent-teacher meetings:

There was a parent-teacher meeting once so there was even role play and stuff in that. And they gave loads of tips of just things like leaving a slot maybe when you're organising them for like running over and things you wouldn't think of, I would have just filled up the day and not even thought about it. So just little things like that, that you know were probably very important at the time. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The second great one that we did was the parent-teacher meeting one, so that was very practical, very helpful, great advice and we role-played parent-teacher meetings, it just worked very well and that was something I had in my head then when I was going into my parent-teacher meetings here. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

There was concern expressed by PST members in three schools, and a small number of NQTs, that attendance at workshops contributed to a work overload for NQTs. One 'experienced teacher' noted that the NQTs seem to find the workshops useful but it was challenging to participate in training and doing teaching at the same time:

I think it's quite difficult on them if they are just in their first year in a teaching role, the workload can be immense, ... and I think having to complete these workshops puts pressure on them. (PST, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

This was exacerbated when the workshops duplicated materials presented during ITE; the recommendation was made that the workshops be shorter and made more relevant to NQTs.

They're trying to deal with a new, like a full timetable, they're trying to deal with planning for classes, they're required to go to these workshops, I think, the feedback I got from my NQTs this year was that a lot of the workshop material could nearly be condensed into an hour, you know. And that they feel that they are pressurised to attend these, they feel it is taking some time, that they could be used to plan for their school day. ... there is really no link between their PME, well I know it is a PME now and the material covered in the workshops. So they feel a lot of it is repetitive. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

4.7.2 Cluster Meetings

The survey data indicated that two-thirds of principals had attended at least one cluster meeting. A third found it 'very useful', 54 per cent 'useful' and 14 per cent 'not useful'. The vast majority (85 per cent) of mentors attended at least one cluster meeting, being equally divided between those who attended one and those who attended more than one. Over four-fifths (85 per cent) found these meetings useful or very useful with one-in-six describing them as 'not very useful'. Four-fifths of other PST members had attended a cluster meeting, most usually more than one, with 84 per cent finding these meetings useful or very useful. The majority (87 per cent) of NQTs had attended a cluster meeting, with almost three-quarters finding it useful or very useful. Thus, NQTs are slightly more critical of cluster meetings than members of the PST.

Interviews in the case-study schools indicated that the majority of NQTs attended cluster meetings and found them 'helpful' and 'great' (Hazel Way primary school, Sycamore Street primary school) as they provided the opportunity to share experiences with NQTs in other schools. The opportunity to relate their experiences to others and hear about the roll-out of Droichead in other schools appeared especially valuable to NQTs. One of the NQTs in Ash Lane post-primary school was positive about a cluster meeting he had attended:

The cluster meeting was good, again, it was a small group, I don't know was it always a small group, or it just happened to be that night? But again any grievances we had we aired them, we discussed them, and I thought we got a lot of stuff kind of straightened out really that evening. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

One NQT in Cherry Lane post-primary school had attended two cluster meetings and was not too impressed by them: 'they were just for feedback of how we're getting on and what we could do to improve the process'.

The make-up of attendees at the cluster meetings was a critical determinant of their perceived usefulness – on the two occasions in the data where cluster meetings were not perceived as useful, there was a low ratio of NQTs at the meetings making it difficult 'to be open when there are lots of principals around' (Sycamore Street primary school) and resulting in there being no 'other NQTs to bounce ideas off' (Ash Lane post-primary school). Similarly, one principal was critical of the value of a cluster meeting he attended as he was the only principal among a group of NQTs (Maple Street post-primary school). The size of the group from the school that attended the cluster meeting also appeared to be influential:

I went to two cluster meetings. It was a little bit better because ... the last one the whole team went, so that was really, really good. And myself and one of the other NQTs went to another one, but again there was only myself and her and another girl there, so there was only three of us at it. So I didn't find that really beneficial at all. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

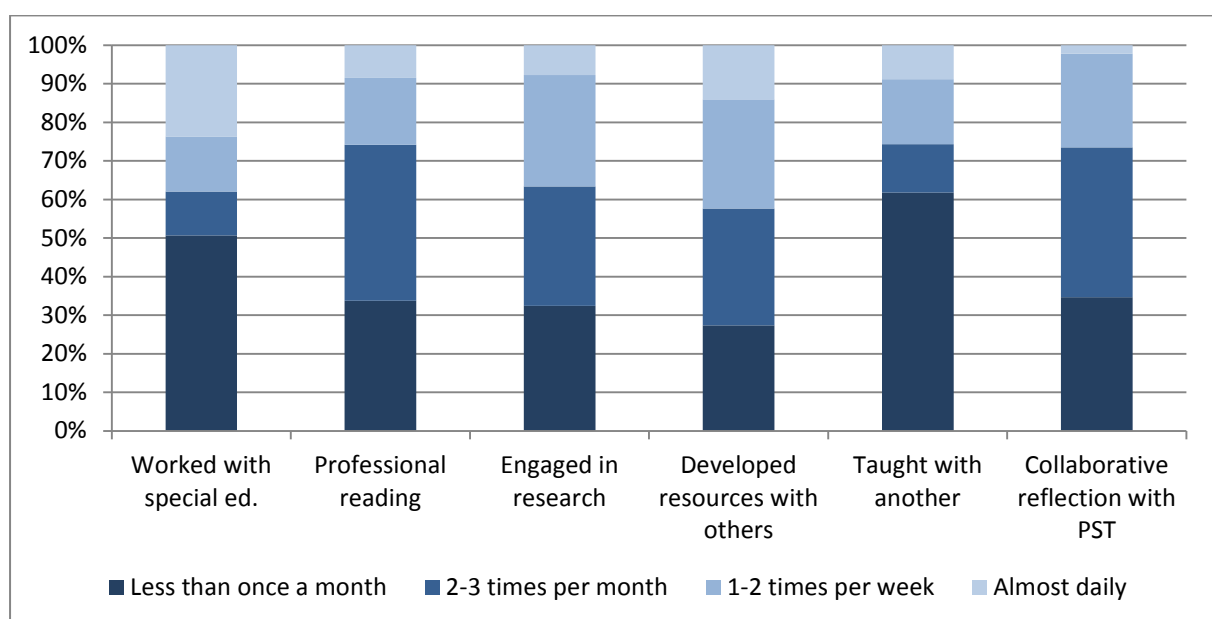
There was very little reference made to shared learning days in the data. In two schools, NQTs also attended additional training and/or in-service courses. Half of the schools mentioned initial school-level induction activities relating to becoming familiar with the school. This involved tours of the school, the provision of handbooks and FAQs about the school and was usually provided by the mentor.

4.7.3 Collaborative Work

NQTs were asked in surveys about the extent to which they had engaged in other induction or collaborative activities in their school. The majority (62 per cent) of NQTs had never or rarely taught a class with another teacher, with a quarter doing so on a frequent basis (at least once or twice a week). Around half had

never or rarely worked with a member of the special education support team in their classroom, with more than a third (38 per cent) doing so on a frequent basis. Four-in-ten had frequently collaborated with other teachers to develop resources. Around two-thirds had engaged in collaborative reflection with members of the PST at least a couple of times a month. More than a third (37 per cent) had frequently engaged in research to support their learning while three-quarters had engaged in reading professional material (such as books or articles) to support their learning at least a couple of times a month. All of these induction activities, except teaching with another teacher, were much more prevalent among NQTs in primary schools.

FIGURE 4.10 Frequency of NQT Engaging in Collaborative Work (NQT, Wave 2)



Interviews in the case-study schools revealed that team teaching opportunities were available in some, but not all, primary and post-primary schools. In these cases, team teaching was a regularly scheduled activity. In Willow Close post-primary school, one NQT co-taught with a teacher on a regular basis and they were working on a project together.

There would be great cooperation among teachers here and there is a lot of team teaching, goes on in the Maths department. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

We've done team teaching here with the learning support teacher. We've two sessions a week, so she comes in Maths today. ... We mix and match (who we work with) ... I might go with the students who need a bit more help one week, maybe the learning support teacher

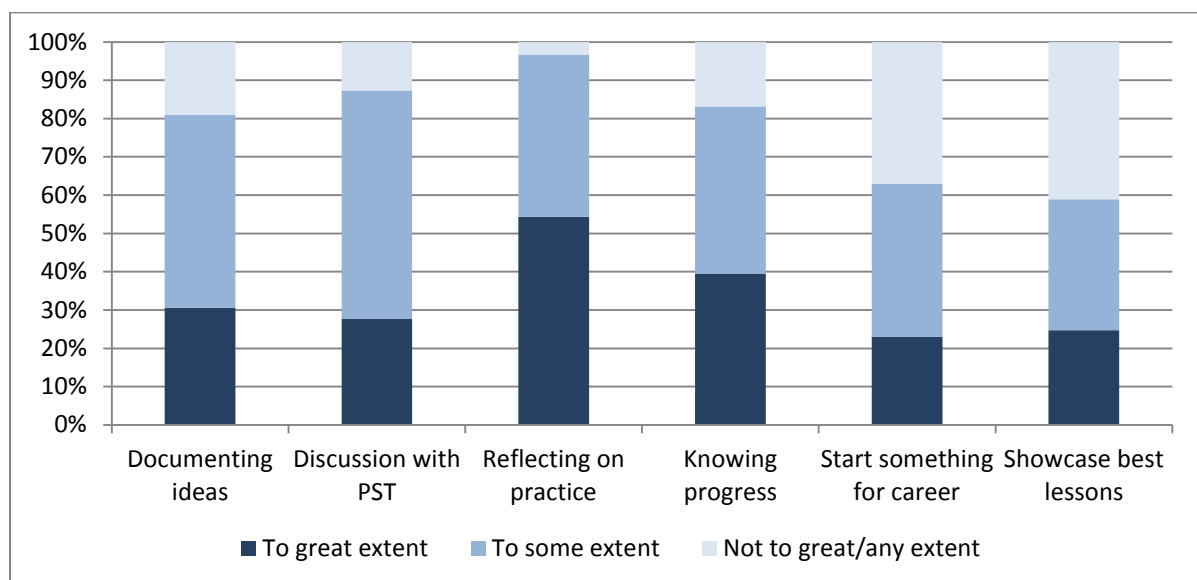
will do that one week. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Other insights on collaborative opportunities to plan and teach can be found in Section 4.5.

4.8 USE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PORTFOLIO; PERCEIVED PURPOSE

Survey data reveal that the vast majority (91 per cent) of NQTs indicated that they were keeping a professional learning portfolio as part of the Droichead process. NQTs were given a list of potential purposes of the portfolio and asked to assess the extent to which these fitted their own case. NQTs were most likely to report that they used the portfolio as a way of reflecting on their practice ‘to a great extent’. It was also often used as a way of knowing what progress they had made and of documenting new ideas. The portfolio generally formed the basis for discussion with the PST only ‘to some extent’. Fewer NQTs used the portfolio to document their best lessons/classes or as a way of starting something they would use throughout their career. NQTs in primary schools were somewhat more likely to use the portfolio to document new ideas and as a way of reflecting on their practice.

FIGURE 4.11 Purpose of the Professional Learning Portfolio (NQT, Wave 2)



Interviews in the case-study schools showed that beliefs around the purpose and role of the professional learning portfolio fell into two divergent camps. While there was variability between schools in terms of the perceived usefulness of the professional learning portfolio, generally there was little variability within a

school. Approximately one-third of schools were critical of the professional learning portfolio, particularly around the perceived lack of clarity regarding the components that constituted the professional learning portfolio. These schools tended to view the portfolio as a task or requirement, 'another box to tick' (Hazel Way primary school, NQT), rather than view it as a personal learning tool that assisted their practice. Much of the criticism in these schools relating to the portfolio arose from the vagueness around what was stored in the portfolio and the different advice and exemplars that NQTs were receiving depending on the cluster meeting they attended.

When I joined Droichead I didn't know there was going to be portfolio and then when we were told about it at the cluster meeting and I was kind of worried. Originally because there was no criteria given ... it wasn't clear so [we were] told we had to [do a] portfolio but we are not really told what's going in. And then we are given a template and told this to go ahead so you're are kind of unsure how significant the folder is. Is it just for you? Is it for other people to look at? Is it for like what's to go into it? So it's kind of all up in the air apart from that I do think it is fine I do think it is a good idea for reflecting but maybe, maybe, even just something like if there was a standard booklet or something like that. That had to be filled in like so you know what is to go in and you write and just how to explain. (NQT, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In Ash Lane post-primary school, the staff were highly critical about the lack of clarity of purpose of the portfolio. The NQTs were keeping a portfolio as a reflective journal, at what appeared to be the insistence of the NIPT associate:

They're used as a reflective journal more or less and basically, again the criteria was very vague, we didn't know what was required. So at our last meeting with the associate, she was looking for you know eight or ten reflections over different classes throughout the year. So they are keeping them in that manner but they are definitely frustrated about who is going to see them, is anybody going to look at this. And I agree with them from that point of view. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

That was probably the most frustrating aspect of the Droichead process, in terms of the information that was given regarding what was required, it seemed to change. I don't know, every single person that I spoke to throughout the cluster meetings, the visits, had a different opinion about it. And we were told at the start of the year

that it was a reflection diary was something that we could do, as a personal choice I keep or I try to keep like a note, as brief as, two things that went well and one thing that went badly or two things that went badly, one thing that went well, I try to do that as often as I can after a lesson. So I originally planned to do that, I was told then that, that wasn't enough that they needed to be full reflections and somebody else told me that, that was ok and then somebody else told me that it had to be a portfolio, like a scrap book and we needed to stick pictures in, that was frankly a mess, I was really disappointed with how that was run. You know you are reflecting generally, I don't think you need to stick a picture to tell someone that you are reflecting about something. It seems a little forced and I haven't found it to be a helpful aspect. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The remaining two-thirds of the schools also mentioned the vagueness around the portfolio criteria; however, this did not appear to cause any tension or dissatisfaction for these schools. They were aware of the criticisms of the vagueness around the portfolio:

I did a workshop on the portfolio – and like everyone was kind of very much of the same opinion, that like the portfolio is very kind of vague on what you're supposed to have in it. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

They viewed the professional learning portfolio as serving several complementary purposes. There was consensus that, while being open to scrutiny and observation by the PST and mentor, the portfolio served primarily as a support for the NQT. PST members and principals noted that the portfolio is an opportunity for the NQT to reflect on their work:

It's more a personal record of information for them rather than something that they have to hand up. I think if it's something they have to hand up then it defeats the purpose of it (Willow Close post-primary school).

Many saw it as a repository where the NQT could store records and reflections and in turn serve as a tool to 'chart progress' (Hazel Way primary school) or 'map the learning journey' (Willow Close post-primary school) in teaching across the duration of the Droichead process. In Maple Street post-primary school the

portfolio was kept as a record of NQT progress, including work samples; it was also discussed as part of the sign-off process:

The PST set them up with a nice little portfolio where they're asked to keep maybe samples of their own work, their lesson plans, like it's not a teaching practice folder that we all had in school and college, it's a different type of thing and the idea of that is that next Friday myself and [the PST] are going to have a twenty minute meeting each with the NQTs, not an interview, but it is a signing-off process where we're going to discuss, you know, how it went, how the year went, get any feedback from them, also ask to speak about something in their portfolio that they've learned and that portfolio could be anything from a post it about something they just thought of to, you know, a long detailed reflection on how a lesson went well or didn't go so well. So that's what the idea of their portfolio is, it's just something that, as you said, documents their progress in here. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In Hazel Way primary school, the staff were all positive about the portfolio and its use as a tool to support reflection. They did not appear overly concerned that it fulfil specific criteria; rather, that the portfolio served their purposes.

Well just a bit like the old folder that they used to have, it's just you know looking at where they're going, seeing how lessons are progressing, if they come to a problem then they can look back and see. (Other PST member, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

They put their, maybe a photocopy of children's work in it, you know that throughout every subject, and they'd also, their notes, and like what we fill out, our observations forms, they keep a record of that. Ok, our feedback forms to them you know, and various things, and where we say they can improve, and that they keep all that together, so that they can, you know, see their progression as well. So they have all that in their portfolios. (Other PST member, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I put some bits of that [incredible years course] because I found that very helpful in the portfolio. And also bits like the parent-teacher meetings and stuff, that would have been a big one actually, that I got help with coming up to the parent-teacher meetings off my mentor. And what else, my observations, I put a page in on each observation just of how it benefited me, what I picked up. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Do I keep a portfolio about my own progress? Oh yeah, so there's reflection. What is that called? There's a title for it but it's kind of your reflections on how you're getting on, weekly reflections, yeah. That, I love doing that, yeah. It's almost like a diary actually, you kind of write in how... If someone was acting up or someone's progressing very well and just write in, so you kind of can see yourself how you're getting on. I find that very good. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Across several schools, it was referred to as being beneficial as a memory aide because:

You're so busy too throughout the day and the weeks fly on and you could easily forget things that you know you learned. So it is great to just flick through ... it's of just the main bits that you want to remember. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

This tendency to forget important events, and the role played by the portfolio in documenting such events and in acting as an aide memoire, appeared frequently across these schools. One of the NQTs was positive about having kept a portfolio, which allowed her to realise the progress she was making:

In my portfolio I have the observation sheets and I have just a few little things, I have like one or two worksheets in there of what I really enjoyed throughout the year, so for example I had, I done a computer class where I really, really enjoyed it, I thought they worked really well, it was a surprise, I didn't think they'd take it as well as they did, so I just put that in there and then I just have a sheet with, I've just, kind of as the year went on, little things that I've learned throughout the year, I've written post its and I've just stuck it in, that's all I have really in it.

Q: And have you found that useful for yourself?

Yeah, because I actually went back and looked over a lot of it this week, kind of try and put it all in together, and even things that I forgot that I had the chat back in October or something, I think it is really, really useful to kind of, even at the end of the year, to look back and see well actually, that really worked for me and I was struggling with that but now it's, it's going really, really good. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

The location and form in which the professional learning portfolio was kept also varied considerably. In one school where the NQT did not keep a portfolio, this was at the decision of the PST; however, the NQT had records of many of the materials that would be expected in a portfolio (i.e. reflections, feedback forms). In the majority of schools the portfolio was in the possession of the NQT but was frequently viewed by the PST and mentor; one school had a digital copy of the portfolio held by the NQT. Two NQTs kept the portfolio digitally and the remainder had hard copies. One NQT said ‘it’s actually on my laptop...so it’s kind of just like reflection. We used to have to do reflections after every lesson in college anyway’ (Cherry Lane post-primary school, NQT). In general, the portfolio was seen as being ‘owned’ by the NQT who would take it with them when leaving the school.

The flexibility around the learning portfolio was evident in terms of the different materials that were archived in the portfolio. The portfolio was predominantly a collection of materials, a showcase of artefacts, and/or a reflection on practice per se. There were three general categories of materials kept in the portfolio: observations, reflections and records of practice. Many used it to store materials relating to *observations* in terms of (i) reflections made by NQTs of observations of teachers in the school and (ii) to archive feedback forms and observations made by the PST and mentors of the NQTs own teaching. The majority of NQTs placed their weekly *reflections* in the portfolio and other reflections pertaining to either areas that they were finding difficult or events and teaching moments that were experienced as successful. One NQT described that at the end of every week or fortnight, or if a specific issue arises, she jots down what happened, what she could do or what went badly and how she could improve it. She considers these reflections useful:

It is good... I think sometimes when you’re reflecting it’s actually the only time when you realise where the trigger point [was which] turned your class bad. (NQT, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

It’s really about reflecting on their practice and their learning moments, what went well, why did it go well, what went wrong, why did that go wrong. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The portfolio also served as a repository to archive their *records of practice* in terms of classroom displays, examples of children’s work, sample assessment items and other records and photographs of activities in which they engaged

students. Other uses were to store information about programmes ongoing in the school (e.g. Incredible Years programme), support materials provided by mentors (for example, how to conduct parent-teacher meetings) and research articles.

Well I have like, I have a couple of weekly reflections, I have pictures of all my displays, pictures of like say, like orienteering, cycling, like different activities I got involved in and I'd write about that. Then I'd have a bit of assessment thrown in there and like kind of marks on my lesson plans and stuff like that, like mine is actually a mish mash of everything, but, you know, it's all, it's all in the one place like. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The Professional Learning Portfolio was very good. I would generally put in areas I focused on, say something I had difficulty with for the month and then I would have like articles and stuff in there that I found helpful for me. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Participants stressed the importance that the portfolio should contain short and succinct records of practice and thus be purposeful rather than add to the administrative and paperwork demands placed on the NQT. One school advised the NQT not to keep a portfolio as they felt 'she was under enough pressure already' (Sycamore Street primary school). NQTs who were 'writing essays every night' (Holly Road primary school) were advised on ways to maximise the benefits from the portfolio without it becoming overly arduous.

I don't think you need have like huge reams of paper, I think it takes the effectiveness out of it, I think if you jot down a few points, you know, for yourself and just keep it, and to be able to look back on, and things like that, I think something short and sweet really, you know, just something that's attainable, that you think you can improve on in the next lesson, or, in the next month, or, whatever your target is, it can be useful, it has its purpose. (PST, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The girls were very frustrated when they came back from the shared learning day because they felt they got no answers about the portfolio.... The frustration with the NQTs was 'what is to be in it'? You're going no, it's not a big folder, it is just key learning moments, photographs maybe, a photocopy out of your observations, tours you did, records of stuff that you were involved in, things that you've learned through the year that you never did in your initial teacher training. Even about, you know, taking the school trips, doing tours, health and safety, you know, making sure you have parents contact

lists, all of that learning stuff that you wouldn't have known when you came in. So that's kind of what I was recommending and not to get stressed over the portfolio, it was not extra work, it was the stuff you'd done just documented. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

4.9 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides insights into the nature and extent of mentoring and its frequency during the first year of teaching. Data arising from surveys of both Droichead and non-Droichead schools are presented. These quantitative data present a broad overview of induction practices in schools and illuminate the distinctions between mentoring and induction practices and models which currently exist in Irish schools. Insights into the views and experiences of designated staff with responsibilities for teacher induction and/or teacher mentoring are presented in relation to (i) initial teacher education as a preparation for teaching, (ii) the division of labour around roles and responsibilities for the induction process, (iii) the frequency and timing of observations of NQTs, and (iv) involvement in induction activities such as workshops. Qualitative data arising from case studies of 12 Droichead schools, six primary and six post-primary, are also presented. These data provide more context and in-depth exploration of the enactment of Droichead in participating schools. In addition to providing the views and perspectives of NQTs, principals, mentors, PST members, and non-PST teachers in relation to the categories above, these data also provide insights into practices specific to Droichead, such as opportunities for NQTs to observe teaching in their schools, the roles and responsibilities of the PST, the professional development and support provided around the Droichead process, and the perceived purpose and use of the professional learning portfolio.

Chapter 5

Completing Droichead: the Recommendation Process and Reflections on the NQT Experience

This chapter focuses on two main themes: (i) the recommendation process and (ii) reflections on the entire Droichead process centred on the NQT experience. At the end of the period (in terms of hours or days) required to complete Droichead, the PST may make a recommendation to the Teaching Council that the Droichead condition be removed from a teacher's registration. In reviewing the 'recommendation process' for the purposes of this study, given the design of Droichead, we define it as an ongoing assistance-linked process leading to the final 'sign-off' as a particular moment in time in a teacher's career. In addressing the recommendation process, the chapter outlines the process itself under a number of themes, addresses the central challenge of embracing the contrary imperatives of assistance and assessment and then notes some key challenges. The second part of the chapter focuses on the NQT experience, drawing on data from interviews and follow-up electronic communication with NQTs in the case-study schools, as well as survey data from NQTs, mentors and principals.

5.1 THE RECOMMENDATION: A PROCESS AND A MOMENT

The whole process informs the recommendation... but those two observations [of the NQT's teaching] definitely have a very big impact on informing the recommendation. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The above quote from a Droichead mentor conveys both the unfolding process and final decision-making moment involved in the recommendation. As such, it sets a context for the first part of this chapter which addresses how effective, appropriate and fair the procedures and protocols are in making a recommendation to the Teaching Council in relation to the practice of a newly qualified teacher (NQT). It is important to emphasise the fact that the recommendation process itself, which has a summative assessment function, is undertaken within the wider Droichead programme that combines both assistance and assessment. First in terms of assistance, as has been illustrated in the previous chapter, Droichead typically provides a very significant range of in-school supports for NQTs over time, encompassing structured support from both

mentors and the PST, centred primarily around a set of core practices involving NIPT-designed and protocol-led observation, and tied to professional conversation-framed feedback.

While the recommendation process unfolds over the school year, the actual ‘sign-off’ or the formal recommendation decision occurs on a given occasion (typically close to the end of the school year). Given the Droichead requirement is 50 successive days teaching in the case of primary and 100 hours in post-primary, the sign-off could conceivably be prior to Christmas in a given school year. In summary – no matter when Droichead is started and completed – recommendation is both a process and a moment. The Droichead programme’s focus on ‘mentoring and professional conversations’ as the

heart of the Droichead process, which involves support, challenge and a shared vision of teaching for both the profession, and within the reality of each school context

cannot be separated from recommendation – both as process and as a moment. While the recommendation as a process and moment are intended to occur within each individual school, schools are also able to avail of outside support by drawing on an external, trained, PST member (i.e. a teacher from another school) that the NIPT have available as a panel.

TABLE 5.1 Recommendation/‘Sign-Off’ by 12 Droichead Case-Study Schools (2014/15)

No of schools	No. of NQTs ‘signed off’	No. of NQTs not ‘signed off’	No of schools involving external PST
12	30	0	1

5.1.1 Support and Assistance over Assessment

A common theme expressed by mentors, PST members and NQTs across the case-study schools was that assistance and support were the dominant focus and experience of Droichead rather than judgement and assessment. This is not to say that attention to and concerns about the recommendation process were not felt by all involved in supporting NQTs, that is principals, mentors and other PST members. Rather it points to the overall climate associated with Droichead which was one of support and coaching for teaching as well as wider involvement of the NQTs in the life of the participating schools. Nor is this to claim that NQTs were not concerned or anxious about the recommendation process. They clearly were – but this was not the dominant socio-emotional experience over the course of

their induction in the Droichead programme. As such, mentors and other PST members typically viewed the recommendation as part of an ongoing process:

Then when the official observation [that is, the final observation undertaken by the PST] comes along it's really, I suppose, an assessment of whether or not those recommendations have been taken on board and if so how well they had them implemented. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

NQTs typically emphasised their experience of significant support as the central theme in their Droichead school experience, recognising that while assessment leading to recommendation was the desired end point, the dominant experience is one of being supported:

And yeah, I mean as I say the Droichead programme within the school here have been so supportive, that I don't think I feel, I feel like that they aren't going to pull out any surprises, you've a good enough line of communication that I think, if there was an issue, you wouldn't be unaware of it or you would be working on it, you know so in that case, it seems like maybe a piece of paperwork, at this stage, if it wasn't, if there was any issues coming up, I'm sure it would be different and you would be working through it, with them but hopefully from what I feel or gather, I think it is sort of the end of the programme. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

In summary, while the end point of the Droichead programme is the recommendation process, the experience of being assisted and supported was more central to the overall Droichead experience of NQTs. This was emphasised, in particular, by primary teachers comparing the Droichead experience with that of their peers'/friends' parallel experience in non-Droichead schools of the long-standing process of waiting for the inspector's assessment visits/observations.

5.1.2 Contrast with 'Performance' for Inspector: Droichead as More Authentic

The NQTs in Droichead schools were generally very satisfied with the programme in terms of its in-school support for them as beginning teachers. At primary level, many of those interviewed contrasted favourably the more authentic assessment of the NQT's teaching over a protracted period with the one-off 'performance' for the inspector at primary level. For example, in one school three NQTs had

graduated from ITE within the past year. Another had been subbing for 2-3 years. One NQT in the school was working in resource and getting restricted probation. All four NQTs had a positive experience as part of the Droichead process and, significantly, all reported conversations with their peers undergoing mentoring in non-Droichead schools and expressed relief that they had the opportunity to be part of Droichead.

One PST teacher contrasted the Droichead approach with the old inspectorate system, and feels that it means that there are 'no surprises' and that the approach takes 'the fear' out of the process. Nonetheless, there was a certain degree of tension between the roles of support and assessment. This tension was resolved by schools in a number of ways. Typically, the division of labour was such that the mentor took the supportive role while the other PST and/or the principal played a more central role in the sign-off process.

In summary, especially at primary level, the 'old' probation system seemed to be associated with more fear and perceived as high stakes compared to the more developmental Droichead approach. In one primary school, both of the NQTs had at least two years' experience subbing prior to being in Droichead. Both of them had done the first part of the 'Dip' before moving to the current school. One NQT contrasted the approach to probation but, more importantly, the contrast in the collaborative culture of both schools:

There is a lot of fear with doing it the old way, you don't know when people are going to turn up, you don't, they may not always be very understanding. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The same NQT continued by emphasising that Droichead (compared to undertaking the first part of the non-Droichead approach the previous year):

...is a lot less scary, it is a lot less scary and because other people are being accountable as well as me, other people are taking responsibility as well as me, whereas I felt with doing the first half of it, that it was very much like, this is all you and I was like but I need help. I asked for help, I went and I asked the mentor who wasn't my mentor but was a qualified mentor, I asked her to look over my notes... and she said would you not just look over the notes of the other NQT, she's already had her first visit and that was fine. So I was like ok and then literally, the amount, I know it sounds like a very blasé thing but, like the build-up for me asking for help [interviewee

crying] sorry.... Sorry, it was actually a very stressful time. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In another school (Hazel Way primary school), one NQT contrasted the approach with the 'old' system being experienced by her friends:

There's a huge difference. I think they are, they feel a lot more stressed all the time, they're kind of worried about this knock on the door every day. And they don't really have any help in the school either, you know figuring out how to work things. And they feel like if they were asking questions about the role or about their room, that nearly someone would be like oh they don't really know what they're doing. You know they wouldn't really ask, it's not the same kind of support that comes with Droichead. Like it's just much more open and welcoming, like for a newly qualified teacher. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The PST team were seen as reassuring:

You know, 'you're doing a good job, that's fine', you know that kind of way? Whereas in the other Dip., like I have friends doing it in different schools and they find it very stressful, they're on their own kind of... Whereas here you kind of can talk to people the whole time and they kind of make you feel a bit more relaxed. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

A similar perception of very significant support and a lower stakes experience – compared to non-Droichead schools – was noted by an NQT in Aspen Square primary school:

Yeah, I've a lot of friends [not in Droichead]. They are absolutely petrified every week, cigire going to come, cigire going to come, like a lot of them now, some of them are half Dipped, some of them aren't, you know, fully. I mean they're literally like, you don't know what's happening, then there was one girl, her cigire, the first inspection went very good, the second inspection, he walked in on a Friday morning, she was doing a test, she was like I had to just take everything away – he came in and said I'm not here to see them being tested, I want to see you teach like – so it was really, she'd to put away everything, she had to like – because her daily plan was like they're having tests and then GAA, like real life teaching, but he was like no, I don't want to see any of that, I want to see Irish, English, da,

da, da, so she'd to take out lessons that she had finished the day before and just continue teaching them. So it was daunting but she said she was petrified, she thought she failed – she passed!

In summary, from the perspective of primary teachers in Droichead – who might have otherwise experienced induction via inspectors' visits – Droichead was perceived as much lower stakes and more clearly supportive over time of their learning as beginning teachers. Given the induction/probation role of inspectors at primary level is different to that at post-primary, there are no parallel data on this perceived difference in experience at post-primary level.

5.1.3 PST and NQTs on Criteria and Indicators of Good Practice: 'They are Clear and Fair'

Across the schools and participants (PSTs and NQTs) in Droichead, there was general agreement that the criteria were reasonable and fair. In viewing the process as a fair one, they also recognised it as a very significant responsibility. The mentor in one school captured some of the inter-related themes of fairness, distributed responsibility within the school and the significance of the sign-off (seen as most appropriate when undertaken by the principal):

I think they are clear and fair ... I think you know it takes a teacher to know how to really think you have got to be super professional, you've got enjoy, you've got to enjoy young people and you've got to be open willing to engage with yourself and reflect on your own practice. Willing to have others do it with you, you know just as honestly I suppose the onus we made is with the principal to sign off. I think you know, the principal is the boss it takes an awful lot of responsibility even with an experienced teacher to say is this person suitable. You are making recommendations yes in I suppose that way you are deciding in person's future you know and that is that's huge. It has huge implications. (Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In another school, the principal (Maple Street post-primary school) viewed the process as fair given the fact that NQTs are given ongoing feedback throughout the process. The process (i.e. recommendation) is seen as a step along the way:

All the way along they will be kept informed of their progress – so I think the criteria – not that I can remember off the top of my head, but I remember at the service thinking it's very fair, I think that it's very fair. And again what we said to the NQTs is we are signing off

not that they are a perfect teacher that has no room for improvement, we are signing off that they have the potential to become an excellent teacher, and that's a different distinction, nothing, people did not become, walk out of college being a perfect teacher, they learned over years and years of doing things, tweaking it, getting it right and maybe only after ten years you become that teacher where you, where you're fully in control. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In the same school, another PST teacher was particularly positive about the criteria specified for the process and the level of expectation vis-à-vis practice expected of NQTs was seen as reasonable rather than unrealistic:

I think in particular the criteria to have a satisfactory capacity to each is good.... This is based more on kind of intuition and rapport and what we've picked up on throughout the year. So I think that word satisfactory doesn't say perfect, it doesn't show exemplary, we're all learning and I think we've admittedly shown in our lessons when they observe us, that we're not perfect, you know they can see us with our flaws and making mistakes as experienced teachers. So I think that's kind of reassuring for them. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

This PST member's observations on the appropriate level of practice expected is calibrated against her own practice in that it is not perfect – as she noted, 'we are all learning.... They can see us with our flaws'.

A frequent comment expressed by those involved in Droichead was the openness in addressing issues related to practice. One NQT expressed this in terms of:

It's very open, it's very honest, there's no things in the background that you don't see, so if I needed to be discussed we were all here discussing it and if there was anything that came up in the woodworks, [the other PST member] was the first person to tell us. So I suppose I like that it's open. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Echoing this, the principal in that school noted that it is 'a fair process' with NQTs being given feedback throughout the process, and the recommendation decision is then seen as a further, albeit critically important 'step along the way' in the

process as it unfolds over time. As such, the unfolding over time whereby feedback provides NQTs with a means of meeting the recommendation criteria were the underpinnings of the perceived fairness of the process.

5.1.4 Need and Capacity to Deepen Understanding of Indicators Locally

Echoing the above sentiments about fairness, though with some reservations, a PST member in another school noted that the criteria for recommendation were explained to the PST team by the facilitator:

the facilitator did really clarify them for us, I don't know how easy they would have been to use if she [i.e. NIPT workshop leader] wasn't there explaining exactly what it referred to, in relation to our school (Mentor).

Noteworthy is the key role of NIPT in explaining, clarifying and enabling an initial sense of efficacy vis-à-vis the recommendation process. Nevertheless, the mentor used terms such as 'unsure', 'daunting' and 'a bit vague' to convey the challenge of making sense of the indicators. As such, she noted that while the indicators were covered in training, she felt that schools are so different and it would be important also to get somebody in the school to help to work out the criteria and indicators on site locally (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school). Significantly, in that school all the NQTs said they were very clear about the criteria for recommendation as the PST team had gone through these with them (Chestnut Avenue primary school).

One of the findings from the school-level analysis of Droichead implementation (see Chapter 6) was that not only did schools adopt Droichead but many – albeit to a lesser extent – incorporated adaptations of Droichead into their practices in a number of ways. In relation to the indicators of good practice, for example, one principal (Sycamore Street primary school) noted that the school found the indicators of good practice 'very good' and they had adapted them 'a little' as they felt it wasn't realistic to expect NQTs to be involved in every initiative/sub-committee. Furthermore, subject competency was not listed explicitly but was seen as important in this school (Sycamore Street primary school).

Information about the recommendation criteria along with indicators of good practice was conveyed early to Droichead schools by the NIPT. Early and clear communication on these was seen as important and empowering. One principal (Cherry Lane post-primary school) was made aware of the TC criteria 'very early

on'. He felt that he is much more confident signing off based on clearly established criteria than before the school joined Droichead and said:

I feel far more confident based on the supports we've given [the NQT], on signing off on whatever it is I need to sign off on... I just feel it gives more structure to me as a principal in terms of support, or on the other hand, if she was a complete and utter disaster, I feel the Droichead programme is there to support my decision not to probate her. (Principal, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

On the other hand, in relation to the use of the indicators of good practice – one principal said 'there is a gut reaction, isn't there really in deciding on whether someone can teach or not.' However, the need to be clear from early on in the Droichead process about both the criteria and indicators of good practice was the dominant theme. We return to this point later in the chapter in terms of one of the main challenges of Droichead, namely, ensuring that there is consistent and shared understanding of the criteria and indicators within and across schools.

5.1.5 The Significance of the Recommendation: 'You are Deciding on a Person's Future You Know and That is.... That's Huge'

Across all participating schools there was recognition of the significance of the recommendation process. This was both expressed and evidenced in a number of ways: a mix of perceptions and feelings associated with the process from considerable concern to business-like engagement with it as part of the induction programme and this was expressed by NQTs, mentors, principals and PST members; attention to who would undertake the actual recommendation at the appropriate time; attention to the use of the tools and protocols associated with making a recommendation; and observations that any concerns about the recommendation process were mediated by the PST's perceptions of the competence of NQTs being recommended. Significantly, the fact that, in the vast majority of situations, the recommendation process was not problematic revolved around the schools' early sense or intuition that NQTs would meet the criteria.

There was a mix of perceptions and feelings associated with the recommendation process from considerable concern to business-like engagement with it as part of the induction programme. This range of perceptions was evident expressed by NQTs, mentors, principals and PST members. One Deputy Principal, for example, viewed the recommendation process as 'important and OK' [not threatening] despite its significance. This DP also noted that that in the case that there would

be a problem with an NQT 'she wouldn't back off of it' (Birch Avenue post-primary school).

The significance of the recommendation decision was clearly perceived by PSTs, mentors and principals:

They are of course and they are very important. See there is fierce consequences to this, you know, if you let them, you want them to perform because we have to do that and if you don't have those criteria, you, the whole programme is not worth anything, you know.

Q: Have you any thoughts on what would happen if somebody wasn't meeting the criteria?

It does bother me but I would, I would not be afraid to stand back from it if it happened and I'm sure [Name] wouldn't either as principal because it's so, so important and I mean there is no excuse because they get so much help in so many areas. You know we pick areas with them you know if they have a discipline problem if there's a lack of knowledge there, or a lack of resources they can all be tackled you know. But I can imagine that someday we might get the teacher that just isn't a teacher and it does worry me because I am worried about like our part in it as management and then bringing in somebody from outside you know, we tried to we are just lucky. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

This mentor's focus on the significance of the decision is moderated by her perception that NQTs get significant support through Droichead and as such through this support are set up to succeed. Nevertheless, the mentor still expressed concern if they got an NQT 'that just isn't a teacher', how that process might unfold for the mentor and management. She noted concern also as to whether or not an external person might need to be involved.

Taking into account that Droichead was seen as less high stakes than being in non-Droichead schools, one NQT described a tension in the process between the stress of being 'assessed' and the feeling that the NQTs were well supported and there would be 'no surprises':

I think it is nerve-racking, you know, you're not only, obviously you are trying to prove yourself in any job but you have this added sort of stigma of the fact that you are not approved, you know you are not a

teacher, you're a newly qualified teacher, there is something extra that you are, are you lacking or it does, it could add an element of stress, I don't think it has been overly, you just have to take it as something that you're going, you know that from now on, everybody is going to go through. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

5.1.6 Central Role of CPD and Templates for Principals, Mentors and PST

The role of CPD was strongly emphasised in terms of how it supported planning for and enactment of the recommendation process. The mentors, principals and other PST members spoke of the crucial role of the CPD and associated templates they received from the NIPT. School participants typically emphasised its importance and its role in clarifying and supporting their practice in terms of both in the induction/mentoring and recommendation process. They identified the course as very valuable:

I really enjoyed the mentoring course and I think as a PST team member, I think you definitely should be a trained mentor because it definitely helps. That you understand how the system is working, you understand, you've a better understanding of the standards that are supposed to be there and everything that goes with it. (Other PST)

Some also noted the need for more extensive Droichead training, especially in relation to (a) the importance of professionalism and confidentiality around all aspects of observation, mentoring and recommendation processes, and (b) more training around the 'professional conversation' or opportunities to engage in 'role play' around providing 'difficult' feedback:

There would be no harm in actually having to do it and actually having to role play it out or something, do you know it is going back to college days or something but like it's grand giving you out on a piece of paper oh you should of say it this way or you should say it that way but do you know there is no harm in actually having to practice it too.

Many spoke also of the resources provided by the NIPT, 'the book... the procedures of induction', saying they found them 'really good'.

In summary, while CPD was important for all aspects of Droichead, it was perceived as critical in relation to the challenges and consequences associated with the recommendation decision.

5.1.7 Clarity Around and Meaning of Indicators of Good Practice:

Participants in Droichead, that is, principals and teachers (mentors and PST members) reported that the indicators of good practice were both a strength and a challenge. In terms of the indicators of good practice as strengths, they noted: they were fair (as described earlier in this chapter); adaptable to local circumstances; well clarified via CPD through NIPT; and provided a clear basis for signing off on the NQT.

A principal in one school (Sycamore Street primary school), for example, noted that they found the indicators of good practice ‘very good’ and were open to adaptation to fit local/school circumstances. In that instance the principal noted that they could be adapted a little and that it was not realistic to expect NQT to be involved in every initiative/sub-committee. In one of the primary schools, the mentor noted that the criteria for recommendation were explained to the PST team by the facilitator:

...the facilitator did really clarify them for us, I don't know how easy they would have been to use if she wasn't there explaining exactly what it referred to, in relation to our school. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Following up on this in terms of NQT understanding of the indicators, the NQTs themselves said that they were very clear about the criteria for recommendation as the PST team had gone through these with them (Chestnut Avenue primary school). This example also illustrates the key role of the NIPT in supporting schools developing a working understanding of the indicators of good practice (IoGP). As such, one principal (Sycamore Street primary school) noted that they adapted the IoGP to reflect appropriate expectations about involvement in some school committees; it was felt it was not realistic to expect NQT to be involved in every initiative/sub-committee. In the same setting, the mentor noted that from her point of view, the IoGP were unsure, daunting, and a bit vague. She noted that while the topic was covered in training, she felt that schools are so different and it would be better to get somebody in the school to help to work out the criteria.

An important observation in light of the proposed system-wide extension of Droichead is the observation made by one principal that the anticipated difficulty in utilising criteria and indicators of good practice was ameliorated through the NIPT workshops. The principal (Cherry Lane post-primary school) noted that the

criteria were provided to him/her ‘very early on’ and subsequently felt much more confident in signing off based on clearly established criteria than before the school joined Droichead.

In summary, this example is also helpful in considering the relationship between assistance and assessment in that being clear about the criteria for assessment right from the outset aided the assistance process and is strongly consistent with the ‘embracing contraries’ understanding of how both processes could be interwoven in a generative manner for all involved in supporting NQTs via Droichead.

5.1.8 Reaching the Standard: ‘Progress, Not Perfection’

I mean it’s based on the progression, it’s not based on perfection and it’s based on participation, so I mean you know pretty well if somebody’s participating or not. And I suppose that needs to be highlighted way back at the beginning it’s not that now we’re saying, sorry, I’m not signing off on you, because the person knows that they haven’t been progressing. (Mentor)

Given the aforementioned developmental and supportive focus of Droichead as intended by schools and the NIPT, and as perceived by NQTs, it is not surprising that the emphasis in relation to the standard sought by schools was progress rather than perfection. As such, the focus was on professional conversations centred on observation-feedback cycles and in the schools for each NQT. However, there is a shared view held by the schools around the potential for flexibility and fluidity around meeting the needs of each NQT (at an individual needs-based level). Nevertheless, schools had a clear sense of not compromising their sense of a professional standard as expressed by a principal and the mentor that they had decided not to sign off on anyone that they weren’t happy with ‘that I wasn’t happy to employ’ (Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS).

5.1.9 Who ‘Signs Off’?

In the context of the overall division of roles and responsibilities in Droichead (see Chapter 4), in the vast majority of cases the principal was the designated ‘sign-off’ person vis-à-vis the recommendation process. The principal in signing off though was typically well informed on an ongoing basis by the PST’s appraisal – along with their own – of the extent to which the NQT had met the Droichead criteria. In some schools, the principals were more significantly involved in leading the

evaluation than others but typically the mentor was not involved in the sign-off at all. As one principal noted, illustrating the typical division of responsibility across the case-study schools vis-à-vis recommendation (i.e. final 'sign-off'), the mentor was not involved, as a different relationship was needed to fulfil that role:

[The mentor] is not allowed sign off at the end because she has a different type of relationship with them, but still she observes their classes and they observe her classes. (Principal)

In general, the sign-off involved a discussion between the NQT, principal and maybe another other PST member. In one school, for example, the impending recommendation process final 'sign-off' meeting was clearly signalled to the NQTs, with expectations set out:

Prior to Friday the PST are meeting on Thursday to discuss the meeting process. So the other PSTs and myself will meet on Thursday to discuss what exactly will happen in the meeting. Each NQT has been given an invitation to the meeting, a reminder of the criteria and what documents to bring, so. (Other PST)

While the principal was the designated sign-off person, input from PST members was typical across schools. In Pine View school (post-primary, small, coeducational, DEIS) a PST teacher noted that 3-4 staff were involved in making recommendation:

Q: Was that the individual sign-off?

A: You know the way the principal has to make the decision at the end, but like my understanding and I could be wrong but the principal, it's the responsibility of the principal on the advisement of her PST as to whether the person is signed off or not.

Q: So it would be yourself and.....

A: Yeah but then if the mentor I mean...

Q: The mentor is in there as well.

A: The mentor is yeah, the mentor is.

Q: So potentially three or four people involved in making the decision.

A: Yeah, yeah. Or maybe have the... and it shouldn't be making the decision like, that's my understanding of it you know. I know that's what the staff felt we'll say [Name] at that time that these people were making decisions, I wouldn't see it as making a decision, I would

think that if the person isn't, through the year if they haven't, if they are struggling well then you are there to help them you know. You know, look for the help to get them over their difficulties. And then at the end of the year if they need further help that it's available. But I don't think it's a case of, I think the principal then can decide what they need, further help or do they need further advice from the next level as to whether they can be signed off or not. So that's how I'd see the role, I don't see it as whether this person should be signed off or not, but that's how the people saw it. I think our role is to support them and help them on their first year as a teacher.

In summary, while the mentor's involvement in this school is atypical, it conveys the shared involvement 'advisement' about the sign-off typical across Droichead schools.

5.1.10 The Continuum from Early Completers to Difficult Situations

When it's a positive situation it's probably easier than if there is a question mark over someone. We were all in agreement very early on that you know the candidates were definitely to be recommended. So you know then it was a very easy process. But I can imagine if it's, if people aren't a hundred percent sure or whatever, that it's going to be more difficult. (Other PST member)

Early completers to extending assistance (as needed)

In the vast majority of cases in the 12 case-study schools, the sign-off was not seen as problematic – as captured in the above PST quote – with some NQTs signed off early (rare) and some having an extension (relatively infrequent) to provide further time in order to meet the criteria. In the former case of 'early completers', one school noted that the two NQTs were signed off in February (though they both remained in the school until the end of May). Interestingly, they still held meetings occasionally with the PST team. When signing off various aspects are considered: the number of days (the NQTs had done 100 days), meeting the established criteria and overall readiness (Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS).

By contrast – although not problematic from the school's point of view – is the situation where a NQT needs more time. As one principal noted that if a teacher is not making good progress, it is seen as the duty of the team to provide additional support at an early stage:

We need to, from an early stage, spot that, we need to give them every support that they can, they might need to visit more classes and we may need more visits to their classes. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

This above example provides further evidence of the supportive and developmental underpinnings of the Droichead process.

As one school noted, and typical of other schools, they:

...wouldn't sign off at the end, if they weren't ready and if they were here for longer time, that you would continue the process until they are ready. Like if they were going to be here for two full years and they weren't ready in June then it would continue next year, that was the way we were looking at it.... It depended very much on the progress of the NQT and their previous experience. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Difficult situations: NQTs unlikely to be recommended

The issue of how best to address the situation of an NQT who was unlikely to be recommended was perhaps the most challenging aspect of Droichead – be it anticipated or an experience of the actual situation. Staff were satisfied with other aspects of external support from the NIPT but there was considerable ambivalence about how best to handle serious underperformance among NQTs. This highlights the need for clear procedures to be put in place with external support from NIPT around these procedures. In anticipating difficult situations, schools typically noted the need for and importance of clarity around protocols, their sense of being able to – though difficult to do – address the situation and crucially, in this context, seeking out external support via the NIPT (an external PST member) and/or the inspectorate:

I think that it definitely needs for the first one [NQT] that there is going to need to be some outside [support]. Even if it is an inspector to come in and sit down with us and look at what we're doing and check it out and maybe observe, I don't know, maybe observe with us or something. Do you know that maybe if an inspector observed with me, that we could ... sit down afterwards ... and [the inspector can] show you, this is what you're doing. Like I might have missed something completely, whereas an inspector who is looking at teachers teaching everyday just for that little bit extra, do you know that is their job. My job is to teach my children. Do you know if there

was somebody to come in and work with all of us, to work and observe with us, to see right ok, to help us do that at least until you get confident doing it. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In summary, from a school perspective, a NQT not meeting the Droichead criteria was viewed as the biggest challenge of the Droichead induction programme. While in-school division of roles and responsibilities was sufficient to address the NQTs who were early or on-time completers or even those needing an extension, schools felt current protocols need to be more finely tuned and comprehensive if schools were to be well prepared to address the difficult situation (with a focus on external support) when a NQT would not be recommended by the school.

5.2 'EMBRACING CONTRARIES': A SCHOOL-LEVEL PHENOMENON

The continuum of situations from early to on-time completers, to those needing an extended time to meet the criteria to those with significant difficulty in meeting the criteria provide different contexts for how schools typically managed both assistance and assessment. The term 'embracing contraries' (Elbow, 1983) explicitly acknowledges the potential tension between the support versus assessment roles of involved in Droichead. In the case of Droichead, we can conclude that schools were able to embrace contraries. The division of roles and responsibilities was central and essential in schools being able to negotiate the contrary imperatives of assistance and assessment. As such, typically it was resolvable at school level through the division of roles and responsibilities whereby the mentors were usually in a supportive role only, the other PST member having diverse roles which involved administration, support and/or involvement in the recommendation process and principals typically fulfilling the official sign-off role. The intentional design of the division of responsibilities is a notable strength of the overall Droichead induction programme. However, as noted earlier, typically the PST had an advisory role in 'sign-off'.

However, it was resolved in different ways. In most cases, the mentor undertook a support role with the principal and/or other PST as 'signing off'. However, in one school an external PST member was involved in the sign-off (but only a very small proportion of schools nationally have external members). Again the existing Droichead protocols for the recommendation provided for such a scenario and proved sufficient in the cases we noted in the data from the case-study schools.

5.2.1 Embracing Contraries as Part of an Integrated Assistance and Assessment System

The extent to which the recommendation process is an effective and fair one can be viewed from both the perspectives and experiences of participants (NQTs, teachers and principals in schools and the NIPT) and by comparing the Droichead approach in this regard with the relevant literature on teacher evaluation/assessment systems. We adopt both approaches. In terms of a teacher assessment system, be it undertaken primarily by schools themselves or external assessors/cigirí, Darling-Hammond's (2014) seven criteria for an effective teacher assessment system are particularly relevant as they are based upon a distillation of extensive research and professional practice in the area over the last three decades. We think these seven criteria are valuable in framing our discussion of the Droichead recommendation process as they reflect the integration of lessons learned across quite diverse practices and contexts vis-à-vis teacher evaluation systems – not all of which might today be seen as good, best or desirable practice. It is noteworthy that Droichead incorporates a number of the key dimensions outlined in the framework presented in Darling-Hammond et al. (2014):

1. Teacher evaluation should be based on professional teaching standards and should be sophisticated enough to assess teaching quality across the continuum of development, from novice to expert teacher;
2. Evaluations should include multifaceted evidence of teacher practice, student learning, and professional contributions that are considered in an integrated fashion, in relation to one another and to the teaching context. Any assessments used to make judgements about students' progress should be appropriate for the specific curriculum and students taught by the teacher;
3. Evaluators should be knowledgeable about instruction and well trained in the evaluation/assessment system, including the process of how to give productive feedback and how to support ongoing learning for teachers. As often as possible, and always at critical decision-making junctures (e.g., tenure or renewal), the evaluation team should include experts in the specific teaching field;
4. Evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, and connected to professional development opportunities that are relevant to teachers' goals and needs, including both formal learning opportunities and peer collaboration, observation, and coaching;
5. The evaluation system should value and encourage teacher collaboration, both in the standards and criteria that are used to assess teachers' work and in the way results are used to shape professional learning opportunities;

6. Expert teachers should be part of the assistance and review process for new teachers and for teachers needing extra assistance. They can provide the additional subject-specific expertise and person-power needed to ensure that intensive and effective assistance is offered and that decisions about tenure and continuation are well grounded;
7. Panels of teachers and administrators should oversee the evaluation process to ensure it is thorough and of high quality, as well as fair and reliable. Such panels have been shown to facilitate more timely and well-grounded personnel decisions that avoid grievances and litigation. Teachers and school leaders should be involved in developing, implementing, and monitoring the system to ensure that it reflects good teaching well, that it operates effectively, that it is tied to useful learning opportunities for teachers, and that it produces valid results (Darling-Hammond, 2014, p. 12).

In employing Darling-Hammond's criteria for the purpose of appraising the recommendation process within the wider Droichead induction programme, it allows us to draw a number of conclusions about the Droichead recommendation process. First, the Droichead recommendation process is part of a wider or comprehensive approach to early career learning for teachers, combining assistance and assessment in a new way in the Irish context. Second, Droichead evaluates NQTs across a broad set of criteria linking individual NQT learning and classroom practice, student learning (to some extent) and professional development in particular school and career contexts. Third, Droichead can be located within the contemporary policy direction in many jurisdictions (as noted in Chapters 1-2) in which both assistance and assessment are incorporated in fostering teacher and student learning implicitly linked to the overall aim of school improvement. Their incorporation in Droichead is significant in that historically they have typically been seen as necessarily separate in the past whereby coaching and judging/evaluating were viewed as incompatible practices. Droichead involves NQTs' school colleagues on the PST who are perceived first and foremost as supportive of NQT learning in the context of the recommendation process (see Chapter 4 and Section 5.1 of this chapter). Fourth, participating PST members (both mentors, other teachers on the PST and principals) typically viewed the NIPT workshops as providing good and sufficient guidance, though noting scope for further support, on both the Droichead criteria and indicators of good practice. Fifth, as Darling-Hammond et al. note, successful assessment systems:

.... use multiple classroom observations, expert evaluators, multiple sources of data, are timely, and provide meaningful feedback to the teacher. (p. 12, 2012)

Finally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) note that various forms of support in terms of professional development, clear criteria and feedback templates are needed to support an effective appraisal system no matter who undertakes that role for new or indeed experienced teachers. They note that:

These tools are most effective when embedded in systems that support evaluation expertise and well-grounded decisions, by ensuring that evaluators are trained, evaluation and feedback are frequent and mentoring and professional development are available.

In summary, much of what we have learned in this review of the Droichead recommendation process aligns well both with Yusko and Feiman-Nemser's embracing contraries framing of assistance and assessment as well as with evidence from the Darling-Hammond et al. framework on good practice vis-à-vis the design, enactment and ongoing review of any teacher assessment systems.

5.3 PERCEIVED CHALLENGES

Two challenges stand out in relation to the recommendation process: (i) perceptions about potential inconsistencies in the application of the Droichead criteria and indicators of good practice across schools, and (ii) managing 'difficult cases' where a NQT was likely to not be recommended for full registration to the Teaching Council.

5.3.1 Consistency in Standards Across Schools

The issue of consistency across schools in the implementation of the Droichead criteria and indicators of good practice was typically perceived as a challenge by schools. Though many expressed confidence in the clarity of their understanding, they also had doubts about whether there is/could be wider consistency and overall fairness in the application of the criteria and indicators of good practice across schools. PST members identified various factors that might lead to inconsistency. One principal felt that there was potential for inconsistency across schools and that there may be difficulty in, for example, assessing a NQT teaching a senior class where the observer had taught junior classes for many years:

That leads me to another worry because I feel some principals might be perceived as sticklers, don't go to do your thing in their [school], that is, she'll crucify you because her standards are so high, where down the road, oh it's grand, she won't even look at you. I would have huge worries about standardisation of the Dip. You know that it won't be across the board, that you will have some excellent teachers

and... being put through the ringer because we want them to be the best and others that are just saying, sure aren't you grand, didn't you get your degree. (Principal)

The principal suggested that this might be dealt with by having 'recognised' schools that had taken part in CPD. The mentor in the same school echoed the principal's views on the potential for inconsistency across schools:

Definitely the consistency between schools is something that I don't quite know how, when this does get rolled out, how it's going to be effectively managed, you definitely don't want situations where NQTs hear that this is a tricky school to be probated in,.. another school down the road is much easier because at the end of the day we are in a tricky position, the PST members particularly, the principal you know if their gut feeling isn't good about the progression of a NQT they have to be able to say you need a small bit more time on this. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The challenge of consistency is premised on familiarity with and knowledge of Droichead criteria. In one school though, the principal felt they did not have a clear idea about the criteria. The principal remembered signing off on the form but not what was written on it. However, in the same school, the NQT was aware of the criteria she needed to fulfil for completion. She felt that she already met most of the criteria. A second NQT in this school felt that it would be good to be clear at the beginning how long the induction is going to be 'if it is extended halfway through 'you are feeling oh well if I was good enough I would have got signed off after 50 days'. As such, there were also ways in which lack of clear information might lead to inconsistency in the implementation of Droichead – be that lack of knowledge of the criteria themselves or some aspect of the programme (e.g. duration).

While principals and PST teachers typically felt the criteria and indicators of good practice were clear, in a minority of cases some felt that the criteria for recommendation could have been clearer. As expressed by one mentor:

They're a bit OTT. Absolutely. The language in them...they have given us a good indication of what exactly they mean by them but to me when you read it, it's very wishy-washy.... like the meeting, we had to go 'what does practice independently mean?' (Mentor, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

More typical responses focused on the NIPT role in effectively communicating the criteria and indicators, noting that the NIPT ‘translated’ the TC recommendation into clearer language for themselves. Furthermore, this mentor noted that some other schools were having the same difficulty based on their observations: ‘what are induction activities? Who classifies induction activities? Do I classify them?’, ‘Maybe the language could be simplified a little’ (Cherry Lane post-primary school). The focus on the meaning of terminology involved in points to the critical role of language and clarity around key terms in any teacher appraisal process – be it in Droichead or non-Droichead schools. As such, some of the challenges around shared language and meaning are likely to be part of any induction programme.

5.3.2 The Difficult Situation: an NQT Not Meeting Criteria

I think again it's all good but the problem is not when you've got somebody who's good, the problem is when you've to sit with someone who isn't.... I think then that is when you will really, will need to have your criteria in place, well a knowledge of them and be ready to argue your case. (Principal)

The above quote from a principal followed on from him noting that the process had ‘been fine to date’ but real concern arose around more difficult situations. The above quote vividly captures a widely held view that perhaps the most challenging aspect of the recommendation process and indeed Droichead was both the anticipated and actual fact of having to manage a difficult NQT case. By ‘difficult’, schools typically meant a situation where the NQT might not be ‘probated’ successfully – with their name not being sent to the Teaching Council for full registration. As noted earlier the recommendation process in all cases was seen as a huge professional undertaking given its significance for each and every NQT. By contrast:

When it's a positive situation it's probably easier than if there is a question mark over someone. We were all in agreement very early on that you know the candidates were definitely to be recommended. So you know then it was a very easy process. But I can imagine if it's, if people aren't a hundred percent sure or whatever, that it's going to be more difficult. (Other PST)

Reflecting a focus on the necessary role of external support, the principal in Holly Road primary school noted the importance of bringing in an external person/voice:

... rather than it just coming from a particular school staff or school principal... it's a second opinion... if there was a situation where we were not going to be happy to probate a teacher.. I would bring an outside person, probably a retired person who has got experience in this.

The principal would like to have a contact number of somebody should it appear that the NQT wasn't 'up to the mark'.

The anticipated or actual challenge in dealing with difficult situations where the NQT is not making sufficient progress was well summarised by one PST teacher:

I think the criteria are fine, I actually do think that the criteria are absolutely fine but you know everything is fine, everything is lovely while things are going well. And trust me when you are faced with this kind of a situation, it is quite stressful and you just have to make the decision, you know because whether or not somebody is fit for purpose is a huge decision to be made. And I think it would be wrong to allow the person to go forward if they are not fit for it. And I felt quite stressful now the whole lot of it, to be honest. (PST, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In summary, the 'difficult situation' was perceived a very real challenge in Droichead even if the vast majority of NQTs meet the criteria; the need for additional supports and protocols was clearly signalled in the case-study school data.

5.4 NQT REFLECTIONS ON THE DROICHEAD PROCESS

This section describes NQT experiences of the Droichead process, an experience that was described in very positive terms.

I think they are very welcoming in the school I think anybody would have made a great mentor. I would have picked any of them to be honest, they are all very helpful. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I was delighted because I really felt from the beginning that it was something that was for me, and it would take out the whole stress of

waiting for somebody to knock on the door. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

5.4.1 Routine and Structure

The routines and structures provided by Droichead, that is, observations and associated feedback, observing other teachers, professional conversations and wider informal yet regular support by other school staff were seen as critical aspects of support by NQTs across all schools. The NQTs were typically emphatic about this central aspect of Droichead experience – often contrasting it with non-Droichead NQTs’ experiences – as noted early in this chapter. Many NQTs liked the structured approach of Droichead whereby meetings were all scheduled. They typically felt they could approach the mentors in one school (Chestnut Avenue primary school) both NQTs acknowledged that they were lucky in that the mentors were willing to give up so much of their personal time to support them: ‘it was their own time, we were very lucky that they were willing’ (NQT). They also noted that any criticism they received was very constructive.

Sometimes the experience of structure and associated support was experienced via the benefits of engaging with teachers at the same class level at primary or the subject department at post-primary:

The conversations with my mentor were beneficial – she had [the same class level] as well ... so we had that link. And just finding out, you know what stage she was on with her class and being able to chat to her and she was brilliant she came and observed me as well. And to go through, my plan my Irish plan with my mentor [was valuable] as well. (NQT, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

5.4.2 Experience of Support

Because I had [senior class] sometimes I did find classroom management a bit difficult, you know, she gave me very good advice, we’ll say in particular for transition from, you know one class to another. And something that I started doing was playing music between the transitions, which really worked because we were doing a school play, so they were learning songs for the school play, so as we were transitioning from one subject to another, I would put on some of that music. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

... and she was always available like... you know she'd ring me, I'd ring her, but there was always kind of a relationship there you know there was nobody breathing down your neck... it was very laid back, ... I know that they are there if I need them. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

As noted in the opening section of this chapter, the dominant theme in NQTs' experience was one of support. In this section, we elaborate on this by noting various ways in which they described how support was focused on enhancing their learning. Support was manifested in terms of a range of practices and seen by NQTs as progressing various aspects of their practice, from planning, to content, to parts of lessons with which they might have had a difficulty, to general emotional support. In relation to planning, one NQT noted the professional conversation with the mentor as helpful in terms of planning:

The help with the planning has been great, kind of they looked over my plans and they were like you could try doing them this way instead and that actually has been very helpful. And even just talking about kind of lessons and ideas for lessons or I say I'm going to do it this way and they would be like, would you not try it this way and yeah, just even to help the, you just you get very stuck in there I think sometimes, to have the outside perspective is very helpful. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The dynamic relationship between support and perceived stress was well expressed by one NQT comparing their previous year teaching. Despite higher levels of responsibility than during this first year, this NQT felt well supported:

Q: Okay so what has it been like coming from initial teacher ed. into school last year and then into school this year? What's that like?

A: Well I suppose it wasn't as pressurised last year you know you are only subbing so you are only filling in whereas there is more responsibility now when I came into an actual teaching post. The responsibility of classes and you know maintaining, of covering the syllabus and stuff, which was daunting enough at the start of it. But this school is very good in the sense that it's not a big school, so like there's a lot of support in the system for that if you know what I mean, I did my teaching practice in fourth year in a lot bigger school and like in the big schools you aren't kind of, there isn't the same level of support as a smaller school. (NQT, P2137)

In an atypical situation an NQT noted the extensive support provided by the principal on a daily basis:

Q: Interesting, how often do you meet the principal?

A: Almost every day but formally or....?

Q: Yeah maybe formally, given you are an NQT.

A: I suppose maybe...

Q: Maybe not.

A: Not too much formally but she'd always make the effort to see how you are getting on. Passing once a day maybe but kind of you know she'd either come to the door or she'd stop you a couple of times a week, you know like. I suppose yesterday now the results came back for the LCAs, for the first session, they sat them at Christmas and she just...just talked about the results and she was just giving you a bit of thumbs up like. You know good work.

Q: Very good and the recognition.

A: Yeah, exactly. She always makes the effort now when the Junior Cert projects, she would make the effort to come in and look at them and you know that's a good thing, you get a bit of an uplift when that happens.

Many NQTs commented on the specificity and usefulness of the support they received. In Chestnut Avenue primary school, the NQTs considered the PST team very supportive; 'only for them, I don't think I'd have lasted' (NQT). Another NQT felt that there was a good match between her and the mentor who was 'very straight to the point and organised', which suited her. She noted that she may have had a different experience if matched with a different kind of person who was less organised and less inclined to help. In another primary school and typical of NQT comments across primary and post-primary, the NQT noted that:

Just from a teaching perspective, she had great advice and she was open and you know very, very good with her time and her advice.... I think she spent a lot of time helping me and thinking about resources or thinking about ways to help me (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Similarly in Hazel Way primary school, the NQTs were very positive about the supports they had received through Droichead:

It was great in this school to have the Droichead thing because I had the mentor waiting for me and loads of support in the school which was just great if you had any issues or any questions, it was just fantastic. It's not even just the mentor, but it's the whole personal support team, and the fact that you could go to anybody. Like at the start of the year there was a boy in my class who I had like major concerns over, and I didn't know like what I should be doing, I didn't know even like was I seeing things, is this right? Like I needed like more help. So like I got one of the PST members to come in, and they observed the child for like just for fifteen minutes, and then had a chat with me, and then you know when I was meeting the parents to discuss things like that they went through everything, the words I should use.

Being in a large school where teachers cooperated was also seen as a huge advantage:

It was great to have [my mentor] across the hall and you know a couple of other teachers that you could be like are you, what are you doing for this and whereabouts in Maths are you. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Many NQTs emphasised the value in having support about the practical aspects of school, e.g. organisation:

At the very beginning I didn't know how to do the roll book, so I went straight to [my mentor] and she was just fantastic, she sat me down, showed me it all, kind of helped me fill in the few dates in the future too because at the start I think it can be kind of overwhelming for an NQT when you have a full class and everybody's books and everything, there's a lot of even just labelling and correcting that you're doing. And things like taking attendance and stuff can kind of slip for a while and for an NQT I was afraid, you know, I wouldn't know how to do that. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Another NQT noted that:

For my parent-teacher meetings, I actually, a member of the PST actually sat me down and did a meeting with me, as the parent. And it was like, oh, because I was actually really nervous before that, you know I was looking up things and everything, so to sit down and just have it was brilliant, and I found my parent-teacher meetings then

flew, and they worked perfect, they were grand, and I just stuck to what, the way I'd been like gone through it. So that would have really stood to me. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Accessing resources was a common theme when NQTs spoke of support. Though not typical as a strategy, one school (Aspen Square primary school) had a shared Dropbox. In that primary school, all NQTs identified the principal as very supportive to them and available to provide advice and support and noted the Dropbox sharing system through which teachers share their planning documents (long term and short term). NQTs found this a very helpful support.

5.4.3 Learning from Core Practice in Droichead

As noted earlier, core Droichead practices, among them being observation, were typically seen as valuable opportunities to pick up ideas:

I think I've pretty much seen every subject and like loads of different levels as well. I was in junior infants and senior infants, seen everything and it was just the biggest help probably of the whole thing. Seeing people's rooms inside, just even at the start you know where I wasn't sure about putting my classroom rules up, like and you know the numbers and everything, like the things I'd never really thought of before. And just going in, getting to see their room and kind of be like that's a great idea, I might actually put that up, you know it's a great reminder for them. And just the layout and things as well, even the tables and chairs were different in everybody's room and how. Yeah so it was just great to see that kind of thing and then to pick up the tips as well from the teachers while they're teaching the lesson, you know it was great to take a few notes and be like ah I should be doing that too, that worked really well. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Observation in the school was contrasted positively with experiences of being observed on teaching practice:

There's a lot of stress around the teaching practice and the inspector you don't really know them. And you just are waiting on that knock on the door and it's a show nearly that you put on for teaching practice. You're waiting really hard and you've prepared loads for this one lesson. And they come in and then you just do it and you're kind of nervous and it's not the way you would teach if they weren't

there. Whereas when [my mentor] came in, you know she would nearly see me passing by every day anyway and there was no pressure, no stress and she was just there to kind of be like this would have went better if you did A, B and C. So it was great, it was very relaxed. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

5.4.4 Tensions and ‘Poor Fit’

There were a number of ways in which NQTs were not as well served and supported by Droichead as might have been the case – though this was in a minority of cases. A number of examples convey the range of such situations and include experiences of an NQT who had completed her dip in a restricted setting several years previously. She decided to return to mainstream teaching and hence had to engage in the Droichead process. The NQT had in fact completed mentor training in her previous school. To her, Droichead felt like an imposed experience and a poor fit for her, the school and the PST. As such, she noted the meetings with the team were less beneficial for her as she had considerable experience teaching:

Yeah like a lot of my friends are teachers and they call me the ‘double dipper’ now and even I was talking to my old principal and she was always just under the impression that I just had to do my Irish and she just couldn’t believe it... I don’t know if I did (find the meetings useful), I’ll be honest and I probably feel like I’ve been teaching a good few years. I found towards the end especially like, I have done my Dip before and I’ve had the full year and incidentals and inspectors coming in, I felt it was almost like I had to do it again.

Typically, while most NQT found most of the inductions workshops helpful some found them repetitive given their ITE experiences of coursework (see Chapter 4):

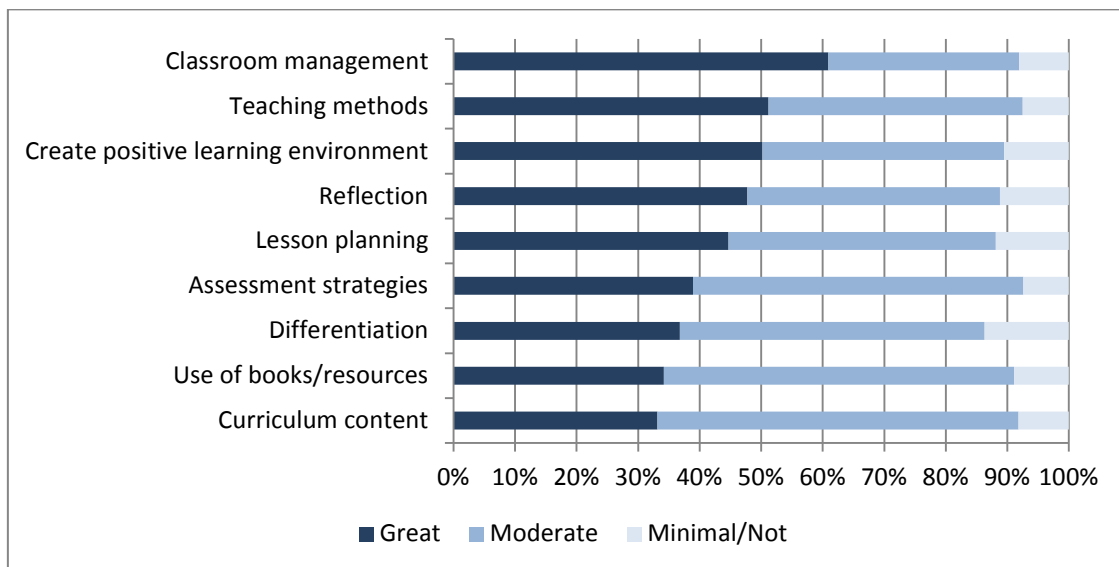
They were very good at giving ideas of different lessons, which I actually am using. Some, like Child Protection, were repetitive, as a lot of this material was already covered in my T Ed [Teacher Education]... and because coming from [named college] so soon, and then doing the induction, it was very repetitive.

5.4.5 Mentors’ and Principals’ Perspectives of NQT Progress

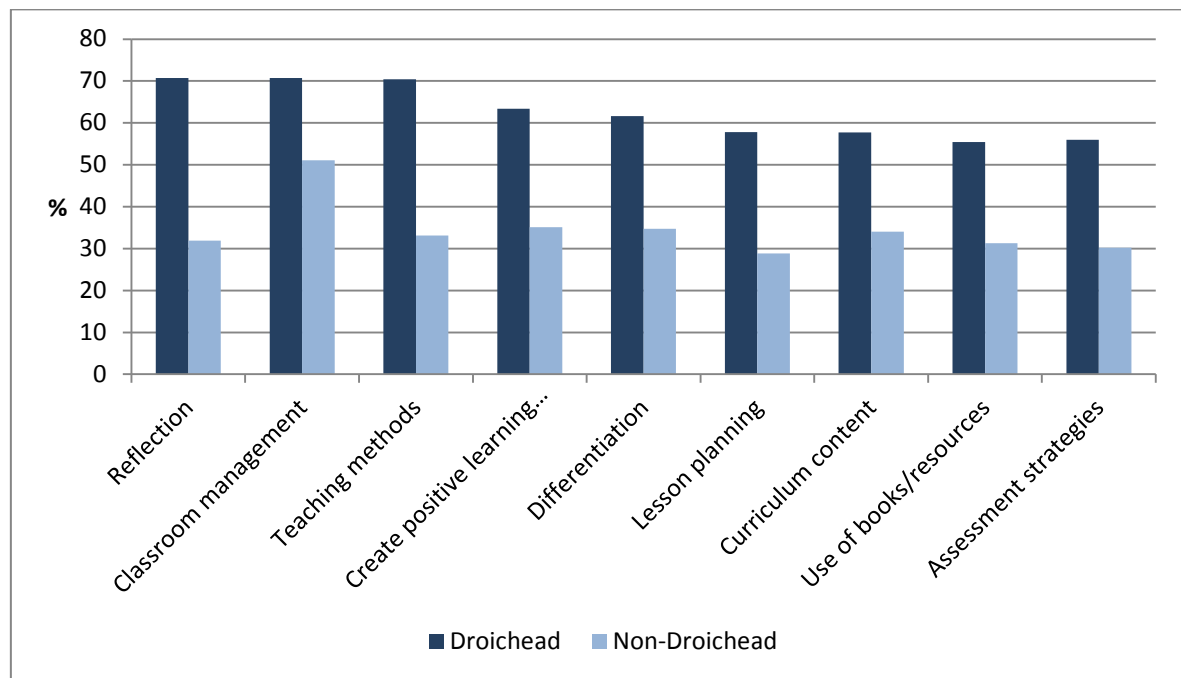
Mentors were asked the extent to which the NQTs they supported in 2014/15 had improved along a number of different dimensions. This gives information on a total of 84 NQTs supported by the mentors. Figure 5.1 shows whether NQTs

were seen as having improved ‘to a great extent’, ‘to a moderate extent’ or ‘to a minimal extent’/‘not at all’. The greatest improvement was reported in relation to classroom management, teaching methods and creating a positive learning environment. It is interesting to note that classroom management and teaching methods had been a frequent topic of professional conversations between the mentor and NQT. Mentors were somewhat less likely to report that NQTs had improved ‘to a great extent’ in relation to knowledge of curriculum content, use of books/resources and differentiation to cater to all abilities within the classroom. Given that initial teacher education was seen as preparing new teachers in relation to knowledge of curriculum content, it may be that mentors did not expect to see further improvement. Mentors of NQTs in primary schools were more likely to report improvement across all of the dimensions than those in the second-level sector.

FIGURE 5.1 Mentor Perceptions of NQT Improvement over Time



It is not possible to compare mentor perceptions with those of teacher induction co-ordinators in non-Droichead schools because of the smaller number of the latter group. However, principals in both Droichead and non-Droichead schools were asked to rate NQTs along the same parameters. Figure 5.2 shows the proportion indicating that NQTs had improved ‘to a great extent’, comparing the accounts of Droichead and non-Droichead principals. Significantly, those in Droichead schools consistently report greater levels of improvement among their NQTs than those in a matched sample of non-Droichead schools. Further analysis indicates that this difference in perceptions holds within both primary and post-primary schools.

FIGURE 5.2 Principal Perceptions of NQT Improvement over Time in Droichead and Non-Droichead Schools

5.4.6 NQTs' Satisfaction with Induction: Droichead v. Non-Droichead

The Wave 2 survey captured the experiences of NQTs who had just joined the school as well as those who had been in the school in the previous year. It is not therefore possible to systematically examine the extent to which the self-perceptions of NQTs in Droichead schools changed over time. It is, however, possible to compare the experiences of those in Droichead and non-Droichead schools at the same time-point. NQTs were asked the extent to which they were satisfied with their job and the extent to which they were stressed by their job. Satisfaction levels were similar in Droichead and non-Droichead schools, with over two-thirds of new teachers reporting that they were 'very satisfied' with their job. In contrast, differences in overall stress levels were evident between Droichead and non-Droichead schools; just over half of those in non-Droichead schools reported that they felt 'very' or 'fairly' stressed while this was the case for a third of those in Droichead schools. Additional analysis was conducted to assess whether this difference held, taking account of primary or post-primary school, DEIS status and how long the NQT had taught in the school. Even controlling for these factors, Droichead NQTs were significantly ($p=0.05$) as likely as their counterparts in non-Droichead schools to report feelings of stress. This pattern should be interpreted with caution as a number of other school and individual factors may influence stress levels (see Darmody and Smyth, 2011).

5.4.7 NQTs' Expectations of and Commitment to Teaching

NQTs were asked whether teaching had met their expectations. Those teaching in Droichead schools were less likely to say that teaching had met their expectations 'to a great extent' than those in non-Droichead schools (54 per cent compared with 73 per cent). On closer expectation, this difference was apparent among second-level teachers but not among those in the primary sector. NQTs were also asked a number of statements related to their overall commitment to the teaching profession. Overall, NQTs indicated a high level of commitment in relation to statements like 'I feel that teaching is really right for me' but no difference was found between those in Droichead and non-Droichead schools.

5.4.8 NQTs' Confidence about Teaching

New teachers were asked about their level of confidence in relation to a number of dimensions of teaching. In general, NQTs in Droichead schools had slightly higher levels of confidence in relation to all but one dimension. However, this difference was significant only in relation to 'suggesting suitable examples when students are having difficulties understanding'. On three of the aspects (teaching to help students remember important information, applying new developments in the curriculum to their teaching and helping students to focus on learning tasks), NQTs in post-primary schools reported lower levels of confidence than their primary counterparts.

5.4.9 NQTs' Self-Assessment of Own CPD Needs

In assessing their own professional development needs, no differences were found between NQTs in Droichead and non-Droichead schools. However, those in second-level schools reported higher levels of need than those in primary schools across all of the fifteen dimensions with the exception of teaching in an Irish-medium school. Among primary teachers, needs were seen as greatest in relation to teaching students with special educational needs and teaching in an Irish-medium school; the lowest level of need was reported in relation to lesson planning, curriculum content and classroom management. Among second-level teachers, needs were seen as greatest in relation to teaching students with special educational needs and dealing with parents; the lowest level of need was reported in relation to lesson planning.

5.5 CONCLUSION

First, the chapter provided an overview of the recommendation process in Droichead, illustrating its enactment as a process and moment in time and identified a number of both strengths and current challenges in that process.

Second, the chapter provided an overview of NQT experiences drawing on school case-study and survey data in terms of overall perceptions of the Droichead process.

Throughout the chapter, a number of key strengths were threaded through various themes including: (i) schools' capacity to embrace the contrary imperatives of assistance and assessment, (ii) the perceived fairness of the recommendation process, (iii) schools' appreciation and recognition of the significance of recommendation – both as a process and moment – for NQTs, (iv) general sense of satisfaction with the CPD received by schools from the NIPT in relation to the recommendation process, and (v) schools' recognition that progress rather than perfection was the standard to be reached in supporting and assessing NQTs.

In framing the recommendation process in this report (see Chapter 2), we noted the general trend internationally is toward incorporating both assistance and assessment into contemporary systematic and integrated induction models. As such, Droichead aligns with this trend. The move to incorporate both – though conventionally this would have been viewed as impossible or not good practice – has now come to be seen as good practice in that it provides a context for linking feedback to NQTs with the wider system. In doing so, it can foster understandings of good practice, drawing upon both indicators of good practice for all teachers, as well as subject-specific dimensions of good practice. As such, recommendation from this perspective is necessarily inextricably bound up with the wider comprehensive induction endeavour.

Chapter 6

Implementation of Droichead at the School Level

6.1 INTRODUCTION

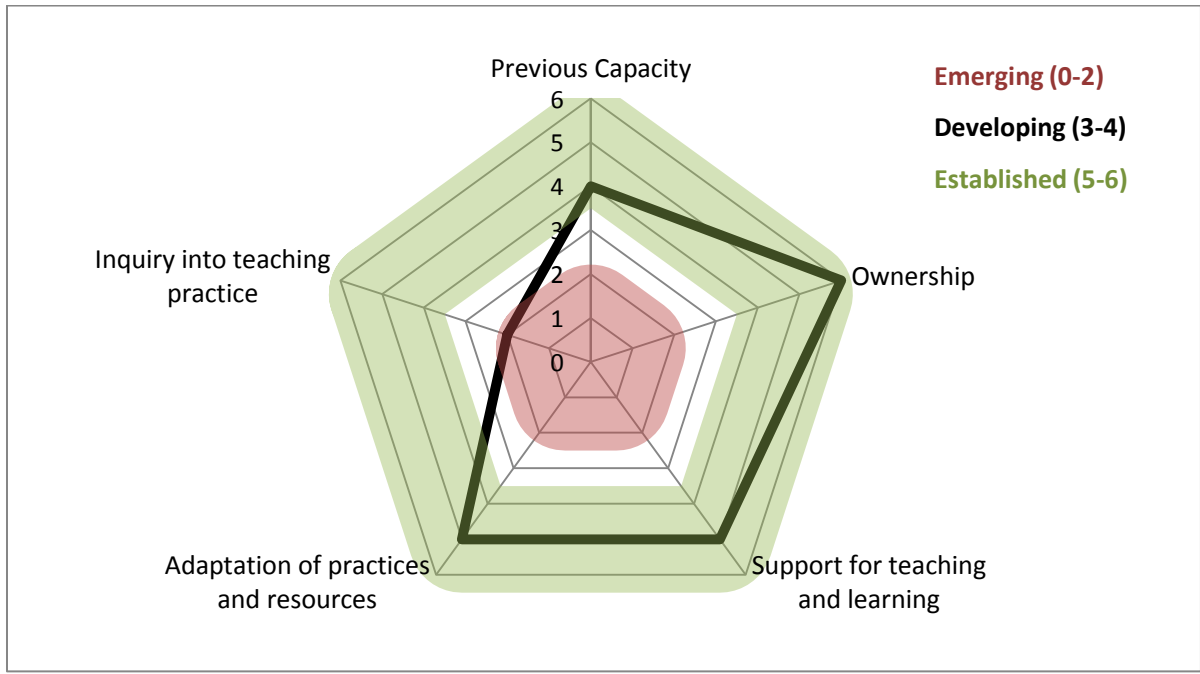
The previous chapters have used the survey and case-study data to examine how the Droichead process is operating across schools. This chapter adopts a more holistic perspective to explore how Droichead has been implemented in the case-study schools. In characterising the process of implementation, a number of dimensions are taken into account, namely:

- **Previous capacity:** as Chapter 3 has illustrated, Droichead has been initiated in schools with very different histories of induction, mentoring and collaboration, and this legacy is likely to influence how Droichead is implemented;
- **Ownership:** this dimension takes account of how Droichead was adopted and the extent to which the process is engaged with by the PST team and more broadly across the school;
- **Support for teaching and learning:** this aspect reflects the extent to which Droichead forms the foundation for professional conversations and is linked to broader collaboration (formal and/or informal) within the school around teaching and learning;
- **Adaptation:** this dimension refers to the extent to which members of the PST have adapted resources and criteria to reflect the specific needs and circumstances of the school;
- **Inquiry:** this takes account of the degree of reflection on practice as well as the use of research and co-inquiry to further develop teaching and learning.

These dimensions have been adapted from an in-depth study of beginning teachers conducted in the US (Johnson, 2004). In addition, the dimension of inquiry was added to reflect the growing emphasis in policy documents on the need for teachers to be reflective practitioners who use inquiry to refine and develop their practice (see, for example, Teaching Council, 2015). While the aim of the chapter is to capture the richness of the experience of implementing Droichead in the case-study schools, for ease of comparison schools have been classified into three categories along each of these dimensions: emerging (codes 1-2), developing (codes 3-4) and established (codes 5-6) (see Figure 6.1). Because of the differences between primary and post-primary school experiences evident

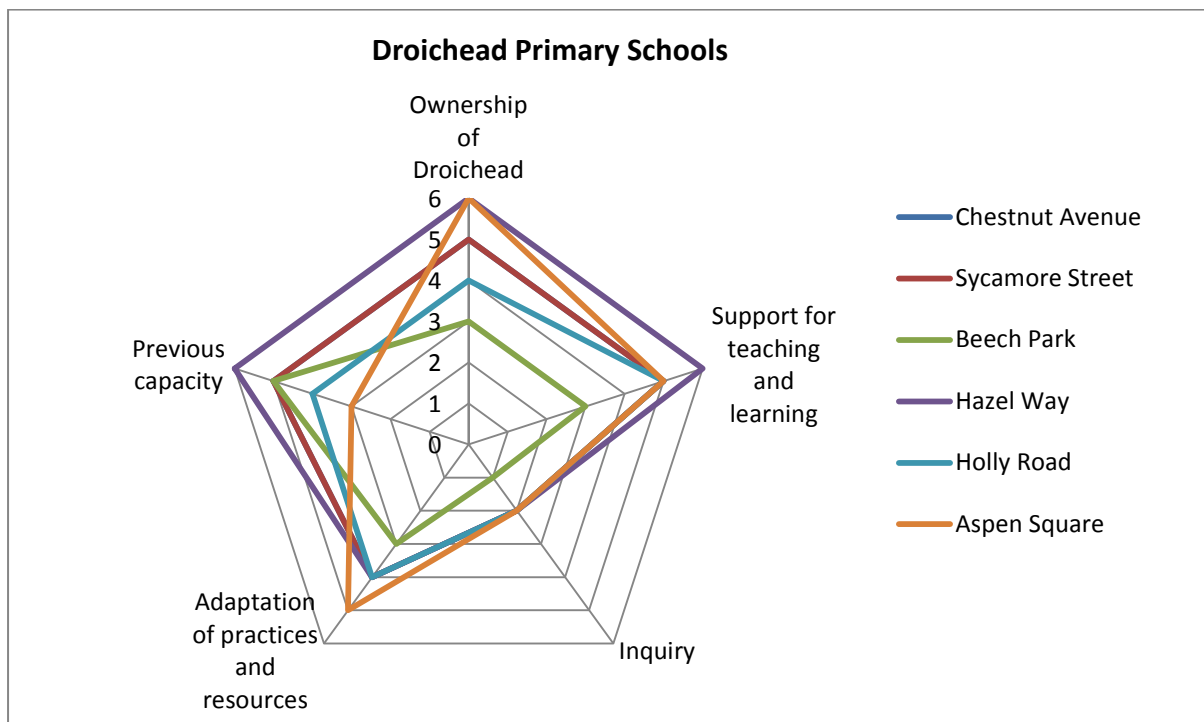
in the analyses presented in Chapters 3 to 5, the following sections look at the two sectors separately before drawing out more general implications in the concluding section.

FIGURE 6.1 Dimensions of Implementation



6.2 IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CASE-STUDY PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Figure 6.2 shows a radar chart depicting the six case-study primary schools along the different dimensions of implementation. Looking across the schools, it is clear that most (four) cases had established levels of mentoring and collaboration prior to the introduction of Droichead to the school.

FIGURE 6.2 Case-Study Primary Schools Along the Dimensions of Implementation

In some instances, there was a strong legacy of informal cooperation between teachers in the school:

We had a good atmosphere... kind of collaborative atmosphere in the school. (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Definitely our school was different from a lot of schools in the way that we kind of operated, we did work together an awful lot, we had an open door policy. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In other cases, the schools had experience of formal mentoring of newly qualified teachers:

We were one of the first schools to do the mentoring everybody is exceptionally supportive in this school. It is down to that culture of the mentoring. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

There was a culture of induction practices going on in the school. (Principal, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In the remaining two schools, collaboration and mentoring were ‘emerging’ prior to Droichead but not as well developed as in the other four schools. It is interesting to note that less of a legacy of collaboration was not necessarily a barrier to assuming ownership over the Droichead process, with Aspen Square primary school characterised as ‘established’ in terms of ownership, support for teaching and learning, and adaptation, despite little history of formal mentoring or cooperation.

In four of the six cases, ownership of the Droichead process could be seen as ‘established’, with a significant degree of buy-in to the process among the whole staff. In Aspen Square primary school, it was evident that ‘the whole school has embraced it’ (Principal), with significant involvement from the teachers within the school. The openness of staff to facilitating observations was remarked on by the NQTs:

I have to say all of the teachers in the school are very welcoming of Droichead. Like we, between us all we’ve gone on observations to different class teachers and like all of them have their door open and say it’s absolutely no problem if you want to come in and observe. Say you’re after going through your action plan and you want to zone in on maybe SESE or group work; then the PST co-ordinator has to go and maybe ask a teacher at any class level if they’d mind one of us coming in and observing. And it’s never been an issue, it’s been completely brilliant, they’d let us in, they do a lesson and we help out and get more hands-on experience and get to see how different teachers do things. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I loved that part of the Droichead, getting to see other teachers teach, it’s amazing ... And seeing my mentor teach was great but getting to see lots of teachers throughout the whole experience... And you get to choose, my mentor would always come and say ‘what do you want to see?’. So you get to choose what level you want to go to and I got to shadow learning support as well, so... I kind of tried to cover every kind of part of the school. I did, what else?, a class in the juniors, first, third and then like one of the higher classes, sixth, I think it was. But it was nice that you, you weren’t told where you were going, that you got to decide, because maybe some people might want to see five lessons in a junior infant classroom, you know, that’s their thing. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Similarly, in Hazel Way primary school, whole-staff collaboration around the Droichead process was evident:

I think I mean talking to all of the staff there, you know, they've all felt it's been a very, very worthwhile process.... By helping somebody else at a more junior level, they're actually consolidating their own skills... it's the ultimate collegial learning as we've been talking about for years. (PST member, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The process of staff buy-in was seen as reflecting a number of different factors, including a prior history of collaboration among teachers and the way in which Droichead was initiated in the school (see Chapter 3), with one teacher indicating that 'getting all the staff on board is important' (Other PST, Aspen Square primary school). In contrast, in two other schools ownership was 'emerging' but not established. In one of the schools, this partly reflected the initial opposition to joining Droichead among some of the staff, with buy-in tentative from the outset.

You have to meet regularly for meetings and this and that, it just seems an awful lot of work. You know I can't, personally I can't see why now the colleges have changed from three year to four year, why that fourth year, the teachers can't be sorted out, before they come out of college. (Non-PST teacher, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

All but one of the case-study primary schools had embedded Droichead within a school-wide approach to teaching and learning. Hazel Way primary school probably represented the strongest example of this approach, with a large PST which complemented well-established structures of between-class planning and cooperation. This provided a network of support for NQTs with professional conversations taking place in a range of contexts.

All the teachers really – even though they're not like involved per se – they've been supportive of Droichead, so it's been... absolutely open door. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Here support for professional development was not seen as confined to the duration of the Droichead process:

It was just interesting to see the way it's thought of as a year-long process; even when you're signed off you continue, you can continue

on the observations if you like. So I know another NQT here, she's finished and she's been signed off but she's gone on still a few observations ... You're not just dropped, yeah. Yeah, so that was kind of useful for us, just so I know that even coming to the end like it's absolutely no hassle if I go to anyone in the PST and say can I do another observation and that's fine. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

A similar network of support was evident in a number of the other schools:

We have a very kind of open door policy throughout the school, that it doesn't always have to go through the mentor. If an NQT wants some advice, you know, they can go straight to somebody that they know is particularly strong in the P.E. area, or somebody who has great ideas for art. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I feel like even if it wasn't a Droichead school, there would still be that enormous amount of support. Like you don't feel like you're alone doing the Dip., like, the teachers here are so generous of their time and they're so generous, like, of their own ideas and their resources and, like, they're so willing to help. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In one of the schools where ownership was less well-established, this influenced the degree of school-wide support for teaching and learning. This challenge was reinforced by issues around confidence among the PST team and the perceived lack of fit between the mentor and NQT which also led to challenges in supporting the NQT and providing feedback around observations.

I don't know in some ways are you confident enough in your own ability ... I think the mentoring programme is brilliant, absolutely but like I'm essentially judging someone else's teaching but let's say in the lines of classroom management, like I'm supposed to essentially give recommendations or mark them on their classroom management skills but yet me as a teacher, I have a class who are quite challenging and classroom management is a massive issue. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the recent introduction of the Droichead process, adaptation of resources and guidelines to the school context was generally emerging but not yet well established. Nonetheless, there were a number of examples of adaptation among the case-study schools. This was particularly evident in Aspen Square primary school where the staff had explicitly refined the process over their time in the programme:

When we took on the Droichead programme, we had some meetings and we knew in principle what it was about, but after, it's like the NQT, after doing it for the year then we knew what we wanted from it so we tweaked it accordingly. We wanted shorter plans, we wanted more observations, we wanted more professional conversations with the NQTs and we wanted them to tell us, they told us how they felt it went and what they would like to see. (Principal, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In another case, Hazel Way primary school was a larger school with a significant number of NQTs so they extended the size of the PST to facilitate support for NQTs from teachers in their own class level. School Chestnut Avenue primary school adapted the indicators of good practice to reflect the specific circumstances of their school:

The four of us decided what does that actually mean for us in this school and we translated it into what we expected here and I found it hugely useful. (Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Similarly, in Sycamore Street primary school, the PST members felt that indicators regarding NQT participation in school-based initiatives and sub-committees were not 'realistic' so adjusted the criteria accordingly. Furthermore, the team decided to be more precise about what kinds of observations they would schedule:

Nowhere does it say that it is obligatory to observe the core subjects but we felt that it was necessary to do that. So we decided that it was going to be the three cores and one other.... We would have looked at transitions between subjects as well but nowhere does it state that. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In addition, responsiveness to the expressed needs of NQTs was an important feature in most of the case-study schools:

We asked her, you see, at the outset to identify things that she feels that she would like to learn about and because she was in seniors, she really wanted to see a junior class in operation. So she viewed, she observed a teacher who was an accomplished teacher, teaching phonics, I think, in a junior infant class. And then she viewed, she said she was a bit nervous about P.E., so she viewed the fifth class teacher teaching P.E. to a similar age group, you know, for station teaching, so that she would know how to do P.E. and then she viewed Gaeilge in another class. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Compared to the other dimensions, inquiry was only at a very early stage in all of the schools studied. Reflective practice was evident in the accounts of many of the NQTs and in the professional conversations with the PST.

I have my reflection or whenever I'd observations and professional conversations, I've them in there as well. And kind of what I was talking about and then if I found anything interesting I'd put it in, the article, and if I liked it and then took out whatever I found interesting into your reflections. (NQT, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I love doing that [the portfolio], yeah. It's almost like a diary actually, you kind of write in how... If someone was acting up or someone's progressing very well and just write in, so you kind of can see yourself how you're getting on. I find that very good. (NQT, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Maybe check something out in a book, that you haven't looked at for a couple of years or go back to your curriculum documents... it does make you have to go back over your own practice as well... sometimes after 20 years you do stop reflecting a bit. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

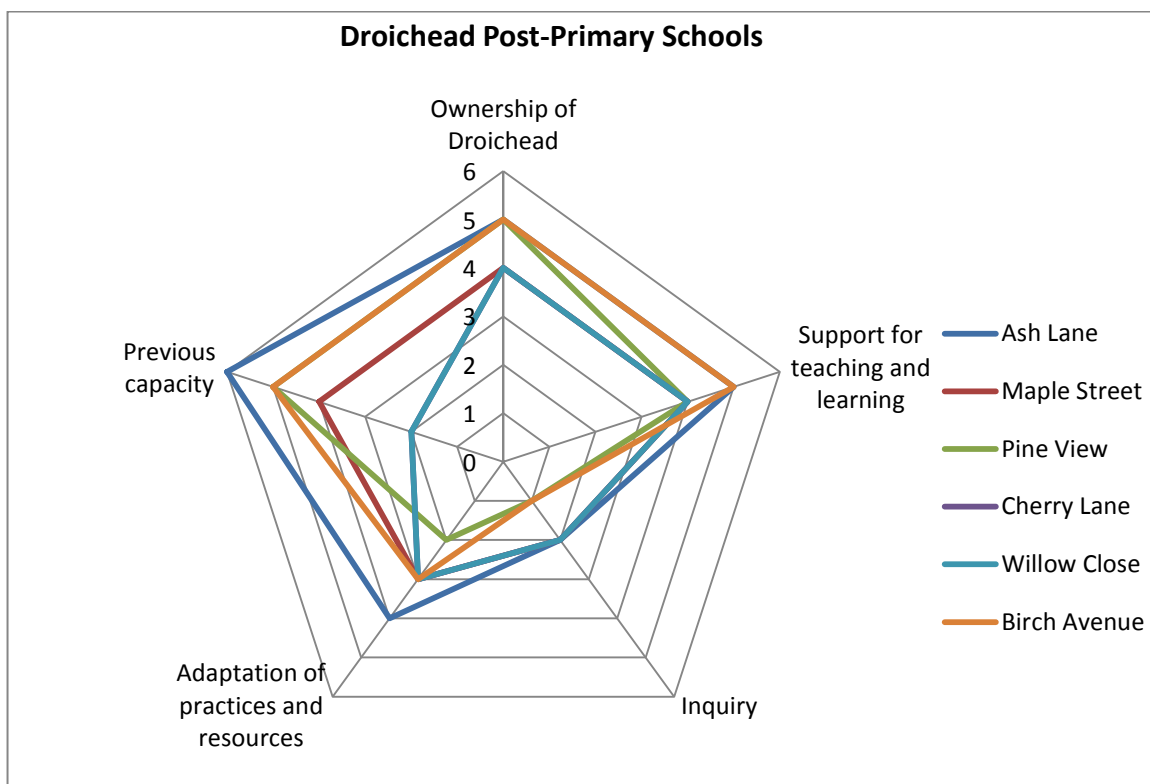
However, the schools were not yet at the stage of using inquiry to develop and refine practice. Nevertheless, it was evident that providing supports to NQTs had prompted many principals and other PST members to reflect on the 'taken-for-granted' in their school and to begin to interrogate their own values and practices.

It was a deep learning experience for people, where we were getting right down to the nitty gritty of where our values lay. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

6.3 IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CASE-STUDY POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Figure 6.3 depicts the six case-study post-primary schools along the dimensions of implementation. In contrast to the case-study primary schools, a previous history of mentoring and collaboration was less common among these schools.

FIGURE 6.3 Case-Study Post-Primary Schools Along the Dimensions of Implementation



Three of the schools had previously had well-developed approaches to induction and collaboration:

It involved linking them with a subject department person, so there was a link there, it was, it involved them, me observing them maybe, roughly about three times a year and giving them feedback. And we had been linked in with the original pilot study... for mentoring, so we could have had our deputy principal and another teacher trained in that and we also would have given a post of responsibility to mentoring, I suppose long before it perhaps was regarded as a necessity to do so. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I suppose a lot of it would have been informal, you know, what I mean in a small school when somebody comes in, you know,

everyone can spot the new face. And you know we'll do our bit to try and help. A couple of the teachers here had set up an informal mentoring programme. (Mentor, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

In another school, an approach to integrating new teachers had been emerging, with an emphasis on having an induction 'day' for new staff:

In those first days and at the end of August we would bring all the new teachers together, we would bring in with them, the, the home-school teacher used to sit in, the Guidance Counsellor used to sit in, myself, Deputy and we'd have one or two other teachers, just to be there – and then we used to meet another six weeks later and just see how everything was going, that was it, it wasn't very formal. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In contrast, in the other two schools, induction had been ad hoc and informal prior to the introduction of Droichead. In one of these schools (Willow Close post-primary school), one person had unofficially taken on the role of guide for the new teachers:

We'd have a lot of them [diploma students] coming through our doors, and being, I suppose, the go to person, not officially a mentor as such but would give them advice, show them around the school, who's who. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

But this approach was seen as much more limited in scope:

There was no such thing as come into anybody's classes. (Principal, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Ownership of the Droichead process was more evident in the three second-level schools that had a stronger legacy of collaboration.

It encourages people to interact, learn, take on responsibility and indeed probably to query their own practice, so that's a good thing, so yeah I'd be positive towards it. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

However, ownership was emerging in the other three schools. This development was captured well by the principal in Maple Street post-primary school who felt that professional conversations were beginning but that collaboration had further to go:

I suppose something that I've been trying to achieve and I haven't, still haven't fully achieved it, but we're getting there, is this teacher collaboration, for more teachers to be talking to each other. I think that's the best thing that the school has benefited, that there's more professional conversations taking place between teachers. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

In schools where ownership was less well-established, PST members pointed to the need for greater information to be given to staff on the nature of Droichead:

It is mentioned at staff meetings that we're a Droichead pilot school. It hasn't gone into huge amount of detail about what it is. Some people will ask questions themselves if they want to know. I do think there is a greater need, somebody to come in and talk about it and explain it. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Support for teaching and learning was somewhat less well-embedded across the post-primary schools visited than among the case-study primary schools. Two of the schools had more established structures for supporting teaching and learning, with NQTs also involved in subject departments that cooperated around planning:

There would be a lot of subject department meetings, and certainly... that would be a good time to discuss, like they'd have discussions regarding where they should be in the textbook, or what they should have covered in the course at a particular date, so there'd be that kind of ongoing support. And well in our school, generally speaking, the subject departments would work very closely together and share resources and that kind of thing. (Other PST, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

These formal structures were underpinned by positive informal support among staff:

I feel like I could approach the majority of the staff and ask them anything. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The other schools had ‘emerging’ support for teaching and learning. Departmental structures were in place but emphasised planning more than teaching and learning. Good informal support was evident for NQTs but this tended to come from members of the PST and a smaller number of non-PST teachers:

She’s [the mentor is] so approachable, she’s always in the staff room and she’s always asking how we are and how we’re doing, ... rather than sitting down and having formal conversations you’re able to just go up to her. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

There’s some other teachers that I’d usually go to. There’s one other, one of the other resource teachers has been in the school a few years, so when I started off I went to her for a bit of advice because I felt like I wasn’t fully aware of what resource was or how I could do it, so I went to her and she gave me just some tips and hints and some of the students she had as well and how to kind of handle them and stuff like that. (NQT, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

One principal pointed to the slow pace of change involved in transforming the professional learning culture within a school:

I have no interest in rapidly changing the culture and... then let it fall apart again. I wanted it to be slow change to culture and build it over time. (Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In some schools, there was still some reluctance among teachers to allow themselves to be observed by NQTs. In one school, this was attributed to an association between being observed and being ‘inspected’:

That would be very much our experience... if someone’s in your room, generally it’s an inspector. (Non-PST teacher, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

Similarly, adaptation of materials and guidelines was somewhat less evident among the case-study post-primary schools. One school used the observation template but interpreted in the light of their own ideas of what constituted good teaching:

In the observations I would go by the template but I suppose in my own mind I would be looking for time management, I'd be looking for interaction between students. Like what's the atmosphere like in the classroom, I would be looking for different teaching methodologies. And just overall, I suppose how the information came across was it a good class, was it, you know, did I feel that the information was communicated effectively. (Mentor, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Schools were also responsive to the needs of the NQTs in terms of observations and feedback:

When I was coming to observe them I was saying like what would you like me to look at, and then they'd say I'm not so sure about my questioning or I'm not so sure... so that's what I would have looked at. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Before the observation [the mentor] would ask me what do you think you need to improve on. We'd find an area and then during the observation I'd have my note pad and... I'd be solely concentrating on that area. I guess it's hard to try and observe everything, but if we zone in on a certain aspect and then afterwards we'd talk about that aspect. What did you learn? How are you going to implement that into your classroom? (NQT, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

As with the primary schools, the post-primary schools could be characterised as at the 'beginning' stage in terms of inquiry. As at primary level, reflection was mentioned by NQTs:

I know it is always mentioned but I do think reflective practice is important, you know sort of being able to identify things that have worked, aspects of things that have worked, getting rid of others and re-trying them. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Members of the PST and other staff also felt that they had learned from the NQTs:

I've learned a lot perhaps about my own practice from observing the NQTs, even new strategies and methodologies and ideas, that you know I'm out of initial teacher training a while now. So obviously things have moved on and you do so much CPD yes but you certainly

never are as up to date with the new recruits coming out. So that's been rewarding. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

And it does make you look at your own [practice], before you kind of explain it to... a younger teacher, somebody that's asking you advice, you kind of, have to break down what you're actually doing.... It's all of that that actually makes you, you do evaluate yourself.' (Non-PT teacher, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

You do get a lot from it and it makes you reflect on yourself because you are the mentor... can I do this better? You are supposed to be the role model so you do critically reflect on yourself. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I also think I learned a huge amount from them, absolutely huge amount, as in you go into their classrooms and it's, you know, very easy as a teacher you have been at this for a while to get a little bit stale (laughs), you know, you find things that work and keep going and you do it. It is nice to go into a classroom and see something a bit different. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked in detail at the way in which Droichead was introduced and implemented across the twelve case-study schools. Because of the differences between primary and post-primary school experiences evident in the analyses presented in Chapters 3 to 5, we presented the two sectors separately. Many of the schools had had a formal approach to teacher induction even before joining Droichead, in keeping with the pattern found in the national data (see Chapter 2). However, some schools had previously relied on a more informal approach to integrating newly qualified teachers. A legacy of support and collaboration facilitated the embedding of Droichead into the existing network of support but was not a necessary condition for staff taking ownership of the process. Taking part in Droichead had changed practices within the schools but the extent to which such changes went beyond the core Professional Support Team varied from school to school. In some cases, schools not only changed as a result of Droichead but staff themselves adapted aspects of the process to better reflect the profile and needs of their own school community. On average, ownership of Droichead, school-wide support for teaching and learning and adaptation of procedures appeared more established in the primary than in the second-level schools visited.

Chapter 7

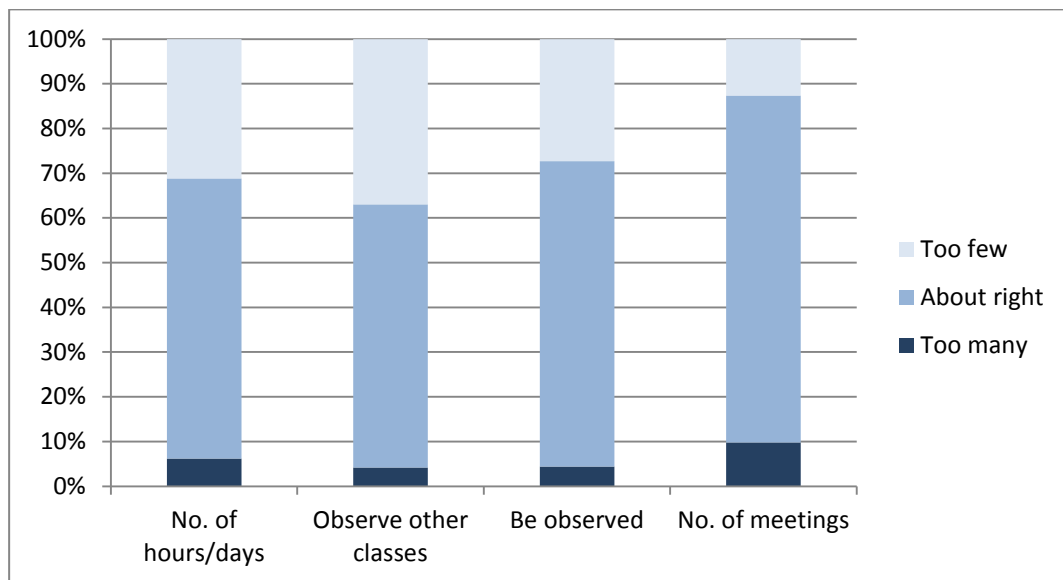
Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Droichead

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have examined the experiences of schools taking part in the Droichead process from the perspective of joining the programme, the nature of the induction process and the recommendation process. Chapter 6 used information from the case-study schools to describe in greater detail the implementation of Droichead at the school level. This chapter provides an overview of the issues arising from the survey and case-study interview data. It begins by looking at overall levels of satisfaction with the Droichead process before examining the perceived benefits and challenges associated with participation in the programme from the point of view of principals, mentors and other PST members.

7.2 SATISFACTION WITH THE DROICHEAD PROCESS

The two waves of surveys asked principals and mentors two sets of questions about their satisfaction with the Droichead process. Responses were generally consistent across the two survey waves so the data presented here are from Wave 2, given that principals and mentors will have had longer to reflect on their experience of Droichead. The first set of questions related to the degree to which different aspects of the process were seen as appropriate. The vast majority (87 per cent) of principals described the number of meetings between the NQT and the PST as 'about right' (Figure 7.1). Almost two-thirds saw the opportunities for the NQT to observe other classes and be observed by other teachers as 'about right'. While the majority (69 per cent) of principals saw the number of hours/days required to complete the process as 'about right', almost a third felt that the requirement was not sufficient. On closer investigation, this dissatisfaction was found to relate to school level; over half (55 per cent) of primary principals felt 'too few' days were required while only 9 per cent of second-level principals felt that 'too few' hours were required. Primary principals were more critical of the opportunity for the NQT to observe other classes (with 46 per cent feeling there were too few such opportunities compared with 30 per cent of second-level principals). They were also somewhat more critical of the opportunities for NQTs to be observed (36 per cent compared with 19 per cent) and of the number of meetings (21 per cent compared with 4 per cent). Responses were very similar between mentors and principals.

FIGURE 7.1 Perceived Appropriateness of Different Aspects of the Process (Principal Reports, Wave 2)

The second set of questions related to satisfaction with different aspects of the pilot programme. Overall, levels of satisfaction were high among school principals (Figure 7.2). The vast majority, around four-fifths or more, were satisfied with the written information provided, external support (e.g. through NIPT), the content of meetings/seminars, and professional development for NQTs and for PST members. Principals were somewhat less satisfied with some aspects of the process, including the timing and location of meetings/seminars, the resources available to support the process, the extent of whole-school involvement and the responsiveness of the Teaching Council and the NIPT to their school's experience of the programme. It should be noted, however, that even in these latter cases, the majority of principals expressed satisfaction. Primary principals were more likely to describe themselves as 'very satisfied' with the content of meetings (64 per cent compared with 39 per cent) while second-level principals were more likely to consider themselves 'very satisfied' with the resources available to support Droichead (42 per cent compared with 23 per cent). Taking all of the measures together, as an indicator of overall satisfaction, no differences are found between primary and second-level principals. There are only a small number of teaching principals in the sample. However, their satisfaction levels are found to be significantly lower than among administrative principals. This group of principals is also more likely to report too few opportunities for observation in their school.

The reasons given for satisfaction or dissatisfaction are echoed in the discussion of perceived benefits and challenges in Sections 7.3 and 7.4. However, some specific issues were also raised. In relation to the meetings, some felt that the meetings were ‘too far away’ and at times that were not family friendly. However, as indicated in Figure 7.2, principals were positive about the content of such meetings and the nature of support:

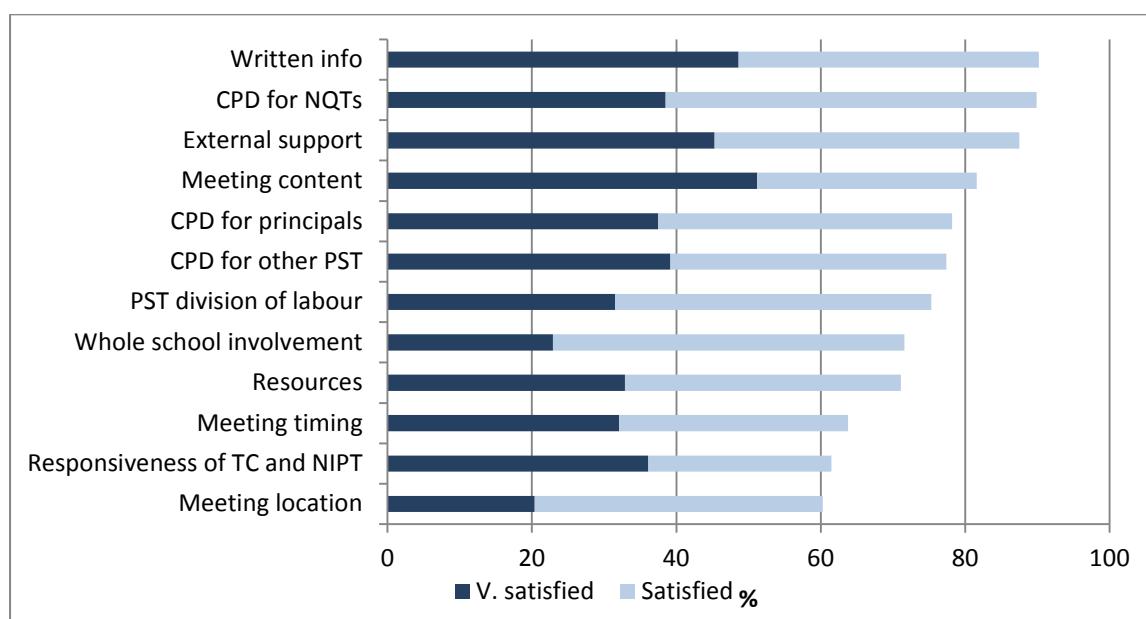
I found the training extremely well organised and helpful and the members of the NIPT team are very approachable.... Our associate was very helpful and practical. We particularly enjoyed the shared learning day and found it very useful. (Principal, Wave 2)

In terms of responsiveness, one principal stated that:

Droichead is a fantastic scheme. However, it is totally under-resourced. There is no incentive or reward for the PST team, who are expected to put in a lot of extra work. The Teaching Council do not appear to be listening to our views re support. (Principal, Wave 2)

Other issues raised included difficulties with the division of labour within the PST, having to cope with NQT underperformance and the lack of materials and resources in Irish.

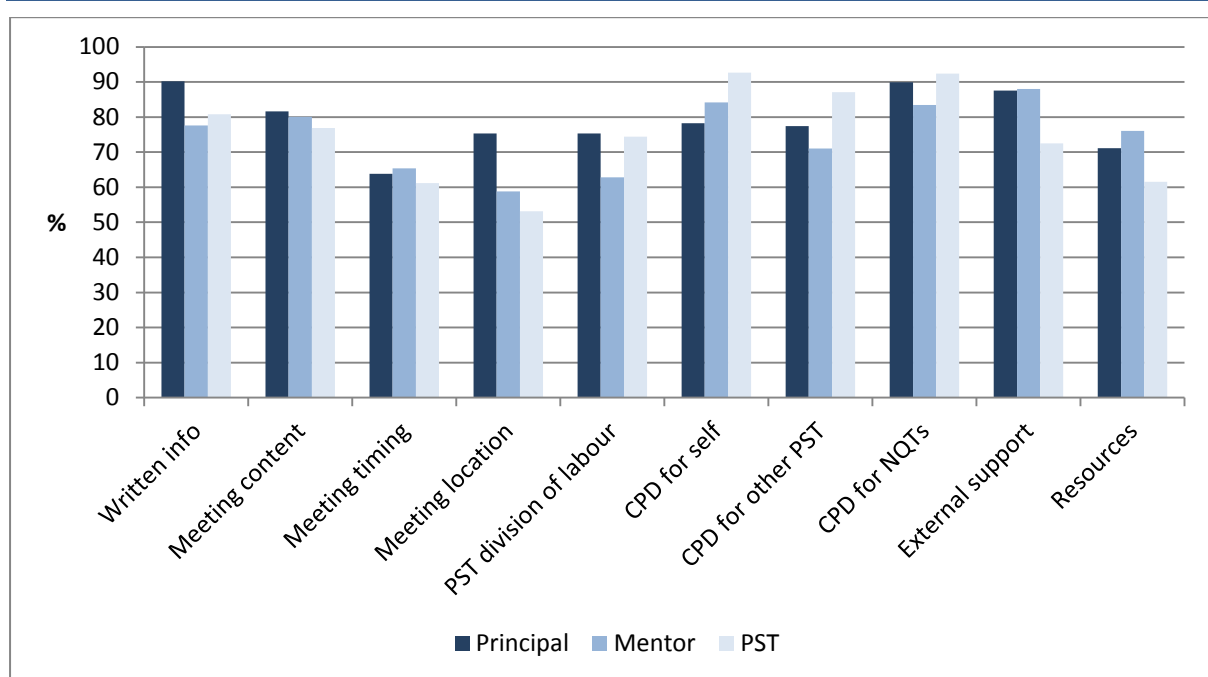
FIGURE 7.2 Satisfaction with Different Aspects of the Process (Principal Reports)



Levels of satisfaction with different aspects of Droichead were broadly similar across all members of the Professional Support Team – principal, mentor and other PST member (Figure 7.3). However, some differences were evident. Principals were more satisfied with written information and meeting locations than mentors or PST members. Principals and mentors were somewhat more likely to be satisfied with levels of external support and resources than other members of the PST. Mentors and other PST members were somewhat more satisfied with the professional development they had received than principals. Mentors were less satisfied with the division of labour in the PST, most likely reflecting their greater workload:

I feel the workload for mentors is much greater than for other members of the PST. I'm not sure that this is sustainable over a long period, particularly for class teachers who are mentors. (Mentor, Wave 2)

FIGURE 7.3 Satisfaction with Different Aspects of the Process – Principal, Mentor and Other PST Member



7.3 BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN DROICHEAD

In the surveys, principals, mentors and PST members were asked about the benefits of taking part in the Droichead programme. The questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to specify the benefits for their particular school. These responses were grouped into a number of categories allowing for an overview of the main issues. Responses were broadly consistent across the two

waves of the survey. The most frequently mentioned benefit (46 per cent of principals in Wave 2) was that Droichead provides a more structured form of support for newly qualified teachers. Responses centred on the idea that Droichead was 'making the process more formal' and that it 'has given a clearer agreed and defined process to induction' (Wave 1):

We are finally supporting NQTs instead of handing them a timetable and 'throwing them in at the deep end'. (Principal, Wave 2)

Similarly, two-thirds of the mentors surveyed emphasised the value of having a structured and supportive induction programme for newly qualified teachers. The process was seen as facilitating the

[i]ntroduction of NQT to school life, procedures etc. [It] is organised not haphazard. NQT hopefully feels someone is looking out for them and cares about them' (Wave 1).

A third of principals and almost a quarter of mentors emphasised the value of ongoing support for, and assessment of, the NQT, contrasting this with the inspection model:

Droichead is based on progression of a teacher rather than one 'perfect' day when an inspector visits.... There is consistent support for the NQT. (Mentor, Wave 1)

Continuous assessment makes it fairer for NQT. (Principal, Wave 2)

Enabling the NQT to ask for support/to help them realise that they are on a journey of learning, emphasis on process not perfection. (Mentor, Wave 2)

It takes away the 'one day' approach and provides a more scaffolded approach to teacher induction. (Mentor, Wave 2)

Providing a structured support for newly qualified teachers was also mentioned by over four-fifths of the other PST members surveyed:

It allows a structure in which NQTs can learn and develop with support. It takes away the concept of starting at the deep end and it allows the PST also to have more professional and constructive conversations. It also promotes reflective practice and inter-subject learning. (Other PST, Wave 1)

A supportive structured environment is created through Droichead. Time is provided to meet and conduct induction activities. It provides opportunities to share best practice and collaborate with teachers and others. (Other PST, Wave 2)

Around a quarter of other PST members focused on the fact that support was given to the NQT on an ongoing basis:

The Droichead process supports NQTs daily. It is less isolating for an NQT to be part of a Droichead school. (Other PST, Wave 2)

As a result, assessment was seen as reflecting this longer process and as providing more authentic insights into NQT professional development:

A realistic appraisal of NQT rather than the one day 'performance' for the inspectorate. (Other PST, Wave 1)

It has done away with the 'big performance' for the cigire and the anxiety that accompanies that, and replaced it with a more natural and gradual appraisal of the NQT. (Other PST, Wave 2)

Having a structured approach to induction and one that was school-based was seen by principals as having raised staff awareness of the needs of the NQT and given other teachers more ownership over the process: 'We see the programme as a whole-school approach; most teachers bought into that' and it 'improves the concept of shared professional responsibility':

It has highlighted the position of the NQT and placed an onus on schools to provide greater professional supports for the NQT. (Principal, Wave 2)

A very significant proportion of principals (four-in-ten in both waves) felt that Droichead had contributed to greater collaboration and more openness among teachers in the school. One principal, for example, noted that 'more professional conversations are taking place, more teacher collaboration and trading of experience' (Wave 1). Another principal remarked that 'it has impacted on professional conversations in a positive way' (Wave 2):

It has had a profound impact on the opening of teachers, classrooms to others/colleagues. The school culture is becoming more open, collaborative and positive. (Principal, Wave 2)

[It] has 'opened up' the school – teachers are no longer afraid to discuss problems or teach sample lessons for each other. Greater collegiate atmosphere. (Principal, Wave 2)

Over a third of mentors felt that the process had impacted on the school more generally, fostering a climate of openness and collaboration among teachers: 'It has opened communication, dialogue about teaching practices amongst staff' (Wave 1):

[It] encourages reflective practice across the school [and] highlights the value of professional conversations. (Mentor, Wave 2)

I feel the 'open door' has become more common in school and it is advantageous to the whole school when teachers share how they practice because each teacher has something to offer/teach/show colleagues. (Mentor, Wave 2)

Four-in-ten PST members similarly mentioned the impact of Droichead on teacher collaboration and openness; it was seen as 'starting other staff to think of opening their doors' and as providing 'experienced teachers with extra motivation and new methodologies that they can use' (Wave 1).

A fifth of mentors mentioned the value of professional development for themselves and other members of the Professional Support Team: 'Being a mentor boosted my own morale as a teacher' (Wave 1). The value of professional development was also mentioned by other PST members: 'Observations can benefit PST by allowing self-reflection and also learning new methodologies' (Wave 1).

The survey responses provide useful insights into the perceived benefits of taking part in Droichead. However, interviews in the case-study schools provide more detailed information on the experiences underlying these responses. The richness of the NQT experience under Droichead, encompassing mentor support as well as opportunities to observe and be observed by other teachers, was seen as providing more structured and sustained support to new teachers:

I think it gives them access to other teaching methodologies and strategies especially relating to classroom management from experienced colleagues, which initial teacher training probably doesn't cover because it can be particular to the context of a school. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

It was described by one mentor (Ash Lane post-primary school) as providing a 'scaffolding for new teachers' which eased the transition into teaching:

I think it is definitely a good system to have in place for the NQTs, and I would like to think that it makes the early stages of a teaching career easier to have a support network there. (Other PST, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

Droichead was seen as making it easier for new teachers to seek support within the school:

I think nearly every teacher in this school and other schools would say I would love to have had somebody to literally hold my hand for the first year or two, that I could go to if I had a problem, because we all came in, we were all, in to a school, we were all given a classroom and away you went, that was it, and it probably would have been seen as a sign of weakness if you went to someone and said I can't manage this, and you weren't willing to admit that, especially in your first year if you were temporary, you weren't going to go to somebody and say listen, I can't manage that class, whereas now I think these teachers feel that they can say that and it's okay to say that. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

One mentor emphasised the crucial importance of such support, given the influence of early teaching experiences on later professional practice:

I do think that your first years teaching can define a huge amount about who you are as a teacher. I think it can define how you see the classroom environment, I think it defines how you see the students how you see other colleagues. How you see your relationship with management how you see your relationship with other teachers, how you see yourself how you see are how you see yourself in the school and I would be very reluctant to actually have a situation where you would drop another person in a difficult situation if there is a process that can be put in place that can will actually will ease the experience. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

A positive aspect of Droichead was that it was gradual in nature, emphasising becoming a teacher as part of a process and placing NQTs on a continuum of learning:

For me, it's a new of looking, it is a new mind-set really of looking at probation, induction and probation, it's the journey, it is a point in the journey where your colleagues are helping you get to a point where you [are] recognised by the Teaching Council but it is really only a point on your continuum of education. So I would see it as a point in time, where you are being recognised by your colleagues as yes being ready to launch the next section. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I think this is a very structured process that allows the young teacher, from day one, to feel that they are very much part of the team, and to feel that they are on very much on a learning curve, that they are not expected to be the best teacher from day one, that it is going to take them years to hone their skills, and that you can't hone every skill in any one year. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Among those in primary schools, the Droichead approach was contrasted against the inspectorate model, which was seen as more 'stressful':

The last few years, it was panicking and the inspector coming...this year, it's a far more structured... it is far more consistent and it's far fairer and there seems a lot less panic with the NQTs so she can actually focus on teaching more than, you know, notes, notes, notes, notes.... The last couple of years... it was all about notes and incredibly detailed folders and that and they're not really getting their teeth into what needs to be done in the classroom'. (Non-PST teacher, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Many of the mentors and other PST members interviewed commented on how rewarding they found it to see the NQT progress during their time in the school and to be supporting that progression:

I enjoy being there for the NQTs and just seeing them grow in their profession... just to see they're happy and that they feel they can come to you if they have a problem...I do find that rewarding. (Other PST, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

There's no point in having teaching experience, and having you know experienced different, different, the things that crop up in teaching, without you know being able to pass it on then. So I think it's good for me to help learn, and to see a newly qualified teacher maybe take your advice on board and it works for them then, you know. There's something, you know you get a bit of satisfaction out of that yourself when you see that happening. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The mentor-NQT relationship was also seen as providing a two-way communication of ideas and practice, with many mentors and other PST members feeling that they had learned a lot from the NQTs they supported:

You learn so much from it yourself. I would have found that you pick up ideas from them. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

I also think I learned a huge amount from them absolutely huge amount as in you go into their classrooms and it's you know very easy as a teacher you have been at this for a while to get a little bit stale (laughs) you know you find things that work and keep going and you do it. (Mentor, Birch Avenue post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

We actually both learned so much from each other, you know, and if I had a problem with it I would just go to them and I would say look, I'm thinking of doing this, you know, I saw it in your class and it was really good, how, how should I go about it? And I just feel, otherwise when you don't see other people you work very much in isolation, and yes, I'm good at what I do, I've been doing it for years but I just feel the richness so far of this brings so much more growth and learning and you're open to new ideas. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Observing new teachers in the classroom was seen as providing more experienced teachers with access to new ideas and methodologies, offering them an opportunity to refresh their own practice:

I'm teaching a long time, and the girls and the guys who come in have great ideas, so I think you're always just picking up new ideas and new ways of you know discipline, new strategies of teaching, ... it's about empowering a child, and all about being positive, and all the incredible years, and all those kinds of things that they are being

trained up in. (PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

You are observing in other classes and you're learning from the NQT... You're learning new methodologies that they've just come out of college with... you're up skilling yourself. (Mentor, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

And it's good [observing NQTs] because you can learn from them as well because obviously they're newly trained and newly out of college, a lot of them, so you're getting ideas from them and you're never really in other people's classes other than that, putting in messages and running back out. It's nice to be in and out, see what works for them. (Mentor, Aspen Square primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

As in the survey, the potential for Droichead to contribute to a professional learning culture within the school was discussed in the case-study schools:

Talking to all of the staff there you know they've all felt it's been a very, very worthwhile process.... By helping somebody else at a more junior level, they're actually consolidating their own skills... it's the ultimate collegial learning as we've been talking about for years. (Other PST, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I am much assured that there is a more collaborative approach to things now than there ever was before. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Having teachers being observed and observing others was seen as facilitating a greater openness and exchange of ideas among staff:

I think in general then people are probably more comfortable with the idea of someone coming and sitting and observing me in the back of the room. (Mentor, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

I've got colleagues in the staff room having professional conversations. (Principal, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

Certainly the idea, over time anyway, that the school would change, that people would be encouraged to walk in and observe a class, and that would happen a lot more frequently than it maybe has happened in the past. So in that way I think it is very positive. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

It's probably conducive to being an open teacher... you're not afraid to learn, or have people in your classroom... you're not terrified of this one knock on the door, and somebody sitting there, and putting on a big show for the day, and then going back to 'oohh, that was great' and then go back to just letting the children do [what they did before]. (Other PST, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The school talks, the people are now talking about going into each other's classes... and people are talking about teaching and learning, whereas before kind of dirty words to be talking about teaching and learning in the staff meeting. (Principal, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

One principal saw the benefits as deriving from a combination of the professional development the team themselves had experienced, the confidence gained from supporting other teachers and the assumption of responsibility on the part of PST members:

One of the great benefits, I think, is the fact that it trains up your own staff, I think that's a great thing... And I think, you know, the benefit of teachers being able to mentor other teachers, feeling confident to mentor other teachers because they've been at meetings and they've been given a certain skill or whatever and also it is very important for the distributive leadership within the school. You know somebody has taken on the responsibility of looking after new teachers, that would not have happened ten years ago, in that way and is having conversations with new teachers about teaching and learning, I think that is a really, really good thing, very positive thing. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The principal in one school reported that taking part in Droichead prompted them to re-evaluate their own policies and practices:

It was a deep learning experience for people, where we were getting right down to the nitty gritty of where our values lay... It did throw up things, deficits within the system, which was really good because

then you had certain things to work on. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

This view was echoed by a non-PST teacher who felt that providing advice to a newly qualified teacher spurred them to re-evaluate their own practice:

Before you kind of explain it to... a younger teacher, somebody that's asking you advice, you kind of, have to break down what you're actually doing.... It's all of that that actually makes you, you do evaluate yourself. (Non-PST teacher, Cherry Lane post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

You are supposed to be the role model so you do critically reflect on yourself. (Mentor, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Another principal felt that Droichead had encouraged more professional conversations among teachers, but that this process was at an early stage:

I suppose something that I've been trying to achieve and I haven't, still haven't fully achieved it, but we're getting there, is this teacher collaboration, for more teachers to be talking to each other, I think that's the best thing that the school has benefited, that there's more professional conversations taking place between teachers. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

It is worth noting that principals tended to emphasise the impact on the school professional learning culture more than other staff. In particular, teachers who were not part of the PST tended to consider that Droichead had benefited NQTs but not necessarily the school more generally. The exception to this pattern occurred in Hazel Way primary school where one teacher saw Droichead as reinforcing the collaborative culture within the school:

It just leads to this open and sharing atmosphere that we kind of have anyway but it just kind of supports that. (Non-PST teacher, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

In addition, a teacher in Holly Road primary school felt that being part of Droichead had 'increased staff morale'.

7.4 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH TAKING PART IN DROICHEAD

In the surveys, members of the Professional Support Team were asked about the challenges involved in implementing the Droichead process in their school. As with perceived benefits, these involved open-ended questions. Responses were broadly consistent across the two survey waves. The most common responses, mentioned by the majority of principals (three-quarters to four-fifths across the two waves), centred on the theme of time. This encompassed time for meetings and observations: ‘For all team members to meet, it has to involve after-school time’ (Wave 1). Another principal noted that:

One of the biggest challenges is time. Ensuring we make time to meet, time for observations, and that the NQTS have adequate time to participate in the programme. (Principal, Wave 1)

Trying to schedule meetings and observations was seen as challenging in a context where classes needed to be covered. One principal suggested that:

In an ideal setting hours would be allocated at the beginning of the year and the release hours for observation etc. would be built into a teaching (mentor) timetable. This would reduce class disruption. (Principal, Wave 1)

Linked to the issue of time, just under a fifth of principals mentioned the issue of workload and responsibilities as a challenge.

As a teaching principal, there is simply not time to devote to Droichead. The demands of principalship are overwhelming currently. (Principal, Wave 2)

The time demands on me as principal are very significant, particularly in light of the moratorium on the filling of posts of responsibility which means that work overload is an issue. (Principal, Wave 2)

Similarly, the vast majority (three-quarters to nine-tenths across the two waves) of mentors mentioned time as a challenge:

Time is the greatest challenge, getting time to meet the NQT and time for observations and feedback. (Mentor, Wave 2)

Much of the work of Droichead has to be done in the mentor’s own time. Mentors have their own classes to teach and plan for, so

*obviously it isn't possible to do this work during the school day.
(Mentor, Wave 2)*

However, their perspective was somewhat different to that of principals since they mentioned the dilemma of spending time with the NQT while missing out on time with their class, an issue that was somewhat more frequently mentioned by second-level teachers:

As a teacher I do not like missing my timetabled classes for Droichead work. (Mentor, Wave 1)

*For me, it is the demands of being out of class. To date we have had four training days. While substitute cover is provided, a teacher 'in for the day' cannot be expected to pick up where I left off in a lesson, especially in senior cycle. It does not work that simply at second level.
(Mentor, Wave 2)*

Like principals, mentors referred to the additional workload involved without any compensation in terms of a post of responsibility or financial reward:

If the PST are being asked to take on extra responsibility, they need to be duly compensated. Otherwise teacher morale and ultimately the success of the Droichead programme will be affected. (Mentor, Wave 2)

The majority (70-80 per cent across the two survey waves) of PST members also mentioned time as a challenge:

Time is a major constraint as it's frustrating when you want to give it your best. (Other PST, Wave 1)

Like the mentors, other PST members were concerned about missing class time because of their duties with NQTs:

*Teachers giving up time with own classes to work with NQTs, limits progress with own classes and is not sustainable in the long term.
(Other PST, Wave 2)*

A quarter of principals specified staff buy-in as a challenge in Wave 1 of the survey. This included difficulties in recruiting mentors and PST members:

‘encouraging enough teachers to take part as members of the team’. In addition, several principals pointed to challenges in getting the broader group of teachers to engage with the process: ‘Building the culture within the school community of open door policy in the classroom. Teachers tend to be quite protective of their classrooms’. Interestingly, much fewer principals (less than a tenth) emphasised staff buy-in as a challenge in Wave 2 of the survey, suggesting that staff involvement had improved over time.

A number of PST members referred to the potential tensions involved in adopting an evaluative role in relation to colleagues. One teacher felt that the ‘Professional relationship with NQT hampers the social relationships’ (Wave 1):

Very uncomfortable telling someone their weaknesses/what needs to be improved/not recommending them for diploma. Then you could be sitting opposite them in staffroom. (Other PST, Wave 2)

The role of the PST in the recommendation process (see Chapter 5) was mentioned by another teacher:

Being responsible for probating the NQT. Making sure that the whole process is seen as fair and transparent by the NQT. (Other PST, Wave 2)

Others pointed to the difficulties in providing constructive feedback. Principals mentioned a variety of other challenges including the timing and location of external meetings, how to handle NQT underperformance, the need for additional CPD, the lack of material and resources in Irish, the need to have consistency across schools in terms of sign-off and the changed relationship resulting from observing and being observed by colleagues. Other challenges mentioned by mentors and other PST members included the need for CPD, potential dynamics within the PST and NQTs not fully engaging in the process.

As in the case of perceived benefits, interviews in the case-study schools allowed for a more detailed exploration of the challenges involved in taking part in Droichead. In keeping with the survey data patterns, time was the most frequently mentioned challenge across the case-study schools. Several different dimensions of time were identified by those interviewed, including access to release time/substitute cover, the number of release days allocated for each NQT and the workload involved for members of the PST.

Principals reported logistical difficulties in arranging cover to facilitate meeting and observations.

It's the practicalities around physically getting bodies to replace these teachers that are there. So sometimes I groan when [the mentor] says I need a meeting with all the NQTs, you're there going Oh My god, it's just, it's a logistical nightmare. (Principal, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

This situation often put pressure on the staff to co-ordinate activities within a limited period of time:

Organising observations, we were just kind of trying to grab time here and there... which isn't always the best way to do it because it does put you under a bit of pressure. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

The current allocation of time was seen as inadequate given the number of activities involved:

To follow the programme, which is very, very good and to follow the activities as laid out by the NIPT, the days that were being offered, were just ludicrously inadequate.... You would need at least five per NQT, at least. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Having a larger number of NQTs to support in a given year was seen as posing additional challenges in terms of time allocation:

That the release time would not be capped depending on the number of NQTs, it would be a certain amount per NQT. So if a school was willing to employ five NQTs, they should get five times the support that a school with only one NQT.... And I think that the substitution model that we referred to, where it would be hours rather than days, would be useful. (Principal, Hazel Way primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

These constraints meant that many schools used release time for activities which could be organised in blocks of time, such as observations, scheduling other activities, such as meetings, outside class time (see also Chapter 4):

We use our release time for when a mentor makes an observation in the NQTs classroom the same day, because we'll have a teacher in we'll arrange for... the NQT to observe another member of staff teaching and then the final part of the day would use for the mentor to deliver the feedback and talk through the observation. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Now all of those meetings we did early in the morning because you can't, you know, even with a sub I can't release two teachers and myself with one sub, you know. So that was really one of the big, big difficulties with it was that all of it had to be in our own time. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Time pressure was also reported in primary schools where the NQT was being signed off in fifty days because of the short-term nature of their appointment:

We felt very much under pressure and she only had a certain amount of time... and it was frenetic. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

There was five observations there within the space of what eight, nine weeks maybe, you know... so it was quite tight. (Other PST, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The fact that the NQT was only here for maternity leave meant that we had to fit the whole thing into fifty days. You know and which is allowed under the process which I think personally is a mistake ... I do think the fact that we had to push it all into fifty days was quite difficult to do. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

An important aspect of the perceived squeeze on time was the tension PST members felt between their role in supporting NQTs and their reluctance to miss time with their class(es). This issue was more frequently referred to among second-level teachers:

I know there are allowances, and we are allowed to ask for supervision cover for our classes, but the problem is it still means you are missing your class! And trying to get some work left for the class that all takes time. And if you are to meet the NQT before the observation, then the observation itself, and meeting them afterwards, it's all just time related. If we had loads of time it

wouldn't be a problem at all. (Other PST, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I think the very nature of people who do mentoring are people who are committed to their job, so telling me that I can claim hours and get someone to cover my classes doesn't actually work because I don't want to miss [classes]... So if I miss my first years they're annoyed, they feel that they've missed out... I would much prefer if I had less time on my timetable to do the mentoring, therefore the kids don't feel like they're missing out, I don't feel like I'm being pulled ten different ways. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

I'm fully aware that there's funding there, there's classes to be covered but classes to be covered doesn't work for me, absolutely doesn't because you are out of your class. And you know no one is winning there, you are missing out, your students are missing out. (Other PST, Pine View post-primary school, small, coeducational, DEIS)

There's time set aside but it's not adequate as such. It's very difficult when you've your full 22 hours, you have your own class groups, especially class groups for exams, it's very difficult for me to leave them for a class period... so that really would be an issue I'd have, the time constraints. (Other PST, Willow Close post-primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

However, it was also evident in the case-study primary schools:

At the beginning of the year when I was a lot more involved, I would have felt that my class were losing out... ok a... teacher will come in and supervise my class but they can't really teach how you are teaching or teach what you were going to teach or pick up where you left off. (Mentor, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Even some of the NQTs expressed a similar reluctance to miss class time for Droichead activities:

Droichead do have hours that they make available to you but even with those hours, you are missing class. You know you are catching up afterwards and you're, you know you are sort of less keen to miss your own lessons. You know for your, in one sense I know it isn't

selfish but it feels like you're prioritising one thing over actually being in with your classes. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

A number of staff suggested that an alternative model of time cover would be preferable. The two main suggestions centred on allowing release hours (rather than days) and building it into the timetable:

I think you need to reduce the teaching time – like I'm on twenty-two hours and I'm a year head and I'm doing the mentoring. You need to reduce people's hours if you're going to get people to actually give it the time it needs. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Being involved in the PST team led to additional workload for staff, especially where teachers were meeting NQTs outside of class time.

You give up a lot of your personal time outside school... there are a certain amount of meetings that we would have inside school but sometimes the NQT might just want to meet me as main mentor on my own with some questions. (Mentor, Holly Road primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Although most mentors mentioned the intrinsic benefits from their role (see above), a number of those interviewed reported the need for some reward or formal recognition of the additional workload involved in being part of the PST:

You would expect probably because of the huge benefits that the Department is gaining, in terms of quality teachers, that, that would be met with some form of reward or otherwise to the schools that take part, to the team members. (Principal, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

Some of those interviewed suggested this recognition should involve extra money or a post of responsibility while others felt that it should be linked to certification:

Basically I just think they should just pay us. I think people would be, they would have a much better attitude, they are basically expecting us to do the work of the inspectors for free for nothing. They don't want to resource it properly, they don't want to give us hours and proper sub or hours of sub cover or whatever it is, there is some sub

cover there but I don't think it is enough. (Other PST, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

There is a huge amount of work on the mentor for very little payback.... The mentor really doesn't get the recognition I feel and a lot of it falls on their shoulders. And I really do feel that they should be recognised in some shape or form or it should be, again factored into CPD with the ITs.... that it would be linked to a certification, diploma, master's programme. So that those mentors would feel that their time is being spent well, for their own development and that there is something to show for it at the end of the day. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

The workload involved was seen as potentially creating difficulties for the long-term sustainability of Droichead, given the current reliance on goodwill from the teachers concerned:

People do things out of the good of their hearts but you know there is only so much of your blood, sweat and tears you can give, after you've done a day's teaching over period of time... the shininess will go off it fairly fast... if it is going to be a thing that needs to be sustained. (Non-PST teacher, Chestnut Avenue primary school, large, coeducational, DEIS)

You can't ask people to stay back after school all the time, do you know there is enough happening after school, they are gone out on the pitch, doing sport, they are gone somewhere else doing. Croke Park, you know there is only so much you can ask for nothing, do you know so this is all goodwill, so how is that going to be sustainable long term, unless there is some, there has to be, I feel some recognition or carrot here. (Principal, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

I think the bigger difficulty will be to try and encourage teachers to jump on board because there is a lot of work involved. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I don't want that to sound negative and whinging about looking for time or money, but I suppose the bottom line is yes, this is wonderful, exciting, will I be doing it in five years' time if I'm still not being rewarded for it in some way, I'm not so sure. (Mentor, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Chapter 5 described the tension involved in the recommendation process for many schools, with some teachers expressing a reluctance to be involved in 'evaluating' their colleagues. Schools had adopted different strategies to manage this tension. However, it was referred to as a challenge by many of those interviewed. While principals were positive about the experiences with the NQTs currently in the school, a number expressed concern about how to handle situations where the NQT was not making adequate progress. Such situations were seen as potentially having a negative effect on staff morale and leading to tensions among colleagues.

My difficulty would be that, if you are dealing with an ongoing situation of underperformance or incompetence and you have a Droichead team, sitting around the table with you, who are looking at one of their peers. That is when relationally there could be difficulty. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

For instance, [if] I have somebody here and they're not... coming up to the mark say and you are giving them all this help so it's a year-long process. You are giving them all the help and you still don't feel that you know [they are making sufficient progress] so you are making that call, you know. It's not the Cigire, it's me, it's me and other PST member in school and then I have to sit beside that person in the staffroom. If it was the inspector you don't have to see him every day, you know. Well if it's me and the other PST member I know the other PST member, she said 'why would I put my neck out there?' And like other staff are saying 'who does she think she is?' To be saying she is not good enough you know because like you will always get that on a staff. (Principal, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

A number of staff were also concerned about the potential for lack of standardisation between schools, with some schools being deemed 'easier' than others:

Definitely the consistency between schools is something that I don't quite know how, when this does get rolled out, how it's going to be effectively managed, you definitely don't want situations where NQTs hear that this is a tricky school to be probated in, this, is another school down the road is much easier. Because at the end of the day we are in a tricky position, the PST members particularly, the principal, you know, if their gut feeling isn't good about the progression of a NQT they have to be able to say you need a small bit

more time on this. (Mentor, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

And for such and for a person whose their whole career at stake, which means there will be an imbalance and you know not stability across the board and if you start your 50 days here and have to move to a different school, you are dealing with different criteria, different thing. So there is a lot of ... differentiation. It is not, you know, going to be stable across the board. (Non-PST teacher, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Another challenge which was frequently mentioned by the NQTs but not as frequently by other staff was the labour market context. The lack of teaching jobs was seen as causing difficulties for new teachers to obtain enough work to complete the Droichead process.

I think one of the big challenges, is not having enough work and then sometimes you know if you are subbing and going around to different schools and maybe not having as good an experience in some schools as you possibly should have. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

It can be hard for NQTs to build up the sufficient hours within the time frame, just in the current climate where jobs aren't there or perhaps where there's a lot of, you know, fragmented contracts. (Other PST, Maple Street post-primary school, small, girls, DEIS)

Many of the NQTs interviewed had teaching experience prior to embarking on the Droichead process, with some having completed part of their 'Dip' under the old system. Data from the Wave 1 survey indicate that a quarter of Droichead NQTs had taught in one school previously while a fifth had taught in two or more schools. Such prior teaching experience was much more common among those in the primary sector, with 58 per cent of NQTs in primary schools having taught in at least one school previously compared with 36 per cent of those in post-primary schools. One of the NQTs suggested that having a guaranteed placement would facilitate new teachers in completing the process:

Droichead, I think, is brilliant, I think this is probably the way forward. I think if there was something like the Scottish system where you would be guaranteed something the first year out, that you could do it the first year out, that would be great. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

A related issue was that of ‘restricted recognition’.⁵ A handful of the NQTs in the Droichead schools had previous experience in special education or learning support but were treated as ‘new’ teachers for Droichead purposes:

I probably feel like I’ve been teaching a good few years... I have done my Dip before and I’ve had the full year and incidentals and inspectors coming in. I felt it was almost like I had to do it again, which I didn’t feel was very fair. (NQT, Beech Park primary school, large, coeducational, non-DEIS)

Two other issues arose in the case-study interviews which potentially posed challenges for the implementation of Droichead. The first issue related to the role of the induction workshops and their relationship to other components of the Droichead process. While many NQTs were positive about some of the induction workshops, a recurrent theme was that several of the workshops duplicated material they had only recently covered as part of their initial teacher education.

I found some of them useful and some of them not so useful and I felt that we were rehashing a lot of things that we had already done, we’ll say part of our teacher training. (NQT, Sycamore Street primary school, medium, coeducational, non-DEIS)

We knew it all before. We’d heard a lot of it very recently in some cases, and not so recent in others, but it was just regurgitation really, a lot of it. (NQT, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

The second issue related to the perceived purpose of the Droichead portfolio. While many teachers found the portfolio helpful (see Chapter 4), others felt there was a lack of clarity as to its purpose and how it contributed to their professional development. Teachers in one of the second-level schools, Ash Lane post-primary school, were particularly critical of the portfolio:

The other difficulty, I think can be that there was a whole question about the portfolio, now that has caused problems, in that all of us seem to be getting different messages and all of us are quite unclear.... Now what they have said to me might be quite different to

⁵ From January 2016, this policy has changed with those previously probated in a restricted setting and meeting certain criteria becoming eligible to apply for full registration.

what they might say to you but what they have said to me, is that this causes anxiety and particularly the lack of clarity and not just what's needed but more importantly why it's needed and I just wonder is there another way. (Principal, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

I have to say the portfolio is something for me that I think is, is in a way, I think it seems to be turning out to be extra work for a person who is already really busy with a new job and learning new things. Personally I don't know how useful it is for them. (Other PST, Ash Lane post-primary school, large, girls, non-DEIS)

7.5 CONCLUSIONS

The survey and interview data indicate high levels of satisfaction among PST members with the Droichead process. Principals generally felt that the opportunities for meetings and NQTs observing and being observed by others were 'about right'. However, primary principals reported more challenges in providing sufficient opportunities for these induction activities. In addition, over half of the primary principals surveyed felt that period of induction was too short. High levels of satisfaction were reported in relation to a number of dimensions of the Droichead process, in particular, in relation to written information and external support as well as the professional development provided for the PST and the NQT. School personnel were somewhat more critical of the timing and location of meetings and some felt that their concerns had not fully been taken on board in the ongoing development of the programme.

A number of benefits were seen as arising from participation in Droichead. Firstly, it was seen as providing a structured form of support for newly qualified teachers, which eased their transition into day-to-day teaching. Secondly, supporting new teachers was seen as rewarding by PST members who felt they themselves learnt a lot in the process. Thirdly, some benefits were reported in terms of a more collaborative learning culture in the school. Principals and mentors in primary schools were somewhat more likely than those in second-level schools to report an impact on school culture. In some cases, there had already been well-developed cooperation between teachers but participation in Droichead was seen as enabling more professional conversations. In other cases, Droichead was seen as prompting the beginnings of a more collaborative culture. Schools also reported a number of challenges around programme implementation. The greatest challenge related to time – finding time to have meetings and observations, arranging cover for class and dealing with the workload associated with Droichead. In most cases, schools deal with these

difficulties by scheduling meetings outside class time, which is seen as unsustainable in the longer term. Many were critical of the current model of release time, suggesting that a bank of hours rather than days would be more suitable and/or that the time should be built into the timetable. Other challenges centred on the recommendation process, particularly the perceived requirement to 'evaluate' colleagues, as well as on the role of the induction workshops and the portfolio.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Implications for Policy

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Droichead teacher induction pilot programme, initiated in 2013/14, is designed to provide whole-school support for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) within primary and post-primary schools. Supported at national level by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), the programme is led at school level by a Professional Support Team (PST) consisting of the principal, mentor(s) and other member(s). Induction activities include meetings between Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and their mentor and other members of the PST as well as opportunities for NQTs to observe and be observed by other teachers. At the end of the process, the PST may make a recommendation to the Teaching Council that the Droichead provisional registration condition be removed from a teacher's registration.

Droichead represents a sea-change in relation to previous approaches to the induction and probation of newly qualified teachers in its emphasis on whole-school support for the NQT and school ownership of the recommendation process. Since 2012, the induction programme requirement for registration has involved attendance at induction workshops for NQTs. In non-Droichead primary schools, the probation process has involved the completion of a period of service and the demonstration of satisfactory professional competence on the basis of inspector observations and evaluations of their teaching. In non-Droichead post-primary schools, a specified number of hours of post-qualification employment (PQE), as verified by the school principal, is the condition for registration.

This report draws on two waves of survey data from Droichead and non-Droichead schools along with detailed case studies of twelve schools (six primary and six post-primary) taking part in Droichead to explore the implementation of the programme. This chapter outlines the main findings of the study and discusses the implications for the future development of teacher induction policy.

8.2 MAIN FINDINGS

Like other teacher induction programmes internationally, Droichead is designed to provide a 'bridge' between initial teacher education and integration into the

teaching profession. In the survey, principals were asked about the extent to which they felt that initial teacher education adequately prepared new teachers for the classroom. Principals were broadly satisfied with a number of aspects of initial teacher education, especially the range of teaching methods used, knowledge of curriculum content, lesson planning and use of appropriate assessment methods. However, principals were less satisfied with the extent to which beginning teachers were prepared for working with diverse groups (in terms of social and cultural background as well as having special educational needs) and for dealing with parents, gaps in preparation that were also highlighted by NQTs themselves.

The pilot phase of Droichead has depended on voluntary participation on the part of schools. The study findings clearly indicate that the decision to join the programme was influenced by the school's prior experience of mentoring and teacher induction. Schools that joined Droichead were much more likely to have had a formal induction programme in place already and were more likely to be led by a principal who themselves had some experience of mentoring training. The decision to join Droichead was driven not by dissatisfaction with existing approaches to teacher induction, but by the perceived benefits that Droichead would bring to their school, in the form of a more structured approach to teacher induction and the provision of professional development opportunities for staff. The principal was key to the decision to join the programme but, in some instances, mentors or other staff members acted as the catalyst. The extent to which the whole staff was involved in the decision varied across schools but some degree of staff buy-in emerged as key to the successful implementation of the programme.

The Professional Support Team was typically comprised of the principal, a mentor and an 'other' PST member, although some schools with larger numbers of NQTs expanded the team to include more PST members. The role of the principal varied across schools. In some schools, the principal took more of an 'overseer' role, attending meetings and organising release time, but not deeply embedded in the day-to-day operation of the programme. In other cases, the principal was central to the work of the PST and assumed the main responsibility for 'sign-off' of the NQT. The mentor had a clear role across all schools, assuming the lead role in supporting the NQT and acting as the 'go to' person for them. While the survey data suggested that the other PST members were clear about their role, greater ambiguity was apparent in the case-study schools visited. They often assumed a central role in evaluating the NQT but in other cases took on the bulk of the administrative work related to Droichead.

Very frequent meetings took place between the mentor and NQT, with over half meeting the NQT they supported ten times or more over the period. Professional conversations between the mentors and NQTs typically centred on teaching methods, classroom management and how the NQT was coping. Teaching methods, differentiation and assessment were more commonly discussed in primary than in second-level schools. NQTs did meet with the principal and other PST members on an individual basis but this was typically less frequent than was the case with the mentors, usually four or fewer such meetings. Group meetings tended to take place on four or fewer occasions. The survey data indicate that meetings are generally less frequent within second-level schools than in the primary sector. Only half of schools fully used the release time allocated under Droichead, mainly because of difficulties with the method of allocation (that is, blocks of days) and reluctance to miss class time. As a result, the majority of schools had at least some meetings outside school hours or during break-times. Given current contractual arrangements, the scheduling of these meetings was crucially dependent on the goodwill of team members. In addition to formal meetings with PST members, formal and informal networks within the school played an important role in supporting NQTs. Thus, Droichead should be seen as embedded within the existing professional culture within the school.

Observation and associated feedback are central elements of the Droichead process. NQTs typically observed members of the PST teaching on two or three occasions; they also observed non-PST teachers on a similar number of occasions. Observation opportunities were somewhat more frequent in primary than in second-level schools. NQTs were themselves observed by members of the PST on two to four occasions, though in some schools such observation was more intensive, with a fifth of schools observing NQTs on five or more occasions. Again the number of times NQTs were observed was higher in primary than in second-level schools. Despite this pattern, primary principals were more likely to report 'too few' opportunities for observation. Almost all of the schools used the NIPT observation templates and found them useful. Mentors were the most heavily involved in giving feedback to NQTs, usually at a later scheduled meeting, and NQTs found this feedback constructive and helpful. Four-fifths of schools used the indicators of good practice and found them useful.

The vast majority (90 per cent) of NQTs kept a portfolio, most commonly as a way of reflecting upon their practice. Primary teachers were more likely to use the portfolio as a way of documenting new ideas or reflecting upon their practice than those in the second-level sector. The case-study interviews indicated a lack of clarity in some schools about the purpose of the portfolio. Furthermore, the case-study data indicated that the portfolios were primarily focused on collecting

and reflecting on school experiences rather than as context for fostering teacher inquiry.

NQTs were very positive about the support provided by the Professional Support Team, with the vast majority rating it as 'excellent' or 'good'. NQTs also reported relying on other (non-PST) teachers in the school for support and guidance. NQTs were more ambiguous about the role of the induction workshops. While most pointed to specific workshops they found helpful, many felt that some of the material replicated that covered in initial teacher education. Interestingly, in the survey responses, NQTs identified the same gaps in provision as in ITE, particularly teaching diverse student populations.

Most second-level principals saw the length of time to complete the Droichead process as 'about right' but over half of primary principals felt the number of days required was not sufficient. The criteria for recommending that the Droichead condition be removed from teachers were seen as clear and fair by members of the PST and by NQTs. In the case of primary NQTs, many of those interviewed favourably contrasted the more authentic assessment of the NQT's teaching over a protracted period with the one-off 'performance' for the inspector. The team-based approach appeared to mitigate against the risk of personality clashes influencing the process. Nonetheless, there was a certain degree of tension between the roles of support and assessment. This tension was resolved by schools in a number of ways. Typically, the division of labour was such that the mentor took the supportive role while the other PST and/or the principal played a more central role in the sign-off process. In a very small number of schools, an external PST member assumed the main evaluative role in the recommendation process. PST members reported that the recommendation process had generally worked well in their school because they were happy to sign off on the NQTs they supported. However, concerns were expressed about the possibility of experiencing more serious difficulties with NQTs and how this could be handled at the school level. It is difficult to determine how prevalent such difficulties are likely to be during this phase of a teacher's career. Data from inspector reports in 2003/04 (DES, 2005) indicated that around 4 per cent of new primary teachers had their probation period extended due to lack of progress in developing teaching skills while only three individuals were rated as 'not satisfactory' and did not complete probation. Thus, it does not appear that PST members were more reluctant to withhold 'sign-off' on NQTs as compared to inspectors. However, dealing with serious underperformance was seen as especially challenging. In addition, a number of staff raised the possibility of inconsistent standards emerging across schools. Concern about assessing the work of colleagues was a

dominant feature among those non-Droichead schools who saw themselves as unlikely to join the programme.

Overall, there were very high levels of satisfaction with Droichead among PST members and NQTs. The benefits of Droichead were seen as the provision of a more structured approach to supporting NQTs, the provision of professional development for the staff and the fostering of a more collaborative climate within the school as a whole. Significantly, principals in Droichead schools consistently reported greater levels of improvement among their NQTs than those in a matched sample of non-Droichead schools. In addition, NQTs in Droichead schools reported lower levels of stress and slightly higher levels of confidence than those in non-Droichead schools. However, PST members also highlighted a number of challenges. Chief of these was time – time to have meetings, professional conversations and observation opportunities. Release time in blocks of days was seen as more suitable for scheduling observations but not for more regular meetings. In addition, teachers were reluctant to miss class time with their own students. This meant that meetings were regularly scheduled outside school hours, relying on the goodwill of staff to allocate the extra time, in the context of current contractual arrangements. Also, the additional workload, without recognition in terms of a post of responsibility or certification, was seen as a challenge, especially over the longer term. NQTs also highlighted the way in which the labour market context made it difficult for them to secure enough days or hours to complete the Droichead process. A substantial group of NQTs surveyed, especially at primary level, had significant teaching experience prior to commencing Droichead and in many ways could not be regarded as ‘newly qualified’.

International research has pointed to variation between schools as well as within them in the implementation of new initiatives or programmes (see, for example, Desimone, 2002). Such variation was also apparent among the case-study schools in our study. Schools differed in their prior history of mentoring and teacher collaboration, in their sense of ownership over the Droichead process, in whether they supported a school-wide approach to teaching and learning, in whether they adapted Droichead guidelines or materials to reflect the specific needs of the school, and in their use of inquiry to support practice. Having an already well-developed approach to induction or collaboration facilitated greater ownership over Droichead but was not a necessary condition for doing so.

Like all research, this study has some limitations. The small number of schools signed up in the initial period of Droichead has made it difficult to analyse variation between schools with different profiles and contexts in the

implementation of Droichead. Further research is necessary on the extent to which the experiences of newly qualified teachers differ according to the diversity of the school population in terms of socio-economic disadvantage, special educational needs and language backgrounds, for example. Furthermore, the implementation of Droichead has been observed over a very short period. On the one hand, reforms typically take a considerable period of time to transform practice so greater changes would be expected over a longer timescale. On the other hand, international research has pointed to a certain amount of ‘fatigue’ emerging after the honeymoon period of a new initiative.

8.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER INDUCTION POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Teaching Council indicated in October 2015 that it was envisaged that, with the appropriate resources and support, Droichead would be confirmed as the route of induction for all NQTs within a three year timeframe. Schools would not be required to participate but NQTs in non-participating schools would not be able to have the Droichead condition removed from their registration in that school.

The study findings point to the high levels of satisfaction among principals, mentors, other PST members and newly qualified teachers with the Droichead pilot programme. Their experiences highlight a number of issues which could usefully inform the planned roll-out of the programme as *the* teacher induction model. In considering the ‘scale-up’ and sustainability of the Droichead model, it is worth taking account of insights from international research on the implementation of educational reform or change. The role of the principal as an active supporter of change is crucial as is the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities (Desimone, 2002). Teacher buy-in from the outset ‘or cultivated quickly’ is critical to successful implementation and research points to the importance of taking seriously the expressed concerns of teachers (Datnow et al., 2002). In addition, lack of planning time has been identified as one of the main causes of the failure of reform efforts (Desimone, 2002).

Participation in the Droichead pilot programme required voluntary commitment on the part of schools. These schools had principals who typically acted as champions of or advocates for Droichead, and often had a well-established approach to teacher induction already in place in the schools. They relied on the goodwill of staff to attend meetings before or after school. Even in these schools, wider staff buy-in could be a challenge, though this seemed to be less of an issue as time went on. Half of the non-Droichead schools surveyed said they would not be interested in joining the programme, mainly because of the additional

workload and concerns about assessing colleagues. Extending the programme to all schools could therefore pose a challenge, especially where principals themselves have concerns about the programme and where existing networks of formal and informal support among staff are not very strong. As Hatch (2000) indicates, 'it takes capacity to build capacity' and some schools will require additional supports to develop 'a strong school community'. Despite this issue, it is likely that involvement in Droichead would have wider benefits for the school culture and may facilitate the development of such capacity. While schools will presumably be free not to take part in Droichead, this poses equity issues for NQTs working in these schools who will be unable to have the Droichead condition removed from their registration while at the school.⁶ The need for principal and teacher buy-in to ensure the success of the programme, and to ensure development opportunities for new teachers, highlights the importance of information on the benefits of the programme and support to encourage participation on the part of schools.

A related issue centres on school size and having a teaching principal. To date, the schools involved in Droichead have been larger but the small number of schools with a teaching principal involved in the programme have lower satisfaction levels and point to too few opportunities for observation. While smaller schools are less likely to have NQTs, the roll-out of the programme means that some will do so, requiring greater consideration to be given to cross-school cooperation in Droichead provision.

The manner in which schools embraced the contrary imperatives of assistance and assessment, that is, through division of roles and responsibilities, suggests that, though challenging, schools had the capacity to undertake both roles. Of importance in this context is the role of NIPT external support for CPD in advance of the recommendation process and both the advice and protocols provided to date in supporting schools in negotiating how best to enact the recommendation process.

The issue of time emerged as the main challenge in Droichead schools and is likely to be a key issue in securing buy-in from the wider population of schools. The method of allocating release time was seen as inflexible, with some primary

⁶ The current labour market context means that newly qualified teachers are unlikely to be in a position to 'shop around' to ensure being employed in a school participating in Droichead. At the same time, posts in schools facilitating probation through Droichead are likely to attract more applicants.

principals indicating they would prefer to have a bank of hours rather than days to schedule meetings and observations. Second-level staff pointed to the potential to build Droichead planning and meetings into the timetable. With the exception of additional hours required under the Croke Park agreement, planning time has not typically been built into teachers' timetable, unless they hold a post of responsibility. For the first time, the Travers report proposals (2015) regarding junior cycle reform established the principle of building planning time into the timetable. Such an approach could be extended to cover planning around teacher induction. This would be comparable to the situation in other systems (such as Scotland and New South Wales) where specific amounts of release time are built into the workload of NQTs and mentors. Building time for Droichead activities into the school day is likely to be crucial to the sustainability of the programme, as the goodwill of staff may be difficult to maintain over the longer term in the absence of scheduled time and/or other recognition.

Principals indicated that they were likely to expand membership of the PST or rotate membership in the future. Such an approach is likely to help further foster school-wide collaboration, though does require ongoing provision of professional development for staff members. Staff were satisfied with other aspects of external support from the NIPT but ambivalence about how best to handle serious underperformance among NQTs highlights the need for clear procedures to be put in place with external support from NIPT around these procedures. Additional guidelines and training on how to handle underperformance would also be of assistance. Ensuring high quality teaching is not just a matter for initial teacher education or induction but needs to be part of a continuum of professional development, as envisaged by the proposed *Cosán: Draft Framework for Teachers' Learning* (2015) framework.

The implementation of Droichead is embedded in a pre-existing network of formal and informal support within the school. Schools with a stronger legacy of teacher collaboration assumed greater ownership of the process and used it to support a school-wide approach to teaching and learning. Droichead cannot therefore be seen in isolation from wider school development planning and teacher induction practices should therefore be seen as a crucial component of such planning.

From the NQT perspective, there was some ambivalence about the role and usefulness of the induction workshops. Interestingly, some of the same gaps, especially teaching diverse populations, were highlighted in both initial teacher education and the induction workshops. This pattern points to the need to ensure complementarity rather than duplication between initial teacher education,

Droichead induction activities and the proposed *Cosán: Draft Framework for Teachers' Learning* (2015) framework for teacher professional development. Longitudinal research would provide a crucial knowledge base for examining teacher learning trajectories over their career. The emphasis of the Droichead process on 'progress, not perfection' provides a useful foundation for regarding professional development as a career-long process but requires the integration of the different forms of development at both national and school level.

NQTs also raised concerns about the impact of the labour market context on their ability to move smoothly through the induction process. Many NQTs, especially at primary level, had substantial teaching experience prior to embarking on Droichead but such experience had been too fragmented to facilitate the completion of probation. A related issue was that of restricted recognition for those who had taught in special education or resource settings, though the new policy which came into place in January 2016 should greatly improve this situation. The guaranteed placements provided as part of the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland could provide a useful model for ensuring the integration of new graduates into the profession in an uncertain employment environment.

In summary, there are high levels of satisfaction with the support Droichead provides for newly qualified teachers and for the facilitation of teachers' learning and collaboration across the school. The study findings point to ways of enhancing Droichead in order to ensure its effective implementation across all schools by finding a way of giving the process the necessary time and space within the school day and by regarding it as a core element of development at the school and teacher levels.

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The Teaching Council



THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2

Telephone +353 1 8632000 Fax +353 1 8632100 Email admin@esri.ie Web www.esri.ie

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