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## Defining possibilities for learning: the learning trajectories of Irish physical education cooperating teachers

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**UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK**

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Defining Possibilities for Learning:  
The Learning Trajectories of Irish Physical  
Education Cooperating Teachers**

**Ann-Marie Young**

**University of Limerick**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Supervisor: Dr Ann MacPhail**

**Submitted to the University of Limerick:**

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# **Defining Possibilities for Learning: The Learning Trajectories of Irish Physical Education Cooperating Teachers**

## **Abstract**

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Effective school-university partnerships can enhance a pre-service teachers' (PST) experience and encourage experienced teachers to become cooperating teachers (CT). International literature alludes to the lack of formalised links between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools (Beck and Kosnik, 2000, McCullick, 2000) and a similar concern is noted in Ireland (Conway et al., 2009). Acknowledging this concern, 'Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers' (Teaching Council, 2011) recommends that "new and innovative school placement models should be developed using a partnership approach, whereby HEIs and schools actively collaborate in the organisation of the school placement" (p. 16). The aim of this study was to examine the intricacies of the learning trajectories of CTs when responsibility was devolved to them in a bid to contribute to effective school placements.

The study employed a situated learning framework, utilising Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. This framework was developed to understand how CTs' learning trajectories enhance or inhibit the move towards full participation in effective school placements. The study involved five phases and included eighteen qualified physical education teachers. To gain insights into the school placement process, a constructivist paradigm was employed, incorporating a number of qualitative data collection methods including observations, reflections, individual interviews and focus group interviews.

The findings indicated that the partnership element between the CT and the PST was particularly strong due to the gradual development of an effective working relationship based on respect and trust. It is clear from the findings that within the school placement the role of the CT is very influential but poorly prepared for and supported by the HEI. CTs identified that there was ambiguity surrounding their role in the school placement process and that there was a need for in-service on the effective delivery of feedback to PSTs on school placements. CTs' responses support the implementation of a more formalised role in the process of supervision. Data have identified mechanisms to potentially enhance existing policy and practice, develop the role of the CT, and create a systemic shift in school-university partnerships.

# Author's Declaration

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I hereby declare that the work contained within this thesis is my own work, and was completed without collaboration or assistance from others, apart from the counsel received from my supervisor, Dr Ann MacPhail of the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Department, University of Limerick. This work also has not been submitted to any other University of higher education institution, or for any other academic award within the University.

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Ann-Marie Young  
September 2012

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Dr Ann MacPhail  
September 2012

# Dedication

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*“It is never too late to be what you might have been”*

(George Elliot)

I dedicate this thesis to my parents.

To my Mum, you are the reason I am where I am today, your support, love and honesty throughout my life made me believe I could achieve something as big as this.

To my Dad, you are the reason I started this thesis, every time it got difficult or I was struggling with a deadline (which was often!) thinking of you is what got me there in the end.

I know you would be proud of me, I miss you x

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# Prologue

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This study is the outcome of a long-held interest in teacher education and supervision. My interest stems from a number of different areas beginning with my own experience as a pre-service teacher (PST). I trained in England completing a three-year BSc Sports Science Degree and then went on to complete a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). I spent the majority of my PGCE year on school placements in two schools in which I received invaluable support from my subject mentors/cooperating teachers (CTs) leading to very successful placements. There is a structured system of both professional and subject mentoring in England which has been established by individual teacher education institutions and schools. This system carries with it a number of incentives that both helps promote the process and ensure that it is effective in the delivery of its goals. The teacher education institutions also provided a range of continued professional development (CPD) opportunities for experienced teachers. Undergoing two successful placements with supportive, knowledgeable and present CTs enabled me to gain in teaching and learning confidence and provided me with the tools to begin a career in teaching and deliver high quality physical education.

## **My role as a cooperating teacher (subject mentor)**

I was a physical education teacher in England for nine years and during this time I carried out the role of mentor to PSTs over a five year period. This involved playing a central role in the training process, through the development and assessment of PSTs' subject knowledge and teaching competence. Trained mentors received payment for each PST they supervised, and as a mentor, there was a requirement from both the school and the teacher education institution to undertake annual training.

An important aspect of the mentoring system involved the scheduling of a dedicated hour per week for subject mentor meetings with the PST. This focused time gave the PST an opportunity to discuss issues such as teaching and learning, standards, discipline, behaviour, planning and organisation. Lessons that the PST had taught were also discussed where feedback was evaluated at length, giving the PST the chance to reflect on the successes of a particular lesson and identify areas for improvement. The decision on whether a PST passed or failed their school placement resided with the subject mentor in the school. While the university tutors (UTs) made two visits during the school placement period to observe a class and discuss the PST's progress with the subject mentor and the PST, the ultimate decision on the PST's performance resided with the mentor in the school. This is an area I feel strongly about as I was the one who saw the PST teach on a daily basis, make mistakes and fix them based on reflections, interact with pupils and colleagues and participate in the life of the school. A visiting tutor only gets a snapshot of the PST's experience and this in my opinion does not provide sufficient evidence to make a fair or balanced assessment or evaluation. I believe that the CT must have a role to play in the evaluation process to truly reflect a PST's teaching ability.

### **My role in professional learning communities**

My interest in professional learning communities came from my experience and involvement with a teacher education institution's physical education cluster meetings in England. At first, mentor meetings took place at the institution twice a year but were poorly attended so regional meetings were organised where the mentors were responsible for the organisation and delivery on a local basis. These meetings were held termly and attended by both subject mentors and UTs from the locality. The communities provided the teachers with an opportunity to discuss their experience of being a subject mentor and to communicate areas of best practice and problems they encountered along the way. The meetings were fully supported by the teacher education institution. I found that the cluster meetings allowed teachers from local schools to develop a rapport, share resources and ideas and ultimately enhance the role of the mentor. However, the meetings took time and effort to maintain and the successful development of the learning community was a direct result of the

commitment of a few dedicated teachers and UTs. My knowledge and experience of cluster meetings has prompted me to explore the development of professional learning communities in an Irish context.

### **My role as a university tutor**

Since returning to Ireland, I have had the opportunity to undertake the role of a UT for a teacher education institution. Over a three year period, this involved supervising year 2, year 4 and Professional Diploma PSTs. Undertaking the role of a UT led to frustrations with the current system in place. There was a lack of interaction with the school and the CT and evaluation was difficult as it was restricted to two meetings with the PST, one prior to the placement and one post placement, and two visits to the PST while on placement. However, acting as a UT allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of school placements in an Irish context and enabled me to make observations of both the relationship and the dynamic between the CT, the PST and the UT.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.1 Background and rationale

Most days, should a student [PST] be left inside a PE class in any guise, any length of time, it's not fair. They are not trained, they are not qualified. It's not fair to them. Second of all, something might happen, something major might happen that you would miss, that needs to be addressed. On the other side, something fantastic might happen that you missed that needs to be absolutely highlighted, this is absolutely brilliant and you might miss it and you may never see it again and it is gone.

(Steven, phase 2, pre-SP)

The above quotation, an extract from an interview with an Irish physical education cooperating teacher (CT), serves to highlight the importance of the role of the CT in the school placement process. The role of the CT, in providing a supportive and professional learning environment, is viewed as the most important and influential aspect in the development of effective pre-service teachers (PSTs) (Glenn, 2006, Johnson, 2011, Jeong and Mc Cullick, 2001, Kahan et al., 2003). Forming the basis of this thesis is the investigation into the preparation, support and recognition afforded to CTs to undertake this critical role and the examination of their learning trajectories as they approach supervision in a formalised manner.

Evidence from international best practice emphasises the value of partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions, highlighting the need to put measures in place to support CTs (Glenn, 2006, Kahan et al., 2003, Moody, 2009). Importantly, effective school-university partnerships can encourage more experienced teachers to become CTs and enhance a PSTs' experience (Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Johnson, 2011, Tannehill and Goc-Karp, 1992). International literature alludes to the lack of formalised links between teacher education

institutions and schools (Beck and Kosnik, 2000, McCullick, 2000) and a similar concern is noted in Ireland (Chambers, 2009, Conway et al., 2009, Moody, 2009). Moody (2009) highlighted that supervision of PSTs in many countries is undertaken largely by the school with university tutors (UTs) taking a secondary role. In an Irish context, schools accept PSTs on a voluntary basis and CTs do not have a formal role in the supervision of PSTs. While many CTs provide tutorial assistance to PSTs allocated to their classes, a system of structured supervision has yet to be formalised. Acknowledging that the concept of ‘supervisor’ or ‘mentor’ is relatively new in Irish teacher education, Chambers (2009) reported a great deal of inconsistency in the quality and quantity of learning support offered to PSTs by CTs.

The aim of a successful school placement is to “enable the PST to put into practice the theoretical components of their course and engage in experiential learning” (Moody, 2009, p. 157). For this to occur and be successful, the teacher must adopt many roles, such as advisor, confidant, observer, role model and critical friend. The adoption of these roles must occur through appropriate training by the teacher education institution, as there is an urgent need to address the role of the CT in the school placement process. Acknowledging this concern in Ireland, the Teaching Council recommends that “new and innovative school placement models should be developed using a partnership approach, whereby HEIs [Higher Education Institutions] and schools actively collaborate in the organisation of the school placement” (Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers 2011a, p. 16).

In recent years, a number of initiatives have been developed both within a particular institution (where the thesis was completed) and on a national basis, which have encouraged CT engagement in supervision. Developments in contemporary politics of teacher education policy in Ireland reflect a shift in attitudes and highlights that the “time is ripe for a fresh and thorough look at teacher education” (ITE Strategy for the Review and Accreditation of Existing Programmes, 2011b, p. 6). A Government-approved ‘National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030’ resulted in the establishment of an international review panel to advise on the structure of initial

teacher education in Ireland. The purpose of the review was to “identify possible new structures based on a reconfiguration of existing programmes in order to strengthen the quality of teacher education” (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 9). The urgency for change and development, in initial teacher education, is reflected in the combined involvement of the Teaching Council, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The impact of teacher education policy is discussed in more detail in chapter 3, section 3.7. This research is significant to current developments in physical education teacher education (PETE) as further work is required to enhance initial teacher education through developing the expertise of teachers to supervise PSTs effectively on school placements.

## **1.2 Research aims and research questions**

The aim of this study was to examine the intricacies of the learning trajectories of CTs when responsibility was devolved to them in a bid to contribute to effective school placements for PSTs. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation was utilised to understand how teachers’ learning trajectories enhance or inhibit the move towards full participation in communities of practice. The study also examined the challenges faced by the CT in investing in a professional framework in a country where there is no national formalised system as regards support for PSTs or beginning teachers. The CTs’ role must be supported and recognised to provide valuable developmental experiences for physical education teachers who wish to contribute to the education and development of physical education PSTs and enhance their learning trajectories as competent, confident supervisors.

To achieve the research aim, the following research questions were addressed:

### **Research question 1: What are physical education cooperating teachers’ perceptions of and responses to the role of supervision?**

- (i) How do teachers perceive the role of the physical education cooperating teacher in supervising pre-service teachers on school placements?

- (ii) To what extent are these perceptions acted upon and what is the reality of the role of the physical education cooperating teacher?
- (iii) What is required to enhance and develop the role to create confident and competent physical education cooperating teachers?

**Research question 2: What are physical education cooperating teachers' intended and actual enactments of communities in school placements?**

- (i) To what extent does a physical education cooperating teacher's participation in mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire impact their ability to learn the skills of a supervisor?
- (ii) In attempting to engage in learning communities what factors enabled or challenged the sharing of expertise between each of the school placement stakeholders?
- (iii) What variations in the infrastructure of a community led to physical education cooperating teachers experiencing a positive learning trajectory?

**Research question 3: To what extent is a physical education cooperating teachers' learning facilitated and supported in their role as supervisor?**

- (i) To what extent do physical education cooperating teachers' motivations encourage them to become legitimate peripheral participants in learning communities?
- (ii) To what extent does legitimacy contribute to a physical education cooperating teachers' learning trajectory?
- (iii) To what extent does peripherality contribute to a physical education cooperating teachers' learning trajectory?

The theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) will encourage the mapping of teachers' learning and development as CTs in order to identify how their experiences as legitimate peripheral participants can inform what support and training is necessary for them to become effective, confident and competent CTs in functioning communities in school placements. The research aims are targeted to

provide the implementation of a strategy to develop the quality of initial teacher education in relation to the school placement triad (CT, PST, and UT) to sustain and develop the progress and levels of attainment of all PSTs in meeting the highest standards.

### **1.3 Research context**

The research was facilitated by a PETE programme in a teacher education institution in Ireland. The institution has a long tradition of teacher education and qualifies both undergraduate and Professional Diploma students in physical education. The institution offers a four year concurrent degree, where undergraduate students choose an elective subject alongside physical education, and a one-year Professional Diploma in physical education. The institution offers a complement of ninety places between the two courses. The school placement system at the institution occurs in full-time block placements. Undergraduate PSTs complete three formal placements, the first of which occurs in the autumn semester of year one, where the students participate in a one week 'school experience' based in a primary school. The PSTs' teaching capability is not assessed during this placement. The final two formal placements are assessed and take place in post-primary schools, a six week block in the spring semester of year 2 and a ten week block in the autumn semester of year 4. A pilot programme was introduced by the institution's physical education department in the spring semester of 2004 for year 2 PSTs. The programme initiated the concept of paired school placements for the teaching of physical education, where two PSTs are sent to each school on practicum. This system of paired teaching is still in operation in year 2 school placements. Professional Diploma PSTs complete two formal placements, the first of which occurs every Monday over ten weeks in the autumn semester and the second occurs over eight weeks in the spring semester.

The school placement model at the institution involves each undergraduate PST being assigned and assessed by two tutors, one in physical education and the other in their elective subject. Professional Diploma PSTs are assigned and assessed by a

physical education tutor and an education tutor. The tutors come from a variety of backgrounds and include a combination of the institution's faculty and external tutors, the latter often being retired teachers. Significantly, there are no formal partnerships between the institution and the CTs in the schools and there is ambiguity surrounding the role of the CT in the school placement process. The lack of school-university partnerships in teacher education in Ireland is well documented in the literature (Chambers, 2009, Conway et al., 2009, Coolahan, 2001, McWilliams et al., 2006). Mullins (2004) recognises that "traditionally [in Ireland], students [PSTs] have been treated as if they were fully qualified, professional teachers and entrusted with responsibilities that were not appropriate to their status, e.g., teaching leaving certificate classes" (p. 38). This is reinforced by Conway *et al* (2009) who identified the "emphasis on the school setting as one for working rather than learning" (p. 27). Although many CTs in Irish schools tend to be cooperative and generous in their guidance of PSTs (Coolahan, 2003), there is a lack of formalised or structured support for CTs in their supervisory role on school placements. The purpose of the research was to work with CTs who had agreed to formalise their approach to supervision in an attempt to identify the successes and/or challenges they faced in learning to become confident and effective supervisors to PSTs on school placements.

## **1.4 Overview of thesis chapters**

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

An extensive review of literature on teacher education, from both an international and Irish perspective, is presented in this chapter. The literature review highlights prominent issues concerning the development of the CT in the school placement process. These include: (i) the roles and responsibilities of the CT; (ii) the relationships within the school placement triadic structure; (iii) the challenges faced by CTs in the supervisory role; (iv) training opportunities for CTs; and (v) school-university partnerships. These issues mirror some of the key themes which emerged throughout each of the phases of the study.

### **Chapter 3: Historical context**

The historical background of teacher education in Ireland is presented to provide an in-depth analysis into past structures and ideologies. It also serves to give an insight as to why the system that is in place currently exists. The chapter reviews the progress and developments made in bringing teacher education into the twenty-first century. Government reports, papers and reviews are presented to highlight issues relating to the development of teacher education. These are supported by an analysis of a number of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) reports which have impacted upon the direction of teacher education and supervision in an Irish context.

### **Chapter 4: Theoretical framework**

This chapter addresses the premise that CTs learn to become effective supervisors in authentic situations, i.e., the school placement. This sits firmly in Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice. The concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice are explored in relation to the learning trajectories of CTs in the school placement process. A number of studies within teacher education in general and physical education more specifically, examining the diverse application of Lave and Wenger's work (1991), are presented to understand the challenges faced by physical education CTs in attempting to become effective supervisors to PSTs on school placements.

### **Chapter 5: Methodology**

The aim of this study was to interpret CTs' views and perspectives on learning to become a confident and competent supervisor and examine the diverse pathways of their learning trajectories. In doing so, a social constructivist paradigm was advocated to elicit and analyse CTs' experiences within the supervisory triad. Observations, individual interviews and focus group interviews were the primary data collection methods used to provide an in-depth analysis of the learning

trajectories of CTs in the supervisory process. This chapter presents a summary of each of the phases of the study and addresses the analysis procedures employed to extract all relevant information from the data to answer the research questions.

### **Chapter 6: Setting the scene**

This chapter presents data from phase one of the study where initial observations of the role of the CT in school placements were documented. Phase one of the study involved keeping a reflective journal on visits made to both year 2 and year 4 PSTs on school placements. The aim was to observe the interactions between the CT and the PST and between the CT and the UT, and analyse what type of relationships, if any, existed.

### **Chapter 7: Cooperating teachers perceptions and responses to the role of supervision**

This chapter focuses predominantly on research question one, the examination of how experienced teachers perceived their role and positioning with respect to working with PSTs when they are completing a school placement in the teachers' school. It involved identifying positive and negative practices and examining experienced teachers' experiences of the supervisory process and their interest in formalising the role of the CT.

### **Chapter 8: Establishing communities in school placements**

Focusing on research question two, this chapter provides the outcomes and analysis of CTs learning trajectories when involved in various structures of communities and the factors which enabled or challenged them in cultivating relationships with school placement stakeholders. Four key constructs were evident in the data and are presented in this chapter. These constructs include (i) the key properties which underpin communities, (ii) the characteristics required for success, (iii) the enablers and (iv) challenges faced by stakeholders in their attempts to create effective

communities. The diverse range of communities established within the triadic structure is also presented in this chapter.

### **Chapter 9: Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice**

This chapter addresses research question three by investigating the possibility of CTs experiencing legitimate peripheral participation in a diverse range of communities to support their learning as supervisors. The constructs of participation, legitimacy and peripherality are examined to challenge Lave and Wenger's (1991) statement that legitimacy and peripherality are two modifications required to make actual participation in a community possible. The data collected from the five phases was analysed and compared to the literature to present a clear picture of the learning trajectories experienced by five particular CTs.

### **Chapter 10: Recommendations and conclusion**

This chapter revisits the study's research questions and highlights key findings. CTs' recommendations for the development of the role of the CT and the establishment of learning communities are presented in the chapter as well as suggestions for a way forward in teacher education concerning the role of the CT.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

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## 2.1 Introduction

It is widely recognised that the school placement element of a teacher education course is one of the most influential aspects of a pre-service teacher's (PST) education and that the role of the cooperating teacher (CT) is critical in the development of the PST (Behets and Vergauwen, 2006, Darling-Hammond, 2006, Hynes-Dusel, 1999). The school placement experience typically involves a triad of stakeholders; a CT, a PST and a university tutor (UT) (Wright et al., 2012). Whilst there is a wealth of research surrounding the development of the PST and the strengthening of the school placement triad there is little research surrounding how a CT learns to become an effective supervisor to improve the school-based experience of a PST (Graves, 2010, Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Nielsen et al., 2010, Russell and Russell, 2011, Sim, 2011, Wang and Ha, 2012).

For the purpose of the study, the focus was on the learning trajectory of CTs in the school placement process, and the subsequent impact on the development of competent and confident CTs to effectively supervise physical education PSTs in Irish post-primary schools. Sim (2011) recognises that there is significant research on the importance of the UT and the PST in the school placement but limited research on the consequences of the supervisory process for the CT. Acknowledging that a successful placement is more likely when PSTs are supported and encouraged by effective, confident CTs (Johnson, 2011), it was deemed critical to focus on the development of CTs.

In order to focus on the learning trajectories of CTs, the roles and responsibilities of CTs will be investigated. It is important to investigate the roles and responsibilities of a CT in an international context as well an Irish context, to examine whether or not these roles are clear and communicated to each of the stakeholders involved.

Bennett (1995) refers to the continuing problems concerning the lack of knowledge and agreement about roles, responsibilities and expectations among the supervisory triad. Unclear roles and responsibilities can have a negative effect on CTs, leading to them being unprepared and unsure of their role and ultimately bringing about undesirable results. I appreciate that there is an extensive literature base on the roles and responsibilities of PSTs and UTs (Albasheer et al., 2008, Broadbent, 1998, Koerner et al., 2002, Sivan and Chan, 2003) but chose not to concentrate on their roles as it is their relationship with the CTs that are significant.

This chapter also reviews the relationships CTs may develop with PSTs and UTs during practicums and the impact these may have on their learning trajectories. Ideally, the relationships established during a school placement practicum would involve all three members of the triad where each of the stakeholders would “form an alliance and partnership to learn from each other” (Albasheer et al., 2008, p. 704). However, there is a body of literature which identifies the absence of sustained and effective triadic relationships (Ganser, 1996, Graves, 2010, Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Jeong and Mc Cullick, 2001, Johnson and Napper-Owen, 2011, Koerner et al., 2002, Murphy, 2010, Sivan and Chan, 2003). Research tells us that the role of the CT wields greater influence on PSTs compared with UTs (Anderson, 2007, Wang and Ha, 2012, Wright et al., 2012) and that PSTs with supportive CTs are more likely to be successful in their practicum (Moody, 2009). Therefore it is crucial to analyse if, and how, CTs and PSTs develop professional working relationships on placements. It is also incumbent to investigate the capacity of CTs and UTs to develop strong working relationships as the UT has the potential to provide effective and cost efficient professional development for CTs in the area of supervision. As a result, the relationships established and developed between the CT and the PST, and between the CT and the UT, are critically examined in this chapter.

The CT can often be the most influential person in a PST’s placement and plays a fundamental role in their development, often carrying out the role of friend, confidante, mentor and advisor (Kahan et al., 2003, Tannehill and Zakrajsek, 1988, Tjeerdsma, 1998). With this in mind, there is a critical need to address the impact of

the CT on the PST. The areas highlighted in this chapter investigate what PSTs want from CTs, the CT's role in the delivery of effective feedback, and the positioning of the CT in the assessment process.

There is a dearth of international research investigating the reality of being an effective CT to PSTs on placement (Christenson and Barney, 2011, Hastings and Squires, 2002, Sinclair et al., 2006, Wang and Ha, 2012). Many studies refer to both the benefits and drawbacks for experienced teachers becoming CTs for PSTs on school placement. This has implications for how to attract suitable teachers to work with teacher education institutions in the development of PSTs.

The literature also recognises the need to attract and train suitable CTs to enable them to become confident in their role (Beck and Kosnik, 2002, Hynes-Dusel, 1999, Remington-Smith, 2007, Sinclair et al., 2006). Research shows that “emphasis must be put on the development of a cohort of motivated, committed and capable school-based cooperating teachers to work with future generations of teachers” (Sinclair et al., 2006, p. 263). Behets and Vergauwen (2006) indicate that most CTs have no formal preparation to carry out a supervisory role and perceive their role as a supervisor primarily from memories of their own student teaching supervision experiences. Therefore, it is important to create a training process for CTs to help them understand their roles and responsibilities and enable them to become effective and confident supervisors. This is indicated in numerous studies whereby the training of CTs has resulted in many positive outcomes for both the CT and the PST (Ganser, 2002, Kahan et al., 2003, Murphy, 2010, Wright and Smith, 2000). Two mentor training initiatives are briefly explained in the chapter, offering valuable insight into what is achievable when opportunities are provided. First, the key terms of the school placement process are introduced in the next section to provide clarity throughout the thesis.

## **2.2 The school placement process**

It is important at this point to define the key terms of the school placement process and the roles of those involved. The term school placement (referred to as teaching practice in some studies) is given to periods of school-based learning throughout a degree programme where the PST has the opportunity to use the skills and competencies gained during their undergraduate programme in a realistic school setting. It entails collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools which involve the PST, the CT, the UT and the school principal. The school placement experience is a significant aspect of all teacher education programmes and it requires the PST to apply their knowledge and understanding of a range of areas including planning, organisation, teaching and learning, and reflection and the assessment of their own and their students' learning in a post-primary setting.

CTs are qualified, experienced teachers who potentially have the greatest influence on the development of a PST as a new professional in education, through a process of supervision. Ralph (2000), cited in Sim (2011), defines a supervisor as “an educational professional, by virtue of his/her previous expertise and experiences, assists a less experienced or knowledgeable colleague in acquiring new professional knowledge or to improve existing ones” (p. 312). A CT can help create a growth environment and support system to aid the development of a PST while on school placement. The role of the CT should be to guide, observe and encourage the PST through the period of the school placement (Goodnough, 2009, Koster et al., 1998, Simpson et al., 2007).

PSTs are student teachers who are completing university-based teacher education programmes and participate in a number of school-based experiences throughout their course to gain rich teaching experience. It is generally accepted in most systems internationally that each PST is assigned an experienced and qualified teacher at the school site who undertakes the role of supervisor, CT or mentor and is there to act as a guide throughout their practice. For the purpose of this study, such

teachers will be referred to as cooperating teachers (CTs) and the roles and responsibilities of CTs in the supervision role are discussed in section 2.3.

The UT serves to assist the PST in preparing for the placement, aid them in their evaluation of the observed lessons and provide an appraisal containing feedback and guidance. The school principal is there to introduce the PST to the school and staff and discuss general expectations while on school placement. There is a general lack of research carried out on the role and the impact of school principals on PSTs during the period of school-based learning. Beck and Kosnik (2000) stress the importance of teacher education institutions working with the principals of partner schools as they can potentially play a crucial role in supporting both CTs and PSTs. However, Rikard and Veal (1996) report that principals had little or no input into the supervisory process, resulting in very little feedback on the school placement or the PST. Albasheer *et al* (2008) found that school principals in Jordan did not treat PSTs as full members of staff and at times hindered their progress while on placement.

### **2.3 Roles and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher**

Many approaches and conceptions about what the role of a CT should entail are discussed in detail in much of the literature on teacher education. The CT is a key element of the school placement process who can potentially provide the most valuable practical and theoretical information to PSTs. Beck and Kosnik (2002) interviewed Canadian PSTs on their views of what constitutes an effective CT and found that the role of the CT should be to support PSTs, give a considerable amount of feedback and collaborate with the PSTs to the point of team-teaching. Following this, Gursoy and Damar (2011), who investigated Turkish CTs' awareness of their role during a school placement, advocate that because of the complexity of the role, the position of the CT is vital and must be clarified.

The discussion about the roles and responsibilities of the CT is of utmost importance as Rikard and Veal (1996) acknowledge that CTs have great influence on PSTs and that the "nature and quality of that influence seem to be critical factors in

determining PST development” (p. 279). Their study investigated how physical education CTs in the United States viewed their role as supervisors in the school placement process. The results highlighted the CTs’ belief that they needed to get along with the PST and the importance of maintaining good interpersonal relationships. The CTs also rated providing feedback and evaluations as an important aspect of the supervisory experience. However, what is interesting is that the CTs often felt uncomfortable when delivering feedback, especially when it involved (constructive) criticism or corrections, as they felt it may damage the positive relationship which they had built up with the PST. This is supported by the same authors in a later study (Rikard and Veal, 1996) where they found that CTs were uncomfortable offering corrective feedback to PSTs as they believed it would move the PST back into the role of student and disrupt their teaching experience. It is acknowledged that many teacher education institutions will be at risk if they do not have full cooperation and assistance from CTs at the school sites. In a meta-analysis on the role of the CT, Ganser (1996) highlighted that CTs involved in professional development schools, became less passive and took on a more “active and proactive role with greater influence in areas previously controlled by teacher education institutions” (p. 559). These included setting prerequisites for PSTs, determining PSTs’ responsibilities in school placements, providing supervision and determining if PSTs should be awarded teacher certification. The various approaches to the role of a CT are addressed in the following section.

### **2.3.1 Various approaches to the role of a cooperating teacher**

A two-year study carried out by Beck and Kosnik (2000), with twenty Canadian associate teachers (CTs), identified two broad conceptions of the role of the CT. The first, the ‘practical initiation model’, involved the PST learning through experience, seen by many as the ‘sink or swim’ mentality. In this instance, the CT introduced the PST to the realities of teaching, alluding to the fact that teaching is difficult, something the PST must realise sooner rather than later to enable them to succeed. This model encouraged an ‘apprenticeship’ role whereby the CT tended to dictate to the PST while on school placement and often led to a lack of innovative teaching approaches (Beck and Kosnik, 2002).

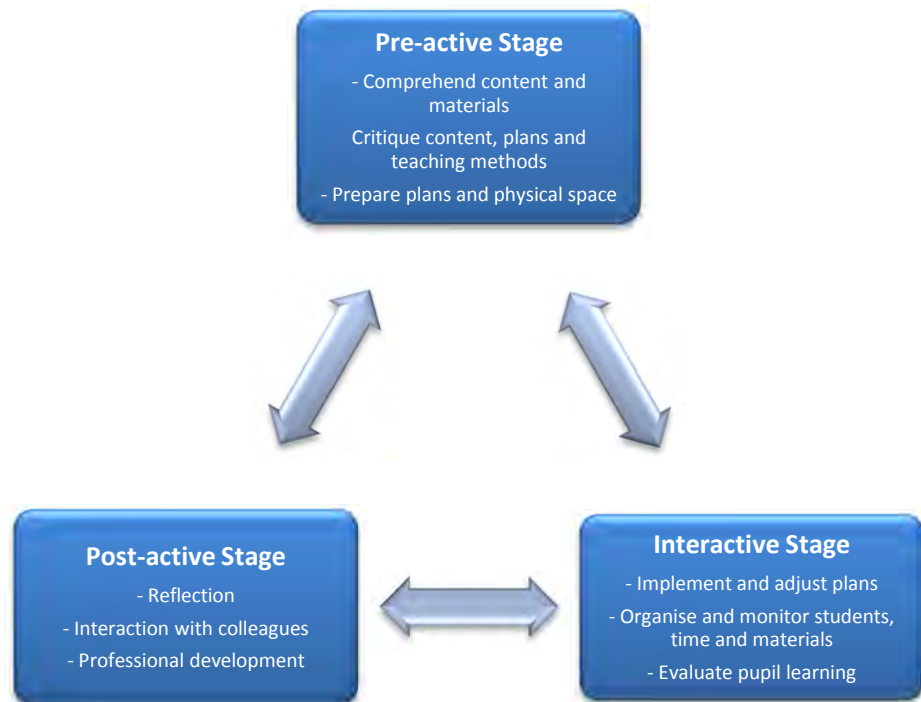
The second model discussed, which moved past the apprenticeship type model, was the 'critical interventionist model'. This involved the CT intervening in the PST's teaching and encouraging the PST to be more reflective in their teaching. This approach involved giving a considerable amount of advice and feedback with, for example, the CT interrupting PSTs as they teach to suggest improvements and engage in team teaching. This model viewed the CT and the PST working more in partnership to enhance the learning experience and introduced the UT into discussions. The CTs in this study deemed themselves to be "supportive, positive and helpful" (p. 217) to PSTs during their practicum. However, the authors found them to be somewhat 'tough' on the PSTs and inflexible in their approach. As a result, the PSTs often felt under pressure, leading to high levels of anxiety (Beck and Kosnik, 2002).

Behets and Vergauwen (2006), in a meta-analysis of learning to teach in the field of physical education, discuss in detail the 'traditional' approach to supervising a PST in physical education. The roles and responsibilities of the CT include carrying out a pre-lesson briefing (to discuss lesson planning), a formal observation of the lesson and a post lesson debrief, during which the CT provides detailed feedback. Modifications are suggested for the next lesson and the PST's teaching is evaluated. The authors found that "student teaching is the critical element in teacher education programmes, as it is the place where teacher competencies are developed" (p. 409). Much of the research (Ganser, 2002, Glenn, 2006, Jeong and Mc Cullick, 2001) supported the view that it is the role of the CT to help develop these competencies as they have a dominant influence over the PST. This is reinforced by work carried out by Goodnough *et al* (2009) who documented the benefits and challenges for Canadian PSTs and CTs who participate in a triad model. The authors also refer to the 'traditional' approach in relation to the role of the CT. This model involves the CT modelling, co-teaching, giving frequent feedback and providing opportunities for reflection. However, Behets and Vergauwen (2006) recognise that this can lead to the CT pushing the PST into an 'apprenticeship' type role whereby they are told what to do, how to do it and when to do it. By using the apprenticeship model, it removes the ability of the PST to experiment with a range of teaching styles and leads to a lack of innovative approaches to teaching and learning, findings that are

not dissimilar to those of Beck and Kosnik (2000). Despite these limitations, this apprenticeship model is commonly practised by many CTs as the majority are untrained as effective teaching practice supervisors.

Exploring PSTs' views about school placements in Hong Kong, Sivan and Chan (2003) refer to the 'teaching practice model', a model they believe is more likely to be found on an initial teacher education (ITE) course than an apprenticeship model or a school-based study model. Using this model, the CTs take on the role of an observer. This model involves the PST using their professional knowledge, which they gained from their teacher education programme, and applying it in a school context. The PSTs are observed by both the CT and the UT and interact in post-observation conferences and receive feedback on their classroom teaching, mainly from the UT. This model provides an interactive process which "enhances trainees [PSTs] attitudes, skills, knowledge, and the reflective thinking that is necessary for their professional development" (p. 184). However, the PST regarded this process as superficial as the UT only observed a snapshot of their teaching due to four visits throughout the practicum. Furthermore, this study involved only two parties from the school placement triad, the PST and the UT, though the authors recognised that the omission of the CT role from the school placement model compromised the reported findings.

Reynolds (1992), refers to the terms pre-active, interactive and post-active as three important domains related to the effective development of beginning teachers. Coulon and Byra (1995) link this to supervision by stating that CTs or mentors should help future teachers (PSTs) to develop competent pre-active and interactive decision making and instructional behaviours. The graphic below summarises each of the domains:



(Adapted from Reynolds, 1992, p.4)

While there is a myriad of research on the interactive (observation) stage and the post-active stage (feedback and post-lesson debriefs) (Glenn, 2006, Kahan et al., 2003, Kiely, 2005, Kinchin et al., 2009, Shantz and Ward, 2000) there is less literature on the importance of the pre-active stage in the process of supervision. The pre-active stage occurs prior to actual contact with the pupils (e.g. lesson planning), the interactive stage consists of the pedagogical application during the teaching of the class and the post-active stage involves critical analysis and reflection on the actual planning and teaching that occurred. Leikin (2005) states that “learning is an interactive process” (p. 237) where CTs can offer professional support in the pre-active and post-active stages and in some cases the interactive stage where team-teaching occurs. Burn *et al* (2000) acknowledge that novice teachers (PSTs) do not have a range of past experiences and established repertoires on which to draw during a lesson, therefore, they are very much dependent on experienced teachers (CTs) to guide them in their lesson planning. As a result of this, the pre-active stage is important in the development of confident PSTs. As many CTs are unclear about the exact nature of their role in the training of PSTs and lack adequate training (Coll et al., 2002) the pre-active stage is rarely carried out effectively. A well planned pre-

active stage can allow PSTs to gain subject knowledge and assistance in the creation of appropriate lesson objectives and expectations. For many PSTs, inappropriate lesson objectives and content can lead to pupil disengaging from the lesson and off-task behaviour (Reynolds, 1992). The establishment of meeting times (both formal and informal) between the CT and PST can meet the needs of the pre-active stage and assist the PST in preparing appropriate and effective lessons. Leikin (2005) acknowledges that the lesson plan is a crucial tool in the delivery of an effective lesson; well-planned lessons will then positively impact the following two stages, the interactive and post-interactive stages. The three key features of the teaching process, the pre-active, interactive and post-active become cyclical (as highlighted in the diagram) (Reynolds, 1992). Effective reflection in the post-active stage may have the potential to positively impact PSTs future planning. However, preparing and adequately supporting CTs to carry out each of the three domains is frequently neglected (Russell and Russell, 2011) and the issue of time is often a restrictive factor. For a CT to effectively carry out the role of a supervisor, they must learn to ‘juggle’ the demands of teaching alongside supporting the PST (Jones and Straker, 2006, Sim, 2011). These demands are examined in the next section.

### **2.3.2 The demands of an effective cooperating teacher**

Borko and Mayfield (1995) state that PSTs “don’t often realise their potential due to factors such as poorly defined roles and inadequate preparation for the task of supervision, particularly in the case of CTs” (p. 503). This longitudinal study in the United States analysed the relationships between four prospective teachers and their CTs and UTs in their final year of teacher preparation and their first year of teaching. The results of the study suggested that ideally the CT should provide feedback about specific lesson components, suggestions about new ways to think about teaching and learning, and encouragement to reflect on one’s practice. When this exists PSTs should be able to reach their potential. Unfortunately, it seems that this potential is rarely achieved. The authors also imply that the role of the CT should include greater involvement in the grading process although this is not always the preference of the CT (Ganser, 1996, Kiely, 2005, Koster et al., 1998, McCullick, 2000). Conversations that did occur between the CT and the PST were

often rushed and lacked any in-depth exploration. These findings support those of Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988), who investigated the supervisory behaviours and practices of eighteen CTs in the Northwest region of the United States. The authors found that physical education CTs provided minimum feedback, held few supervisory conferences, and spent little time observing teaching. In an effort to address these issues, Edwards *et al* (2002) developed the idea of co-teaching between the CT and the PST in England. This model sees the CT modelling, guiding and challenging the PST. They also encourage the PST to deviate from the lesson plan to accommodate pupil needs, therefore, ‘living’ the teaching experience. Co-teaching enables the CT to observe and give relevant feedback to the PST.

Koster *et al* (1998) describe in detail the ideal role of the CT, acknowledging an internationally growing trend of a general shift towards more school based teacher education. Consequently, the role of the CT has become more prominent. However, it is important to note that the “role of the supervising teacher is a highly complex and demanding one, encompassing advisor, encourager, giver of feedback, observer, role model and supporter” (Moody, 2009, p.159). Other functions of the CT role described are orientation, instruction and guidance, and liaising with teacher education institutions (Shantz and Ward, 2000). Koster *et al* (1998) develop this list further to include evaluation and assessment of the PST and involvement in the teacher education curriculum. Ultimately, the same authors believe that CTs should have a greater involvement in the training of PSTs, concluding that the greatest challenge ahead is the training of CTs. It is also important that previous negative experiences encountered by CTs do not permeate the supervision process. Boudreau (1999), examining thirty six Canadian CTs’ experiences of supervision, found that some CTs initially learned to teach through trial and error, and believed that experience is the only valid way to learn for PSTs. In such instances, this belief dominated their definition of the role of the CT. The role of the CT in Ireland is presented in the next section to situate the study in an Irish context.

### **2.3.3 The role of the cooperating teacher in an Irish context**

Much has been written regarding the process of supervision and mentoring in Ireland in the last ten years (Belton et al., 2010, Chambers and Armour, 2011, Chambers and Armour, 2012, Conway et al., 2011b, Conway et al., 2011a, Kiely, 2005, McWilliams et al., 2006, Moody, 2009). Chambers (2009) found that the Irish system of teacher education has some similarities to that which has been discussed internationally. The author, investigating physical education teacher education (PETE) student learning on school placements, recognised the school placement as a pivotal aspect of a PETE programme and that the CT is “the most significant influence on the student” (p. 6). Chambers (2009) also acknowledged that the concept of a ‘supervisor’ or ‘mentor’ is relatively new in Irish teacher education but stressed that a number of initiatives have been undertaken to enhance the system. These include the Lucent Science Teachers Initiative (LSTI), University of Limerick’s Masters of Arts in Educational Mentoring, University College Cork’s Telemachus Mentor Training Programme for Physical Education teachers, Dublin City University’s Cooperating Teachers programme, and the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction.

In Ireland, school placements are based primarily in schools prepared to host PSTs rather than careful selection of sites that allow PSTs to experience diverse teaching contexts and gain support and assistance in developing teaching skills (MacPhail et al., 2006). Kiely (2005), in analysing Irish school placement stakeholders experiences of being involved in a science mentoring initiative, discusses the current reality of the role of the CT in an Irish context. At present, CTs work voluntarily as informal, untrained and unpaid mentors during the school placement period. Most CTs, in a gesture of goodwill, offer support and regular feedback to the PST. To do this, a CT must find a way of balancing meeting the needs of the PST with the demands made on them as practising teachers. Chambers (2009) found a great deal of inconsistency in the quality and quantity of learning support offered to PSTs by CTs. As a result, CTs seemed confused about their role as supervisors on school placements. In conclusion, Chambers (2009) found that PSTs were not supported to learn effectively by CTs due to the fact that CTs were not trained in their role as

mentors and secondly, CTs tended to be selected on the basis of availability, not suitability. This reinforces the Irish National Teachers Organisation's (INTO) (2006) view that PSTs' placements are reliant upon school's willingness to accept them and teachers voluntarily accepting them into their classroom. The INTO state that teachers should have a structured role as mentors to PSTs during school placements. However, they are aware that such a role would need to be recognised and acknowledged, with teachers being prepared for the role, supported and rewarded. In November 2009, the Minister for Education and Skills in Ireland signed new regulations for Initial Teacher Education stating that second level ITE students are now required to have observation opportunities on their school placements (Conway et al., 2011a). Reflecting these issues, the next section explores the development of relationships between the CT and the PST, and between the CT and the UT.

## **2.4 Relationships within the school placement triad**

### **2.4.1 The cooperating teacher/pre-service teacher relationship**

Graves (2010), in a study exploring the mentoring relationships between CTs and PSTs in the United States, found that “the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher is at the heart of every practicum experience” (p. 15). Given that these two stakeholders potentially spend a significant amount of time together on a daily basis, it is unavoidable that some form of relationship will be developed. Russell and Russell (2011) stress that promoting successful mentoring relationships is a very important step towards developing PSTs into effective teachers. This is similar to findings by Rikard and Veal (1996) who reported that in the United States the nature and quality of the relationship developed is critical in determining the PST's development. International research suggests that not only do PSTs gain personally and professionally from the relationship, but so do the CTs. Wang and Ha (2012), in a study investigating the interactions occurring between physical education CTs and PSTs during the mentoring process in Hong Kong, found reciprocal interactions between the two stakeholders during the supervision process. The authors suggest a collaborative approach to mentoring where both CTs and PSTs “examine, share and generate new knowledge in their teaching. This

collaborative mentoring model would then enhance the mutual learning between PSTs and their mentors” (p. 59). However, for these types of relationships to develop there needs to be clear and open lines of communication throughout the duration of the school placement and an element of trust must be established. CTs have the advantage of experience and can guide the PSTs through some of the potential pitfalls inherent in the early stages of teaching (Graves, 2010). At the same time, PSTs must be open to feedback and support as CTs attempt to guide them through teacher preparation. Graves’ (2010) study reinforces the benefits of developing effective relationships and results revealed that clear, explicit expectations, on-going communication, and adequate time are vital to the development of positive relationships.

The establishment of ‘dyads’ and ‘coalitions’ between CTs and PSTs are discussed in a number of studies on teacher education and supervision (Murphy, 2010, Rikard, 1990, Rikard and Veal, 1996). Veal and Rikard (1998b) suggest that often in triadic relationships in the United States a coalition between two members is eventually formed. In terms of a school placement triad, the coalition usually exists between the CT and the PST due to the amount of daily contact they have, leaving the UT on the outside. This can lead to the PST viewing the CT as the most influential figure during a school-based practicum. Murphy (2010) examined relationships within the physical education school placement triad in Guam and found that once these coalitions were in place, the PSTs gained trust in the CTs and established a belief that they had the ability to become competent, effective teachers. Rikard (1990), in a study investigating a clinical model of student teacher supervision in physical education in the United States, supported these findings and found that the strength of the model was situated in the dyadic relationship between the supportive, mentoring collaboration between the CT and the PST. Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011), in examining the roles and role perceptions within two physical education student teaching triads in the United States, found that the relationship between the CT and the PST was very strong. Regarding the issue of dyads, Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011) emphasise that it would be interesting to “study whether dyads can be completely functional and perhaps whether dyads (versus triads) are actually the standard in the student teaching experience” (p. 54).

Shantz and Ward (2000), in analysing questionnaires from PSTs in Canada and Scotland on their perception of school placements, recognise that a CT/PST relationship can be “fraught with complexity and idiosyncrasies” (p. 288) which include differences in personalities, teaching philosophies, approaches to education and perceptions of each of their roles. For example, common problems between CTs and PSTs on practicum can be personal and are linked to poor methods of communication. However, many CTs are unaware of effective communication skills and therefore develop poor relationships with the PST during the practicum period. As a result, Rikard and Veal (1996) indicated that poor student teaching emerged as a result of the CT being untrained and unprepared as supervisors and providing little or no developmental feedback or guidance during the practicum. Reflecting these issues, Wright *et al* (2012) found that in the United States, problems between a CT and a PST can occur if roles and expectations are not clearly defined.

#### **2.4.2 The cooperating teacher /university tutor relationship**

A common theme throughout the literature focuses on the level of communication between CTs and UTs, with most studies recommending the need for frequent occurrences during a school placement experience (Christenson and Barney, 2011, Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Hastings and Squires, 2002). A number of studies highlight a range of suggestions for the development of strong professional relationships between CTs and UTs. For example, Gursoy and Damar (2011) stress that there is a necessity for CTs and UTs to meet regularly while Hastings and Squires (2002) state that “cooperating teachers want to be equally heard in a two-way dialogue and need to be partners in the venture, not victims of it” (p. 81). Hastings and Squires (2002) reporting on a small case study carried out in Australia, indicated that CTs and UTs need time to cultivate relationships. When facilitated effectively, the function of the relationships should be to share expectations, plan the school placement effectively and discuss expectations for the PST.

Murphy (2010) revealed increased communication between the CT and the UT which was critical in providing “a more realistic view of achievement and success of

student teachers” (p. 65). Sim (2011) agreed and argued for the support of CTs by UTs through on-site visits to discuss supervisory behaviours and practices, and devising ways to support the PST. Sim’s (2011) study on CTs’ identities found that tensions emerge when teachers are unsupported as they attempt to act as teacher and supervisor. The author suggests that on-going support from UTs could ease these tensions.

The lack of communication between the CT and the UT is a widely recognised problem (Bullough and Draper, 2004, Jeong and Mc Cullick, 2001). Kiely (2005) highlights CTs’ high level of dissatisfaction with the lack of contact and feedback from the UT. For example, Nielsen *et al* (2010) emphasise the disregard some teachers experience from UTs stating that, “teachers who serve the profession as cooperating teachers in practicum settings are often regarded as little more than ad-hoc over-seers of the success (or otherwise) of teacher candidates” (p. 480). Both the CT and UT need to realise the valuable contributions each make and devise methods to create effective relationships to aid the professional development of all members of the school placement triad. As the relationship between the CT and the PST is more prominent in the literature (Anderson, 2007, Boudreau, 1999, Christenson and Barney, 2011, Graves, 2010, Murphy, 2010), the following section identifies a number of factors which impact upon the development of a relationship between the CT and the PST.

## **2.5 The impact of cooperating teachers on pre-service teachers**

It is generally accepted that the CT has a significant role to play in the development of PSTs as they are the ones who potentially see them teach on a regular basis (Hynes-Dusel, 1999, McCullick, 2000). Also, Koster *et al* (1998) found that the CT had a significant impact on the PST’s attitudes and teaching behaviours, more so than the UT. As a result of this relationship, the PSTs found the practical advice from the CTs was helpful, while UTs’ comments were ‘bland’ and ‘unspecific’ (Koster et al., 1998). This section considers a number of factors which can support or hinder the development of relationships between CTs and PSTs.

### **2.5.1 What pre-service teachers want from cooperating teachers**

In discussing the impact of the role of the CT, it is important to examine what PSTs want from their CTs while on school placement. Hobson (2002) found that English PSTs perceived school-based mentoring as the key element of the ITE experience. The study revealed that PSTs value supportive, reassuring CTs who are prepared to make time for them, offer practical advice and ideas relating to their teaching, as well as providing constructive feedback on their teaching attempts. Again, feedback featured highly as one of the key characteristics of a CT in a study carried out by Beck and Kosnik (2002), along with emotional support, collaboration and flexibility. Koerner *et al* (2002) discuss the findings of Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) who found that PSTs expected CTs to “hold conferences with them regularly, observe them teach, and provide feedback on their teaching” (p. 38). It is important for CTs to possess contextualised subject knowledge and experience as well as effective communication skills to enable the PST to receive as much guidance as possible while on placement (Koerner et al., 2002). These are areas that PSTs report as key features that enabled them to experience an effective practicum placement.

In a study on power relations between CTs and PSTs, Anderson (2007) observed that the nature of a CT’s influence was varied and complex. Russell and Russell (2011), exploring the perceptions of nine American CTs about mentoring, extend this observation by stating that “if the mentor lacks adequate skills in mentoring, this can significantly impact the student intern’s professional development” (p. 28). The research discussed above reveal that it is imperative that CTs are trained in their role, supported in their attempts to build close working relationships and encouraged to deliver specific, constructive and effective feedback to PSTs.

### **2.5.2 The impact and importance of feedback from cooperating teachers**

Pre-service teachers are in the classroom to learn how to teach. The best way to facilitate this is to have supervising teachers who can provide daily, on-going, helpful feedback to pre-service teachers.

(Shantz and Ward, 2000, p. 293)

The presence of a confident CT delivering effective feedback is significant in determining the success of a PST's school placement. Although the delivery of feedback is time consuming, it is a necessary element of the student teaching experience (Johnson and Napper-Owen, 2011). It is important to note that imparting effective feedback not only benefits the PST's and CT's teaching, but also enhances the PST's ability to reflect on classes and usual teaching behaviours. Effective feedback is described as frequent, specific, continuous, and relevant to the PST's needs and delivered by a CT trained in delivering feedback (Wilkins-Canter, 1997).

Numerous research studies indicate that PSTs receive feedback from supervisors that is vague, irregular and incomplete (Coulon and Byra, 1997, Kahan et al., 2003, Ocansey, 1988). A study that centred on the support PSTs receive from CTs (Broadbent, 1998) found that many of the PSTs revealed a lack of both verbal and written feedback from the CT. Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988), found that PSTs wanted more feedback on their teaching, evaluation of what they were doing right or wrong and also more clarity and direction about the expectations of the practicum. In contrast, the majority of CTs provided a lack of specific feedback and tended to be in the form of informal discussions that did not have a student teaching focus. Coulon and Byra (1997), investigating post-lesson dialogues between American physical education CTs and PSTs, found that they tended to be dominated by the CTs and they often ended up 'telling' the PST how to teach. Other studies reported that some CTs were reluctant or tentative about delivering constructive or negative feedback out of fear of negatively affecting the developing relationship shared with the PST (Glenn, 2006, Wilkins-Canter, 1997).

Results of research stress the importance of providing supervisory training programmes that have a strong emphasis on the delivery of effective and relevant feedback (Kahan et al., 2003, Wilkins-Canter, 1997). In summing up these views, when feedback is delivered effectively by the CT it can have a greater impact on the PST than that of the UT's feedback, as one would anticipate that a CT's feedback would be situated and directly linked to practice.

### **2.5.3 The cooperating teacher's role in assessment**

McCullick (2000), examining eighteen CTs' perceptions on the characteristics needed for PETE participants in the United States, argues that because CTs are with PSTs on a daily basis, they should be best informed to contribute valuable feedback regarding whether the PST is achieving the goals of the PETE programme. In particular, the CTs "witness the application of effective management strategies, the construction and implementation of developmentally appropriate lesson plans, and evidence of reflective teaching practices by the PSTs" (McCullick, 2000, p. 508). Beck and Kosnik (2000) found that CTs were best placed to evaluate the PSTs as a result of this close contact. They acknowledged that the grading process caused extra stresses for the CTs but the CTs in this study also agreed that they were best placed to grade the PSTs. In essence, this removed the PSTs' worries about having a 'disastrous lesson' when the UT visits. Hargreaves (1994), cited in Koster *et al* (1998), backs this up by suggesting that CTs should share in, or even take primary responsibility for, the formal assessment of PSTs during the practicum. This is contradicted by Silberman (1970), cited in Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988), who identified the CT as the weakest component of the supervisory triad due to a lack of supervisory training. Anderson (2007), studying power relations between 98 PSTs and their CTs from a Midwestern University in the United States, also suggests that CTs should not be involved in the assessment or evaluation process as PSTs may find it more difficult to build relationships and ask for help if they know that they are going to be evaluated by their CT. Borko and Mayfield's (1995) findings complement Anderson's (2007) finding by stating that a 'power differential' is bound to occur as PSTs often choose to avoid confrontation.

Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) discuss the discourse surrounding the role of the CT in terms of the assistance and assessment of PSTs and new teachers. The authors, in summarising the traditional approach which separate the two contraries, state that many PSTs may not trust teachers who have a role in their evaluation. PSTs may be reluctant to share problems or ask for help as it may affect their assessment and, as a result, supervision becomes ineffective (Yusko and Feiman-Nemser, 2008). The authors refer to the process of assisting and assessing as ‘embracing contraries’, many CTs view their supervision role as one which nurtures, supports and encourages, whereas, involvement in the grading process leads to them becoming assessors, evaluators and gate-keepers to the teaching profession. This can negatively affect the development of CT/PST relationships. Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) examined two programmes, in Cincinnati and Santa Cruz, where mentors assisted and assessed new teachers. The study revealed that assistance and assessment can co-exist;

Participating in assessment and evaluation did not prevent mentors from forming trustworthy relationships, although it sometimes made that more challenging.

(Yusko and Feiman, 2008, p. 923)

The results revealed that combining assistance and assessment can strengthen the CTs work as it parallels with good teaching. However, it must be acknowledged that the CTs in the study were carefully chosen through stringent mentor selection. In conclusion, the authors acknowledge that this form of supervision and responsibility will only be educative if mentors are supported by appropriate frameworks and processes, and receive training and on-going CPD.

In an Irish context, CTs are not involved in the formal assessment of PSTs, and their role “remains cooperative, informal but non-consultative in the grading of marks” (McWilliams et al., 2006, p. 75). Kiely (2005) found that Irish CTs were reluctant to become formally involved in the assessment of PSTs assigned to their schools. CTs had concerns about the current system of assessment due to the inconsistency and small number of tutor visits. Kiely (2005) stressed that each of the stakeholders

involved in the study (CTs, PSTs and UTs) agreed that the CT/mentor should contribute informally to the assessment process, with mentors stating that they “could help focus students in the right direction and become more active partners by providing evidence for correlation with tutor’s findings” (p. 355). All the mentees believed that their mentors should have a role in their assessment as they were the people who saw them teach on a daily basis and saw progression (or not) in their teaching ability that UTs did not necessarily see. Kiely’s (2005) finding also correlates with Anderson (2007) who found that CT involvement in assessment may impact the development of close working relationships with the PST. There is support throughout the research that for CTs to be involved in the assessment process there must be a structured form of training and a process of moderation in place to support their new role (Johnson and Napper-Owen, 2011, Kiely, 2005, McWilliams et al., 2006). The concept of the CT playing a role in the assessment process is further addressed in chapter 9. The next section explores the benefits and drawbacks experienced by CTs involved in the school placement process.

## **2.6 The reality of being a cooperating teacher**

### **2.6.1 The benefits of being a cooperating teacher**

Graves (2010) found that many CTs, who are committed to the role of supervision, are motivated by their own professional beliefs, the progress of PSTs and the good of the teaching profession. This is supported by Ganser (2002) who discovered that CTs from a university in Wisconsin in the United States, found the process of supervision both personally and professionally fulfilling and that it had a positive effect on their careers. Throughout the research, many benefits are highlighted for experienced teachers to become involved in the supervisory process of PSTs and the development of partnerships with teacher education institutions. Beck and Kosnik (2000), for example, commented that the CTs in their study derived considerable satisfaction from their role as a supervisor, mainly because they learned a great deal from the practices of their PSTs and believed that their pupils also gained from the experience. Brown and Duguid (1996) refer to teachers benefitting from ‘stolen knowledge’, where PSTs become a rich resource of knowledge in which the CTs can

legitimately steal. CTs steal knowledge by watching and listening to PSTs teach to benefit their own professional development. Comiskey and Cotson (1997) reported benefits to CTs involved in a school-university partnership in England as observing a diversity in teaching styles, pupils being motivated by fresh ideas, reflection on their own teaching and a form of professional development (lifelong learning). They also refer to the school benefiting from the “enthusiasm and expertise in extra-curricular activities and more in class and individual pupil support” (p. 53). A study carried out by Hynes-Dusel (1999) in the United States, found that physical education CTs enjoyed the supervisory experience because it gave them the opportunity to ‘give something back’ to the teaching profession and that the process made them better teachers, even if it meant that they had to do more work.

Three categories of benefits emerged from Simpson *et al*'s (2007) findings of the professional benefits of mentoring in PST education programmes in rural communities in Australia. The first, personal gains, included emotional outcomes and opportunities to reflect upon growth, challenges and dilemmas. The second, professional development, pertained to access to current research and theory, development of leadership skills and opportunities to reflect on professional behaviour. Thirdly, the authors discuss the technical aspects, such as specific strategies, teaching resources and teaching skills. However, it is important to note that the CTs in this study received small payments for their role in the practicum and that this likely, in part at least, motivated their participation in the process. Sinclair *et al* (2006) explored positive and negative motivations for Australian CTs to become involved in the supervisory process. This extensive piece of research analysed the responses from 322 CTs who responded to a questionnaire. The positive benefits included (i) learning from both the experience and the PST, (ii) a valued relationship with the university, (iii) provision of a positive experience for the PST (unlike the negative ones they may have experienced), (iv) opportunity to share knowledge and best practice and (v) helping the PSTs become aware of the realities of teaching. The authors suggest that mapping the motivations and profiles of CTs will lead to identifying and encouraging new supervisors in the future.

### **2.6.2 The drawbacks of being a cooperating teacher**

Negative motivations for carrying out the supervision role were common across numerous studies (Christenson and Barney, 2011, Simpson et al., 2007, Sinclair et al., 2006, Wright and Smith, 2000). These included the (i) drawback of having additional responsibility to an already busy day, (ii) a lack of time for and commitment to undertake the role and (iii) the belief that PSTs were insufficiently prepared or committed to the practicum. The issue of a lack of time to commit to the CT role was stressed through the work of Beck and Kosnik (2000), Rikard and Veal (1996), Simpson *et al* (2007) and Sinclair (2006). Hastings and Squires (2002) emphasise that “the lack of time and/or overwork of the cooperating teacher are seen as an impediment to the success of fieldwork. More time is essential if the objectives of the practicum are to be met” (p. 83). A number of other drawbacks emerged including interruption of classes and instruction, displacement of the regular teacher, disrupted classroom routines, and the extra daily strain on teachers’ time and energy (Rikard & Veal, 1996). For the supervisory process to be effective, the CT must not only observe the PST teach but also give them detailed feedback following the class (as immediate as possible).

Hobson (2002) reported from a study involving a cohort of 224 English PSTs, that not all CTs were supportive of their PSTs due to the lack of status, recognition, incentive, or reward they received throughout the process. A final drawback emphasised in the literature is that the lack of prior contact with the teacher education institution results in the CT having no control over those they will supervise, which often leads to personality clashes (Jeong and Mc Cullick, 2001, Tercanlioglu, 2004). The CT also does not have control over the timing of the school placement, often occurring at inopportune moments in the school term (e.g. exam periods) (Sim, 2011). The following section addresses the specific requirements needed to develop effective CTs.

## **2.7 Developing effective cooperating teachers**

### **2.7.1 Attracting cooperating teachers**

Sinclair *et al* (2006) compiled a list of ‘enticers’ which could act as possible future motivators for Australian CTs. These included increased extrinsic rewards, such as payment, additional teaching experience, more time designated on their timetable to work with PSTs, enhanced communication between school and universities, and additional contact and support from UTs. The authors suggest that if schools can release teachers to undertake the role effectively, and teacher education institutions run efficient and manageable placements, then CTs’ motivation to be involved will be increased and there will be a greater chance that they will engage as effective supervisors in the placement. Sinclair *et al* (2006) believe that identifying what motivates CTs to become supervisors is the first step in attracting and encouraging new CTs into the role of supervisor. For example, Hobson (2002) suggest that providing more time to work with English PSTs and the provision of more effective training opportunities for qualified teachers who wish to become supervisors are two examples of effective interventions. In terms of professionally engaging physical education teachers to become supervisors, Tannehill and Goc-Karp (1992) found that some colleges in the United States reimbursed supervision with course waivers for teachers, course credit for supervising, university perks, and financial incentives.

Veal and Rikard (1998) refer specifically to the potential benefits a physical education teacher may experience as a result of being part of the practicum. They highlight the fact that many physical education teachers often work in isolation in a school and may be separated from other school faculty. Therefore, hosting a PST at the school allows the exchange of ideas and sharing of information in terms of teaching and learning. CTs can learn from the PST and also aid PSTs learning from them, thus creating a two way process and interaction that CTs previously lacked. Involvement in the practicum also provides the CT with a link to the teacher education institution and UTs, further reducing their isolation at the school site. In researching quality teacher education, Darling-Hammond (2006) provided eight principles for reviewing and designing programmes. One of the principles included a

well-structured alliance between schools and universities built on strong relationships, common knowledge and shared beliefs to support ITE. It is likely that if this principle is in place CTs will feel supported and valued and therefore engage fully in the school placement process.

### **2.7.2 The selection of cooperating teachers**

A number of studies address the issue of the selection of CTs for the role of supervisor (Beck and Kosnik, 2000, Chambers, 2009, Hobson, 2002, Sudzina et al., 1997). Tannehill and Goc-Karp (1992) acknowledge that the school placement has been researched extensively but little attention has been given to the organisation and implementation of the placement, including the selection of effective CTs and school sites. Research informs us that the full potential of the student teaching experience will only be achieved through selecting CTs who demonstrate effective supervisory and communication skills (Coulon and Byra, 1997, Glenn, 2006). Behets and Vergauwen (2006) reported that PSTs experienced negative placements due to the fact that they were placed in schools based on convenience rather than a site which would provide a quality learning experience with a supportive CT. The authors state that “the need for selection and training of CTs is urgent, as the role of the university tutor is limited due to the low frequency of visits” (p. 409). Regrettably, due to the high demand for placements, teaching expertise is not always taken into account. Chambers (2009) supports this statement and highlighted that while CTs should be carefully selected and trained appropriately, Irish CTs are selected on the basis of availability and not on their suitability for school placement. A study carried out by Tannehill and Goc-Karp (1992) investigated the criteria for selecting CTs in the United States. The results found that (i) Colleges of Education and not physical education departments made the majority of student teacher placements, (ii) CTs were selected based on their teaching experience and not their supervisory experience, (iii) less than 50% of CTs had undergone any supervisory training, and (iv) almost 50% of programmes did not compensate CTs in any way. The results of this study further highlight that the process of selecting CTs and school sites is a neglected aspect of teacher education programmes. The process of selecting CTs based on teaching skills and not supervisory skills can result in

unqualified supervisors demonstrating wrong instructional and management techniques and providing little or no feedback (Jeong and Mc Cullick, 2001).

Sudzina *et al* (1997) refer to the fact that the ‘mentor’ relationships between the PST and the CT can develop into ‘tormentor’ relationships due to CTs not being subject to selection criteria and therefore not trained to deal with PSTs on placement. One of the main reasons for this is the sheer number of CTs that are needed to supervise PSTs from teacher education institutions. The training opportunities for CTs are explored in the next section.

## **2.8 Training cooperating teachers**

“It is clear that the role of the cooperating teacher, acting as mentor, is very influential, but poorly conceived and prepared for” (Bennett, 1995, p. 4). The urgent need to train all members of the school placement triad is prevalent in the literature, especially in terms of the CT (Albasheer *et al.*, 2008, Beck and Kosnik, 2000, Behets and Vergauwen, 2006, Coulon, 1991, Fischer and van Andel, 2002, Koster *et al.*, 1998, Remington-Smith, 2007, Tjeerdsma, 1998). One of the reasons for poor student teaching is often the result of untrained and unprepared CTs and UTs (Chambers, 2009). Chambers (2009) states that;

It would be helpful if UTs and CTs were trained specifically to provide high quality learning support for PETE students during teaching practice. Such training could pave the way for the development of genuine partnerships between CTs and UTs, and between schools and universities, with both parties actively supporting PETE student learning on teaching practice.

(p.14)

As stated previously, many studies found that, as a result of a lack of sufficient training, many CTs reverted to supervisory behaviours encountered during their own school placement experiences (Behets and Vergauwen, 2006, Cothran *et al.*, 2008, Rikard and Veal, 1996). The variety of these experiences can have negative

implications on the supervision of PSTs. It is important to realise that “good teachers are not automatically good mentors” (Hennissen et al., 2010, p. 1) and that CTs, and often UTs, should receive as much attention and training as PSTs in terms of supervision procedures and expectations. Sudzina *et al* (1997) recognise that “cooperating teachers appear to have the greatest influence on a student teacher’s professional development yet they are generally unprepared for the task of supervision” (p. 6). The authors, in identifying the role of American CTs in contributing to PSTs’ successes or failures, highlight that, traditionally, few CTs receive training or support beyond written materials and/or a single orientation session. As a result of a lack of training, CTs generally tend to be unaware of the goals of the training institutions which can lead to the CTs having unrealistic expectations of the PSTs while on placement, ultimately resulting in negative feedback and support (Sudzina et al., 1997).

Beck and Kosnik (2002) highlighted that CTs should be given adequate preparation for their role as supervisor and be given the opportunity to develop a critical stance toward their own teaching to positively impact that of the PST. Rickard and Veal (1996) reflect similar findings in that CTs received little or no guidance about how to be effective supervisors to PSTs. Their study revealed that 21 out of 23 CTs received no provision for their preparation as supervisors by the universities with whom they worked. As a result, most supervisory behaviours were developed through trial and error. In conclusion, the authors state that it is the university’s responsibility to assure that CTs receive proper supervisory training and they reinforce the idea that most CTs would be more than willing, and of course better able, to supervise PSTs if they were adequately equipped with the right skills.

It is common for some teacher education institutions to conduct workshops once or twice a year to improve the supervisory capabilities of CTs and provide support in the form of handbooks (Albasheer et al., 2008, Gursoy and Damar, 2011). The institutions use these opportunities to inform CTs of recent trends in teaching and learning and the training of PSTs. One university in particular, in Jordan, uses this format and the UTs follow up closely with the CTs on a regular basis throughout the

practicum. Meetings can be arranged between all stakeholders and the results published in an annual booklet that can be used as guidance throughout the practicum (Albasheer et al., 2008). Coulon (1991), investigating the relationship between PETE programme goals and CT feedback in the United States, similarly discussed that CTs can be effective supervisors if they are aware of the goals of the programme, and as a result, training manuals which set out expectations and standards, were designed and utilised amongst the CTs in the study. As a result of this approach, results showed improved and effective supervisory behaviours during the school placement period. McCullick (2000), Tannehill and Zakrajek (1988) and Tjeerdsma (1998) all discuss the benefits of distributing PETE goals and standards in handbook form prior to the arrival of the PST. The handbooks are designed to give support to CTs in the delivery of more substantive feedback and provide information on supervisory skills. Wright *et al* (2012) discuss the use of role playing via videotaped lessons to provide opportunities to observe and analyse supervisory behaviours. This study in the United States involved the up-skilling of UTs to enhance their supervision of PSTs but could be transferred to the training of CTs.

Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988) refer to Paese (1984) who states that, in the absence of effective training, supervision will remain a 'hit and miss' occurrence and a process that focuses on problem solving rather than improving the teaching skills of PSTs. This is supported by Zeichner (2002) who states that "high quality student teaching placements will continue to be a matter of good fortune rather than the norm" (p. 59). Anderson (2007) highlights that CTs need to be taught how to combine pressure and support in order to give PSTs the feedback and guidance they need to develop as confident teachers. If this is in place, PSTs will have greater access to a more structured and systematic school placement in which to develop. A study into mentors' professional knowledge in England, carried out by Jones and Straker (2006), found that a large number of mentors acquired their supervisory knowledge through practice and experience (98%), mentor training (85%) and collaboration with colleagues (80%).

To enhance teacher education, institutions must train CTs to facilitate and encourage the achievement of the teacher education programme's goals. In challenging economic times, it makes sense to train CTs to effectively supervise PSTs, bearing in mind the minimum contact UTs have with the PSTs and the increasing costs incurred. This was highlighted by Siedentop as far back as 1983 when he stated that "university supervision in the form of visitation is economically and pedagogically inefficient" (cited in Ocansey, 1988, p. 59). Internationally, some institutions have attempted to address these issues by providing structured supervisory training and opportunities for professional development (Nielsen et al., 2010, Russell and Russell, 2011, Tannehill and Goc-Karp, 1992).

It is acknowledged in the literature that the challenge ahead for teacher education is in the training of CTs. For example, Remington-Smith (2007), examining the challenges faced by American CTs and PSTs in their collaborative planning conversations, stresses that the gap between university based education and the experience gained in school must be bridged and to do this the training of CTs must be addressed.

Cooperating teacher training is an ideal venue for cooperating teachers to learn to facilitate planning, to explore practices different from their own; engage in discussions that explore their own teaching ideas and assist novices who bring new ideas to the table.

(Remington-Smith, 2007, p. 103)

The training of UTs to facilitate debrief sessions between CTs and PSTs to enable the effective delivery of feedback and support is also proposed. Sudzina *et al* (1997) refers to Richardson-Koehler (1988) who states that if

the cooperating teacher is the most influential player in the cooperating teacher, pre-service teacher and university tutor triangle, it behoves teacher educators to take seriously the particular and unique role of cooperating teachers as they contribute to pre-service teachers successes or failures.

(p. 33)

It is important to recognise that the training of CTs should not be in isolation from the UTs and PSTs; it must be a three way process for it to be effective and beneficial. There is also an opportunity at teacher education institutions to up-skill PSTs to become effective CTs in the future. The following are examples of two teacher education institutions' efforts to involve CTs in the school placement process and offer supervisory training.

### **2.8.1 Lucent Science Teacher Initiative**

In Ireland, the INTO (2006) recommends that the “expertise of experienced practitioners be recognised, through enabling practising teachers to become more formally involved in teaching practice as mentor teachers, and be given the necessary training, support and reward” (p. 23). The Lucent Science Teacher Initiative (Kiely, 2005), carried out at the University of Limerick (2000-2003), provided new methods (particularly in an Irish context) of professional training for science CTs in their role as mentors (supervisors). The study involved CTs attending a five day summer school, followed by supervision of a PST in cooperation with a UT. The CTs then attended a further two day summer school to evaluate their work with the PSTs. Successful candidates received certificates of completion and were entitled to credits in degree courses at the university. This study was positively impacted by the availability of funding, from Lucent Technologies K16 programme, to pay the mentors a sum of money for each PST they supervised. The study found that the school-based teachers, who were trained in the skills of mentoring, had a significant impact on the quality of Science PSTs' school placement (Kiely, 2005). The success of the Lucent Science Teachers Initiative pilot project has demonstrated that teachers can become effective mentors to PSTs and that such a system can exist

in Ireland if sufficient monetary and institutional backing is supplied. Following this intervention, Kiely (2005) highlights the need for more structured partnerships between Irish schools and the teacher education institutions due to the increased emphasis on school-based experience and the acknowledgement that teachers in schools are a rich resource in the development of PSTs.

### **2.8.2 Mentoring at Southampton University**

Kinchin *et al* (2009) discuss the benefits and frustrations of creating cluster mentoring at Southampton University in England. Training for CTs took the form of cluster meetings where groups of physical education CTs from a number of schools met to enhance their role as supervisors. The aim of the mentor training was to “sustain interest in mentoring, promote continuous professional development (CPD) and strengthen school-university partnerships within a supportive professional network” (Kinchin et al., 2009, p. 2). The training involves two meetings a year, in December and May, attended by the CTs and a tutor from the university. The December meeting involves an explanation of new documentation and discussion on new approaches or methods of teaching and learning. The May meeting involves a joint observation (by the CTs of each cluster) of a PST on placement. It serves as a moderation process and an opportunity to enhance supervisory capabilities. The study has seen a success rate of nearly 90% attendance across all clusters and, as a result, CTs have greater involvement in the university programme. There has been an increase in the number of workshops available and greater attendance from CTs. Frustrations highlighted with the process included the frequent turnover of mentor teachers and sustaining interest and involvement in the meetings. The next section provides a brief summary of school-university partnerships and their impact on the learning trajectory of CTs in the school placement process.

## **2.9 School-university partnerships**

With both the cooperating teacher and PETE faculty working closer together...the chances are greater of producing top notch future professional physical educators who are prepared to respond to the growing demands of physical educators today.

(Christenson and Barney, 2011, p. 15)

In addressing the learning trajectories of CTs, it is important to establish the importance of school-university partnerships and the potential impact they may have on the development of effective supervisors. Much has been written internationally about the need for well developed, structured partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions to ensure successful experiences for PSTs while on school placements (Caires and Almeida, 2005, Chambers, 2009, Ganser, 1996, Hardy, 1999). However, there is considerably less evidence in the literature reporting the experiences of CTs in the partnerships. School placements are seen as “an important partnership between teacher-training higher education institutions and schools through which teachers’ professional development is facilitated and enhanced” (Sivan and Chan, 2003, p. 183). The same study suggested that there is a need to strengthen the existing school-university partnership and that increased involvement and understanding of all participants of the triad will result in greater improvements in practicums. Sudzina *et al* (1997) agree with this point by emphasising that for the triad to work effectively, all participants of the triad must not only understand the various processes involved in the school placement, but they must also have a voice in the process. Veal and Rikard (1998) support this by suggesting the development of “an alternative model of supervision in which all three members of the triad share decision making and have an equal voice in the student teaching experience” (p. 116). Conway (2011a), in a commentary on teacher education, highlights the importance of the influence of the CT in the development of effective PSTs. The authors advocate the process of learning to teach in the form of assisted practice (as opposed to solo practice) and state that “this has significant implications for school-university partnerships in terms of how teaching practice and school experiences are structured” (p. 103).

To establish a partnership between the school and the teacher education institutions, strong lines of communication must be maintained. Caires and Almeida (2005), describing PSTs’ first contact with the teaching profession in Portugal, believe that a genuine link between the school and the university must be set up to agree and formalise goals and targets for the PSTs from the beginning. However, the absence

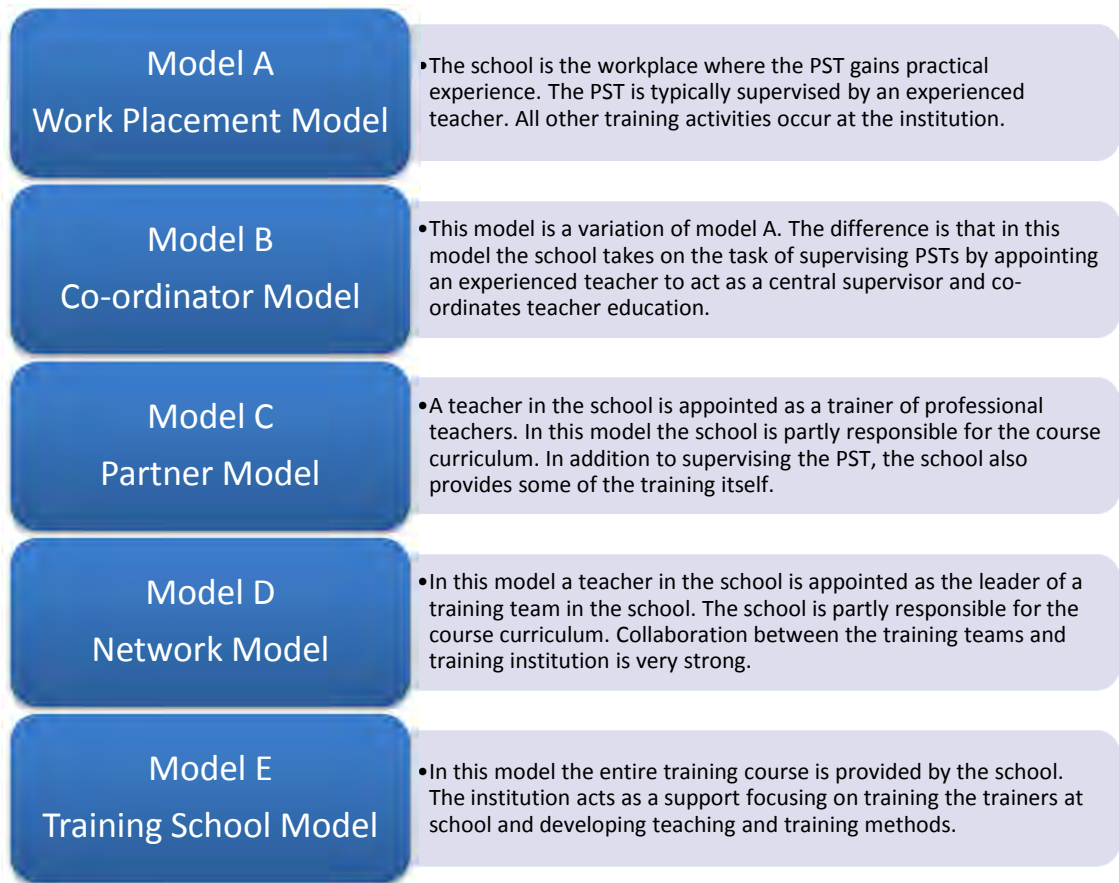
of these clear goals appears to be a common fragility in many of the international systems of school-based experiences. Sudzina (1997) summarises the process as

Pre-service teachers need a guide, a teacher, a mentor to help them as they struggle to navigate the often frightening distance between their college preparation and the beginnings of their teaching career. Cooperating teachers also need a guide and mentor as they navigate the waters of providing effective supervision and mentoring.

(p. 33)

Beck and Kosnik (2002) found that for a school placement to be successful it should take place in innovative schools which have developed a partnership with the teacher education institution in a “joint program of research and teacher development” (p. 82). Siedentop and Locke (1997), cited in Hardy (1999), further extend this by stating that PETE can only fulfil its responsibility “if it does so in collaboration with schools in which there are good physical education programmes” (p. 177). This relates back to the theme of selection. However, many teacher education institutions do not have the luxury of identifying school sites for their placements due to the high number of PSTs to place on practicum and the limited number of school placements available.

Conway *et al* (2011a) discuss that many countries in the last decade have initiated the development of mentoring and school-university partnerships and found that “it is common for formal partnership arrangements to be developed between higher education institutions and schools to provide structured support and a gradual increase in classroom responsibility for student teachers” (p. 98). Maandag *et al* (2007), in a study of school-university partnerships, highlight that many partnerships vary considerably in structure and practice. Results from a five-country cross-national study (England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden) describe how partnerships range from a work placement model, with minimum collaboration, to a training school model where the school undertakes the entire training of a PST. The following figure summarises the five models of school-university partnerships.



(Adapted from Maandag et al, 2007, p.153)

The nature of school-university partnerships in Ireland is evident in model A, the work placement model, where the school acts as a host to the PST. Conway *et al* (2011a) suggest that this practice needs to be readdressed and it is critical that formal partnership arrangements are established for improvements in teacher education to occur. As described previously, the establishment of formal school-university partnerships can positively impact the learning trajectories of CTs due to the potential interaction and collaboration with other members of the school placement triad.

## 2.10 Conclusion

It has emerged that many PSTs go on to become CTs later on in their careers and rely heavily on their own student teaching experiences as preparation for becoming supervisors. Therefore, it is important that the dynamics of the school placement triad are addressed. Rickard and Veal (1996) assert the need to develop shared

supervision, including shared power among all members of the triad. All three participants of the triad must be involved in the process and become aware of the potential of providing professional development for one another. This shared process, described by Veal and Rikard, (1998), encourages PSTs to assist in structuring and directing conferences with the CT and UT. It can result in three-way conversations where all written and verbal feedback and evaluations are shared among the group. This “sharing of information encourages open and honest interactions, thus fostering a community involved in the student teaching experience” (Veal and Rikard, 1998a, p. 117). It has been recognised that CTs can, with sufficient training and guidance, become effective supervisors in the school placement experience. A large number of studies look at ways to disseminate supervisory information to CTs (Belton et al., 2010, Coulon, 1991, Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Tannehill and Goc-Karp, 1992) in an effort to enable them to supervise effectively. However, it is important to continue to identify the most sustainable and cost effective way to do so. In some instances, what CTs require in order to learn the skills of an effective supervisor is limited as a result of poor school-university partnerships. There is a need to create improved partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions to create an environment of growth for the CT while supervising PSTs on school placements. Clear roles and responsibilities and goals of the teacher education institution must be made apparent to all involved in the process as only then will it be possible for close relationships to be developed between the CT, the PST and the UT.

For CTs to gain the skills necessary to effectively supervise PSTs, they must be provided with scaffolded support through the development of relationships with both PSTs and UTs. Training and support for CTs can take place through constant interaction with UTs and PSTs, conversations between CTs and UTs about PST teaching and encouragement of CTs to attend CPD courses. While there is an obvious need to enhance the school placement process, it is also important to emphasise the need to balance both university based elements and practical placements and that the development of PETE is based on the integration of the two. To ensure high quality teacher education, research stresses the need for it to be continuously reviewed. As such, the next stage should be to develop a mechanism

by which all school placement stakeholders can operate effectively to sustain and develop the progress and levels of attainment of all PSTs in meeting the highest standards. An appropriate goal to aspire to in an Irish context would be the gradual movement towards the ‘co-ordinator model’ and eventually the ‘partnership model’ (Maandag et al., 2007) in school placements. The following chapter provides a historical background of teacher education in Ireland to provide insight into past structures and ideologies. It serves to give an insight into why the system that is in place currently exists.

# Chapter 3: Historical Context – Teacher Education in Ireland

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## **3.1 Introduction**

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Review (1991), describing the provision of initial teacher education in Ireland, stated that “despite the pressures, initial teacher education is already of a good and appropriate standard and, happily, the means very largely exist at present for the further development that should and will undoubtedly occur” (p. 97). To examine the accuracy of this statement, it is essential to look historically at the development of initial teacher education (ITE) in Ireland and to what extent the perceived development occurred within the sphere of teacher education in general. Analysis will provide insight as to why the system that is in place currently exists and identify mechanisms to potentially enhance existing practice to improve the quality of supervision in Ireland. The evolving relationship between the school placement triad, i.e. the cooperating teacher (CT), the university tutor (UT) and the pre-service teacher (PST) will also be addressed throughout the historical context. The chapter reviews the progress and developments made in bringing teacher education into the twenty-first century. A significant number of government reports, papers and reviews are presented to highlight issues relating to the development of teacher education. These are supported by an analysis of a number of OECD reports which have impacted on the direction of teacher education and supervision in an Irish context.

## **3.2 Developments in Education 1891-1970**

The Education Act (1891) established the state system of education in Ireland and unusually remained the only piece of education legislation in place until the passing of the Education Act 1998. However, during this time, a number of significant papers, reports and reviews suggested changes to the shape of education in Ireland.

Up to the 1970s, post-primary teaching was based on the consecutive model i.e., a three/four year initial degree followed by the completion of a one year Higher Diploma in Education (H.Dip). The H.Dip was developed in 1912, followed by the establishment of the Secondary Teacher's Registration Council in 1918. It was compulsory to complete the H.Dip to become a registered teacher and, further to this, eligibility for the new salary increment became dependent upon registration in 1924. 1909 saw the introduction of the teaching union, the Association of Secondary Teachers (ASTI), as a result of pressure to improve standards within teacher education. In 1933 'Practical Teaching' became an integral part of the H.Dip. Each PST completed on average six weeks a year on placement in a school (Coolahan, 2004). The school was designated by the colleges and were usually the schools closest to the institutions. The Department of Education monitored standards by sending inspectors to assess a cross section of teachers. Up to the 1970s, effective delivery of the H.Dip was compromised by a number of factors. These included the fact that lectures had to occur in late afternoons and evenings and staff shortages were common (Coolahan, 2004).

A number of reports emerged in the latter half of the 1960s which directly impacted teacher education. These included the 'Investment in Education Report' (1966) which was the first survey to report on primary and post-primary systems and the Commission on Higher Education Report (1967), which provided a detailed survey of higher education in Ireland. A number of recommendations were made following the publication of the two reports, including the establishment of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 1968, which would act as a link between the government and the universities. The HEA's first report, the 'Report on Teacher Education' (1970) recommended that university departments (staffing) be expanded and facilities for research be made available (Coolahan, 1981). 'Teacher Education' replaced the term 'Teacher Training' and the education sector saw an increase in numbers applying for teacher education courses. This came about as a direct result of trying to improve pupil-teacher ratios in schools nationally. In line with this, was the introduction of the Bachelor of Education Degree (B.Ed) in 1974 and the Higher Diploma in Education was restructured to place more emphasis on the teaching placement aspect of the course. The first recommendation for the establishment of a

Teaching Council came about in 1974 (Coolahan, 2004). It would be over another 30 years before this came to fruition.

### **3.3 Teacher Education 1970-1989**

The National College for Physical Education was set up in Limerick in 1970, the first college to specialise in the education of second level (physical education) teachers in Ireland. This later became Thomond College of Education and widened its approach to include areas such as woodwork, metalwork and rural science. These courses were concurrent, that is, a four year integrated course with teaching practice occurring in block placements. As a result, teaching became an all graduate profession in the 1970s with both consecutive and concurrent courses available (Coolahan, 2004, Drudy, 2006). Consecutive courses were mainly offered by the four National Universities of Ireland (University College Dublin, University College Cork, NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth), while subjects such as Physical Education, Construction Studies, Art and Home Economics pursued the concurrent route. Initial teacher education was also supported by the setting up of regional Teacher Centres. The first centres were established in 1972 and were run on a voluntary basis by teachers. The centres' aims were to provide a range of supportive and valuable in-service activities for teachers in all parts of the country. The late 1960s and the early 1970s saw an influx of initiatives to enhance the development of initial teacher education throughout the country. Upon the conception of the University of Limerick in 1989, Thomond College became subsumed within the larger university structure.

### **3.4 Teacher Education 1990 and beyond**

#### **3.4.1 The Influence of the OECD on Teacher Education: The three 'I's' perspective**

“It is widely acknowledged that, in Ireland and internationally, the decade of the 1990s and the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been a period of unprecedented change in both society and education” (Drudy, 2006, p.3). This change in teacher

education began with the publication of the ‘Reviews of National Policies for Education: Ireland’ (OECD, 1991). While the review highlighted a number of strengths of the Irish education system, it also made suggestions for “improvement and modernisation” (Coolahan, 2003, p.1). In particular, the review of Irish education made reference to the development of teachers and recommended developments in the following three areas: (i) good quality initial teacher education, (ii) structured form of induction, and (iii) in-service teacher education. These developments were known as the three ‘I’s perspective’; initial teacher education, induction and in-service (Coolahan, 2004). This review led to the publication of a number of government policy documents which marked a turning point in teacher education in Ireland. These included Education for a Changing World: Green Paper on Education (1992), the Report on the National Education Convention (1994), Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education (1995) and the OECD publication ‘Teachers Matter’ (2005).

The government’s Green Paper (1992) identified issues within education and proposed a framework for development to take place over the following decade. One of the aims relating directly to initial teacher education was “to train and develop teachers so as to equip them for a constantly changing environment” (DES, 1992, aim 4, p. 23). The paper’s first recommendation related to initial teacher education. With the view to encourage mobility within the teaching profession, the paper suggested a common form of initial teacher education for all primary and secondary teachers. The reasoning behind this was that it would ensure greater “flexibility in meeting teaching needs at a local level, especially in the context of specialist teacher requirements at both levels” (p. 164). It was also hoped that the gap would be narrowed between the teaching methodologies used in both primary and secondary classes. To enable this, the suggested model included a three year university degree, followed by a post-graduate teacher training diploma (including school placements), culminating in a probationary year in a school. The proposed union of primary and secondary initial teacher training did not become a reality. The introduction of a probationary year became a popularised view throughout the 1990s. Further to this, the OECD (1991) recommended that “the best returns from further investment in teacher education will come from the careful planning and construction of a

nationwide induction and in-service system using the concept of the teaching career as the foundation” (p. 98). The concept of induction for newly qualified teachers was readdressed in greater depth in the White Paper (1995) and will be discussed in more detail in section 3.4.3.

In 1991, the Secondary Teachers Registration Council stated that a teacher’s final degree examinations must include a school curriculum subject. Supporting this, the Green Paper (1992) proposed that “newly registered teachers must teach their final year degree subject for at least half their timetabled hours” (p. 165). The debate about the establishment of a Teaching Council to support all teachers resurfaced in the Green Paper. A committee was set up in 1990 to deal with concerned interests and specific legal issues relating to the establishment of a Teaching Council.

### **3.4.2 The National Education Convention 1993**

Following the publication of the Green Paper, the Minister for Education at the time, Niamh Bhreathnach, invited a number of stakeholders to discuss the proposals made in the paper, which culminated in the National Education Convention in 1993. The convention gave an opportunity to “clarify issues, analyse submissions and foster consensus” (Coolahan, 2003, p. 3). The government’s proposal of strengthening the three I’s (initial, induction and in-career teacher education) was welcomed by the majority of the stakeholders. Significantly, the convention proposed the development of closer links between the universities and schools and the utilisation of teachers as mentors to PSTs while on school placements (Coolahan, 2007). The ‘Report on the National Education Convention’ was published in 1994.

### **3.4.3 The White Paper 1995**

The ‘Report on the National Education Convention’ (1994) formed the basis of the government’s White Paper ‘Changing Our Education Future’ (1995). The paper stated that “Providing education, which is responsive to the demands of ever-accelerating change, requires teachers who are adaptable and reflective practitioners

and who have knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to facilitate learning” (p. 140). The paper set out a framework for the development and modernisation of education in Ireland and established a number of policy directions for the provision of education. Chapter eight of the document sets out recommendations for ‘The Teaching Profession’ and incorporates the concept of the three I’s (initial teacher education, induction and in-service training) reported by the OECD in 1991. The first recommendation proposed that the concurrent model of teacher education would be retained for the initial training of primary teachers and recommended that the Higher Education Authority “undertake a systematic review of the pre-service education for second level teachers and to make recommendations for its future development” (p. 130). Two important features regarding initial teacher education included:

- The provision of an extensive programme to develop the pedagogical and classroom management skills of student teachers through wide and varied teaching practice, including placement in different school settings and teaching subjects at various levels.
- The use of experienced teachers to guide and assist student teachers and to facilitate their subsequent induction into teaching.

(DES, 1995, p.130)

A second recommendation concerned the establishment of an induction year for primary and secondary teachers. Proposals included continued links between the teacher education institutions and the newly qualified teachers to provide on-going support and training. The schools were to provide mentors to oversee the probationary year and to ensure the smooth transition into teaching. A third recommendation stated that each newly qualified teacher would have a profile upon beginning teaching. The profile would indicate strengths and areas for development and would be updated at the end of the probationary year. The establishment of an induction year remained at the forefront of educational debate throughout the late 1990s but the creation of teacher profiles have not as yet come to fruition nor has a formalised induction year.

In-career professional development was also a concern raised in the report,

Teacher education is a continuum in which quality initial training and well-managed structured induction are followed by well devised in-career training programmes, available periodically throughout a teacher's career.

(DES, 1995, p.134)

The 'Teacher Centres' were renamed as 'Education Centres' and were to be re-established to provide school clusters on-going support and a system of continuous professional development (CPD). To highlight key areas of in-career professional development, a National In-career Development Unit was established in the Department of Education and was to work closely with the Education Centres, University Departments and Colleges of Education. Another recommendation in the document related to the establishment of a Teaching Council which would cover both primary and secondary level sections. It was proposed that the Teaching Council's main aim would be to emphasise and enhance teaching as a profession and for the "minister to publish a draft legislative framework for the operation of the council which will subsume the existing Secondary Teacher's Registration Council" (p. 144). A number of the perceived functions of the Council would be to establish a register for all teachers, lay down conditions for registration, administer disciplinary and deregistration procedures, and offer advice on relevant policy matters, for example, teacher supply and demand, pre-service education, induction processes and in-career development. The document stated that registration for the Teaching Council would be compulsory for all primary and secondary teachers.

### **3.5 A changing landscape in teacher education**

Ireland's economy was entering a boom period in the late 1990s. There was a gradual realisation that a good education system would have positive benefits in many spheres of Irish life, particularly the economic sector (Drudy, 2006). As a result, the government passed the new Education Act in 1998. While the Act did not relate directly to teacher education, it had a huge impact on education, schools and

the curriculum, in terms of special educational needs, disability, equality and admissions. The government also initiated a review of both primary and post-primary teacher education. To support this, a Teacher Education Section (TES) was developed within the Department of Education and Science (DES) to deal specifically with teacher education issues.

### **3.5.1 The establishment of the Teaching Council**

A report on the establishment of a Teaching Council was also released in 1998. This culminated in the passing of the Teaching Council Act in 2001, a significant development for education in Ireland. The Teaching Council became the first independent body to regulate key aspects of the teaching profession. Its primary functions included the promotion of teaching as a profession, the creation of a register for all qualified teachers in Ireland, establishment of codes of professional conduct for teachers and the approval of initial teacher education courses. The Teaching Council, established on a statutory basis on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2006, was launched by the then Minister for State Mary Hanafin. With regards to education and training (Government 2001, section 38) the Council is to (i) review and accredit the programmes of teacher education and training provided by institutions of higher education and training in the state, (ii) review the standards of education and training appropriate to a person entering a programme of teacher education and training, (iii) review the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required for the practice of teaching and (iv) promote the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers. The establishment of the Teaching Council resulted in the teaching profession gaining more control over the education of teachers and entry requirements into teaching. The Teaching Council became self-regulatory and its reform could have the potential to enhance the status and professionalism of teaching (Drudy, 2006).

### **3.5.2 Government action on education**

Since the passing of the Education Act in 1998, legislation has impacted education in many ways, including the ‘Qualifications (Education and Training) Act’ (1999),

the 'Education and Welfare Act' (2000), the 'Teaching Council Act' (2001) and the 'Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act' (2004). These acts signify a change of culture in Irish society, a progressive society which is geared towards the development of a strong and progressive education system. Significantly, for initial teacher education programmes, the 'Advisory Group on Post-Primary Teacher Education' (Byrne Report) was commissioned in 1999 to review post-primary level teacher education and come up with a framework to enhance and develop the systems already in place. In 2002, the group published 65 recommendations including:

- The establishment of partnership boards between universities and stakeholders.
- A minimum of two different sites for teaching practice.
- Retention of both the consecutive and concurrent models.
- Structured induction for all newly qualified teachers.

(Drudy, 2006, p.7)

Significantly, the report was only made available publically in 2005. There have been many developments on a number of the recommendations which have positively impacted initial teacher education, such as retaining both the consecutive and concurrent courses and the development of two different sites for teaching practice placements. Unfortunately, for the development of other recommendations, there is a need for substantial state exchequer funding to be made available for any significant progress to be made, particularly in terms of developing links between the teacher education institutions and schools. However, what is important is that "teacher education has been the subject of much review, reflection, reform and development over the last fifteen years" (Drudy, 2006, p. 8) and there is evidence of progress within teacher education in terms of opportunities and availability of places for prospective student teachers. Numbers on teacher education courses, within the seven universities and associated colleges of education, have increased steadily since 2000, with a significant rise from 1,000 places in 2006 to 1,649 places in 2007/08 (H.E.A, 2012). The number of students graduating from teacher education courses (primary and post-primary) rose to 2,750 in 2011 (Hyland, 2012). This conveys the government's willingness to develop teacher education courses and the education sector becoming more attractive to students.

### **3.5.3 The National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction**

A National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction was unveiled in 2002 to look at mechanisms to support newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in their first years of teaching. Prior to this, once teachers left the teacher education institutions, they had no formal links with the universities or colleges and had no support systems available to them within the schools. The aim of the pilot project was to introduce new methods of induction and to evaluate which worked best to support newly qualified teachers in their first years of teaching, “thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development” (INTO, 2006, p. 17). The pilot project also came about in response to the White Paper’s (1995) recommendation to create a “well developed and carefully managed induction programme, coinciding with the teacher’s probationary year” (p. 131). The project created partnerships with the three teacher unions (the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland, the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation and the Teachers’ Union of Ireland), the DES and university education departments to develop a programme in line with international best practice to support the induction of newly qualified teachers. The first pilot took place in 2002/03 and involved a selection of experienced teachers to train as mentors. Induction courses were delivered in selected schools with training available at the regional Education Centres. Following the evaluation, the review committee outlined recommendations and a further pilot project took place in 2003/04 with a new cohort of 40 newly qualified teachers (NQT). By the academic year 2007-2008, 90 mentors and 120 newly qualified teachers had participated in the programme (Moody, 2009). In September 2010, the renamed Department of Education and Skills (previously Department of Education and Science) published a circular stating interim arrangements for the availability of induction programmes for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Education Centres around the country (Background Report: Teacher Education in Ireland and Internationally, 2010).

### **3.6 International influences on educational reform**

In 2003 the OECD conducted an international research project entitled ‘Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers’. It was instigated by the acknowledgement of the role education plays in the development and improvement of economies and employment worldwide and the appreciation that with an ever changing society there is a need for education to transform and modernise. Twenty five countries participated in the project. A country background report was submitted by Ireland with the hope that it may be “regarded as a valuable resource for policy makers and others on the teaching career in contemporary Ireland, and that it will be helpful in the general OECD study” (Coolahan, 2003, p. iii). The Irish report mirrors the project’s goal by stating that

The Irish government has been determined that Ireland should build on its educational strengths and reform, adapt and modernise its education system so that it can continue to serve the needs of its citizens in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment.

(Coolahan, 2003, p. 1)

The report is complimentary to the development of education in Ireland, displaying a strong tradition of academic success and an innovative teaching profession. The introduction of a Teaching Council is welcomed and the development of continuous professional development is acknowledged. However, Coolahan (2003, p. ii) is aware that a number of issues must be addressed “if Ireland is to remain in a position of strength in terms of the attractiveness of its teaching profession”. To do this, he suggests maintaining the goal of the OECD’s (1991) report, ‘Reviews of National Policies for Education: Ireland’, i.e. the three I’s approach but with a renewed policy approach. Initial teacher education, induction and in-career development as an inroad to lifelong learning has remained at the forefront of educational policies throughout the 1990s in Ireland. The education system started to take what is termed the “from the cradle to the grave” approach within a lifelong learning paradigm (Coolahan, 2003, p. vi) in teacher education, meaning that the system began to understand the importance of investing in the concept of the three I’s approach. The report was complimentary about the structure of teacher education but highlighted

that a review was needed to ensure that each of the teacher education institutions was providing up to date and innovative procedures, methodologies and contemporary course content. In terms of PST education courses, Coolahan suggested an extension to the length of the courses to improve the quality of NQTs and importantly the development of closer links with school personnel on teaching practice.

The report also discusses that supervised teaching is an integral aspect of teacher education courses and block placements on school sites occur throughout the four years. There is a realisation that the school must play a greater role in “helping students to understand the dynamics of classroom teaching and the principles underlying it” (Coolahan, 2003, p. 40). Coolahan (2003) goes on to discuss the need for the development of more overt forms of partnership between schools and teacher education institutions, especially regarding teaching practice placements. He also comments that the teachers in the schools provide cooperative assistance to the students while on placement in an informal manner. As yet, there is no formal mentoring system for teachers in place in Ireland, with all work carried out by the cooperating teachers based on goodwill;

Two recent reviews of teacher education recommend closer partnership between teacher education institutions and schools, but national policy needs to support schools and mentor teachers more so that they are facilitated to engage more fully in such a partnership.

(Coolahan, 2003, p. 40)

The report also details developments in induction and CPD in Ireland. The author concludes with a number of priorities for policy development in educating, developing and certifying teachers, such as:

- The extension of the pre-service teacher education courses
- Closer links with school personnel on teaching practice
- The establishment of a national induction system
- CPD/In-service courses

(Coolahan, 2003, p. 53)

### 3.6.1 OECD ‘Teachers Matter’ 2005

The overall message portrayed by the background report is the need to modernise and restructure the existing education system. The emphasis centred on the ‘attracting and developing’ aspect of the OECD’s mandate. ‘Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers’ formed the basis of the OECD publication ‘Teachers Matter’ in (2005) which consisted of an international analysis of the trends and developments in the teacher workforce in 25 countries around the world. The report published a number of findings, including that Ireland was below average for both primary and post-primary teacher education course duration, that school-university partnerships must be “more overt and deliberate” (Coolahan, 2007, p. 26) and urged the training and support of mentor teachers. The report also highlights the importance of developing teacher profiles to “guide initial teacher education, teacher certification, teachers’ on-going professional development and career advancement, and to assess the extent to which these different elements are being effective” (OECD, 2005, p. 131). To strengthen the teacher profile, the report stresses the need for clear, evidence-based teacher competencies. Coolahan (2007), in his review paper on ‘Thinking and Policies relating to Teacher education in Ireland’, notes that the ‘Teachers Matter’ report states the importance of the role of the Teaching Council in guiding these changes in Irish teacher education.

In 2006, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) held a consultative conference on education entitled ‘Teacher Education: The Continuum’. The conference discussed both primary and post-primary teacher education issues such as teaching practice, induction and probation, mentoring and CPD opportunities. The resultant recommendations echo those of previous reviews referred to in this chapter, most importantly the recommendation that

the expertise of experienced practitioners be recognised, through enabling practising teachers to become more formally involved in teaching practice as mentor teachers, and be given the necessary training, support and reward.

(INTO, 2006, p. 23)

### **3.7 The influence of the Teaching Council**

One of the Teaching Council's initial contributions was the development of the 'Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers', published in 2007. Following this, the Teaching Council commissioned a report entitled 'Learning to teach and its implications for the continuum of teacher education: A nine-country cross-national study'. The report was completed by a team led by Paul Conway from the School of Education in University College, Cork (UCC) and published in 2009. The purpose of the report was to "inform debate and strategic planning on the continuum of teacher education with a specific focus on initial teacher education and induction and their interface with the continuum" (Conway et al., 2009, p. xiv). The report's main findings, in relation to the interest of my study, include the need to enhance teacher education by providing opportunity for observation, the provision of effective feedback from mentor teachers and the need for critical reflection of teaching episodes. The emphasis is on eradicating the 'sink or swim' mentality that can prevail in teaching placements in Ireland (Conway et al., 2009). The report also highlights the need for "strong relationships, common knowledge and shared beliefs" (Conway et al., 2009, p. xix) between schools and universities. To do this, formal partnerships must be developed where the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders are clearly established.

The combination of Coolahan's (2007) paper, 'A Review Paper on Thinking and Policies Relating to Teacher Education in Ireland' and the study led by Conway *et al* (2009), informed the basis of the Teaching Council's process of drafting its 'Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education' (June, 2011b). The document recognises the widely used term 'teaching practice' to describe part of a teacher education programme in a school. However, the Council replaces this term with 'school placement' as they believe it reflects the teaching and learning experience more accurately (Policy on Continuum of Teacher Education, 2011c). The term 'school placement' will be used throughout this thesis. This document provides a framework for the reconceptualisation of teacher education across the continuum (initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development). Within the document, the Council adopts the terms 'innovation', 'integration' and

‘improvement’ to be used in the discussion of all stages of the continuum. In terms of initial teacher education and the school placement, the document states, “New and innovative models need to be developed using a partnership approach, whereby HEIs and schools actively collaborate in the organisation of the placement” (p. 13) and that structured support, in the form of mentoring, supervision and critical analysis, be provided to student teachers. To strengthen relationships, the document also states that student teachers should be provided with opportunities for “observation of, and conversations with, experienced teachers” (p. 13), highlighting the need to train teachers to become effective supervisors.

A decision to extend the length of teacher education courses was made in July 2011 by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn. Concerns about the length of courses were raised by OECD reports in 2003 and 2005, Coolahan’s (2003) country background report on Ireland and the Teaching Council in their ‘Policy Document on the Continuum of Teacher Education’ (2011b). The three year concurrent B.Ed. programme will now be extended to four years, effective from September 2012 and consecutive programmes will be increased to two years duration, coming into effect from September 2013 (Hyland, 2012).

In August 2011, the Teaching Council published a document entitled ‘Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers’ to provide a mechanism to implement the recommendations made in the preceding document on the continuum of teacher education (2011a). The guidelines state, in relation to initial teacher education, that new and innovative partnerships between HEIs and schools be developed. A comprehensive list of criteria is provided in the document including:

- Host schools being communities of good professional practice.
- Structured support for student teachers to include mentoring, supervision and feedback.

- An enhanced partnership between the HEI Placement Tutor and the Cooperating Teacher.
- Facilitation by the HEI, where feasible, of CPD for other members of school staff, based on school needs.

(The Teaching Council, 2011, p. 17)

Ireland is in the midst of interesting times for initial teacher education. Continued advancements and interest has been cemented by a request made by the Minister for Education and Skills to the Higher Education Authority (HEA), to review the structure of initial teacher education provision in Ireland (Hyland, 2012). An international review panel, led by Pasi Sahlberg, was established to reconfigure existing teacher education courses to strengthen the quality of teacher education. The minister stated that the extension of teacher education courses and the review will provide “an opportunity to reconfigure the system of initial teacher education in Ireland to ensure the best possible learning experience for student-teachers that will compare favourably with the best in the world” (Hyland, 2012, p. 23).

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The shape of teacher education in Ireland has transformed throughout the past two decades. The government has worked to retain the positive aspects of the teaching profession and has passed numerous pieces of legislation to help modernise and enhance the system. While the OECD’s prediction in 1991 of “further development should and will undoubtedly occur” (in teacher education) rang true, it is acknowledged that it is work in progress. Issues such as closer school-university links and the development of an effective mentoring and induction system, which were highlighted in the OECD’s report ‘Teachers Matter’ (2005) are beginning to be addressed, and must be at the forefront of future debates, reports and policies for initial teacher education to continue to develop. The development of a mentoring/supervision system is the particular focus for this thesis and the structures in place to promote and support the learning trajectories of CTs in Irish post-primary

schools. The next chapter provides an in-depth analysis into Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice to investigate the learning trajectories of CTs.

# Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

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## *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation in Communities of Practice*

### **4.1 Introduction**

Through observations of, and interactions with, cooperating teachers (CTs) over the years I have become conscious of how the development of CTs' knowledge and experience is dependent on the context in which they are positioned. Consequently, situated learning provides a framework that allows me to investigate the learning trajectories of CTs further.

Situated learning emphasises the idea that much of what is learned is specific to the situation in which it is learned (Rovegno and Dolly, 2006). Patton *et al* (2005) state that “situated perspectives assume knowledge is inseparable from the contexts and activities in which it develops” (p. 305). Transferring the concept to the focus of interest in this study, one can surmise that CTs' knowledge and experience of supervision is inseparable from their involvement in supervising pre-service teachers (PSTs) during a school placement and their role as physical education teachers. Also taken into account is their previous experience of supervision when they were PSTs themselves as well as the school context in which they teach as qualified teachers. Situated learning focuses on learning as a social practice in social settings and that learning is social as it may involve interaction between an individual learner and others (Kirk and MacDonald, 1998). This contributes to the focus of this study in providing a framework through which to examine the potentially developing relationships between the CT, the PST and the university tutor (UT). For the purpose of this study, the CTs who participated in the five phases were physical education CTs.

Lave and Wenger (1991) discuss the theory of situated learning in various forms of ‘social co-participation’ using examples from different cultural and historical traditions. Their discussion centres on the process of apprenticeship through studies carried out with communities of midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers and alcoholics. They provide an analytical viewpoint on learning, stating that learning and skills can only be mastered through active engagement in the process. Lave and Wenger (1991) use the concept of ‘communities of practice’ and ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ to convey that learning is an “integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31). They identify legitimate peripheral participation as a situation whereby “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community” (p. 29). Wenger (1998) defines a community of practice as “a process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (p. 4). Communities of practice (Kirk and MacDonald, 1998, Wenger, 1998) provide an avenue to rethink learning in an educational setting. For an individual, such as a CT, learning means engaging in and contributing to a community of practitioners, for example CTs, PSTs and/or UTs. For communities, learning becomes an issue of refining practice and attracting new members (in this study, teachers or those associated with teaching). For organisations (in this study, teacher education institutions and schools), learning means developing and retaining effective communities of practice.

The development from experienced teacher to effective CT/supervisor is an under-researched area. Many studies have focused on the development of PST and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) learning through legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice in physical education (Chambers and Armour, 2011, Kirk and Kinchin, 2003, Kirk and MacDonald, 1998, Parker et al., 2012) and teacher education (Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011, Harrison and McKeon, 2008, Laker et al., 2008, Maynard, 2001, Sutherland et al., 2005, Yandell and Turvey, 2007). For the purpose of this study, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice will be used to illustrate the learning trajectory of Irish CTs and the possibilities for learning provided. The term

'community of practice' will be used interchangeably with professional learning communities and school placement communities as it is proposed that, at this point in time, structured and formal communities of practice are not common for physical education teachers and the school placement triad (CT/PST/UT) in Ireland. 'Communities of practice' is the favoured term in the literature, however all three terms are based on the same philosophy for the purpose of this study. The intention is that the utilisation of situated learning will encourage the mapping of teachers' learning and development as CTs in order to identify how their experiences as legitimate peripheral participants can inform what support and training is necessary for them to become effective, confident and competent CTs in functioning communities of practice. The chapter begins with an exploration of the constructs of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. This is followed by an explanation of the terms legitimacy, peripherality and participation to provide the reader with an understanding of a CT's experience of learning to become an effective supervisor. The chapter then identifies factors which support or hinder the learning trajectories of CTs and addresses some of the challenges faced by CTs as legitimate peripheral participants in communities of practice.

## **4.2 Communities of Practice – Do they exist?**

Wenger (1998) defines communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis" (p. 4).

Characteristics which define a community include:

- Sustained mutual relationships, harmonious or conflictual
- Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- Absence of introductory preambles
- Very quick set-up of a problem to be discussed
- Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs
- Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise

- Mutually defining identities
- The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
- Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- Jargon and shortcuts to communication
- Certain styles recognised as displaying membership
- A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

(Wenger, 1998, p. 125)

Communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger, 1998) provide an infrastructure that supports change, a setting where teachers come together to learn from each other and identify professional development needs and opportunities, acknowledging that working together as a learning community enhances a sharing of expertise. Lave and Wenger (1991) recognise that learning through legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice will only come about through analysis of the political and social organisation, and historical development, and the effects these can have on the sustained possibilities for learning. Not all of the characteristics attributed to communities of practice, noted above, formally exist for CTs, PSTs and UTs in Ireland at present. The aim of this study was firstly to identify CTs learning trajectories and secondly to develop a cohort of effective supervisors through providing opportunities for CTs to become involved in learning communities to enhance their supervision capabilities which, in turn, will nurture and support PSTs. It was envisaged that the learning community would include the CT, the PST and the UT in various forms throughout school placements, acknowledging that a particular interest of the study was the CT/PST relationship.

Wenger (1998) defines learning as ‘social co-participation’, and more specifically that learning is the “process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (p. 4). Learning involves ‘participation’ (through training and learning) in experiencing practices within the community, and teachers are involved in this through their support of the requirements and expectations for PSTs on teaching practicum.

Structured training opportunities in the delivery of a supervisory programme include tasks to be completed and knowledge to be acquired. Participation involves taking on the role of a supervisor as someone to guide and support PSTs through their placement. In terms of this study, engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which CTs will be able to learn and become effective, competent supervisors.

According to Wenger (1998), learning and meaning within a community do not depend solely on participation; a process of reification must also exist. To allow for successful negotiation of meaning, participation and reification must combine; “As a pair, participation and reification refer to a duality fundamental to the negotiation of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). Participation in communities consists of the shared experiences and negotiations that result from social interaction. In contrast, reification “is the process by which communities of practice produce concrete representations of practice, such as tools, symbols, rules and documents” (Pallas, 2001, p. 7). In the case of supervision, learning for the CT can come about in the interwoven processes of participation and reification. Wenger (1998) gives examples of reification as writing down a law, creating a procedure, or producing a tool. In terms of this study, reification can be produced through the creation of the physical education school placement booklet and provision of observation sheets. Here the booklet enables effective participation allowing the CTs to “use the tool to perform an action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). The process of CTs and PSTs working together in a community to create resources for teaching can also be viewed as reification. In both these examples, reification shapes the experience of both CTs and PSTs and the creation of a tool can change the nature of an activity, in this sense, supervision. Hall *et al* (2012) state that, not only should communities include reifications into their practices, they must also understand when and how to apply them and when and how to ignore them. Wenger describes the importance of the duality of participation and reification as;

On the one hand, it takes our participation to produce, interpret and use reification; so there is no reification without participation. On the other hand, our participation requires interaction and thus generates shortcuts to coordinated meanings that reflect our enterprises and our takes on the world.

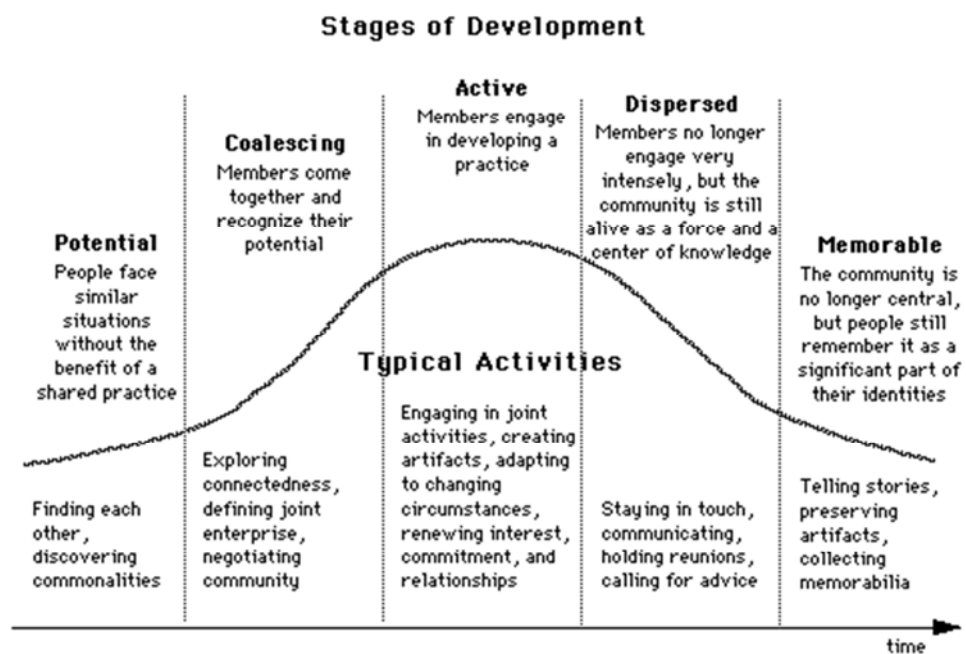
(Wenger, 1998, p. 66)

Wenger (1998) defines communities of practice as having three key properties, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. Mutual engagement suggests that members are engaged in the practice of the community and mutual relationships are established. Geographical proximity is not required but can help contribute to this priority. Joint enterprise, a collective process of negotiation, is different for every community but it must be negotiated and agreed by its members. A shared repertoire includes routines, ways of doing things, actions or concepts adopted that become part of the practice of a community. Wenger (1998) states that for learning in practice to benefit members the following processes must be carried out by a community;

- Evolving forms of mutual engagement: discovering how to engage, what helps and what hinders; developing mutual relationships, defining identities, establishing who is who, who is good at what, who knows what, who is easy or hard to get along with.
- Understanding and tuning their enterprise: aligning their engagement with it, and learning to become and hold each other accountable to it; struggling to define the enterprise and reconciling conflicting interpretations of what the enterprise is about.
- Developing their repertoire, styles, and discourses: renegotiating the meaning of various elements; producing or adopting tools, artefacts, representations; recording and recalling events; inventing new terms and redefining or abandoning old ones; telling and retelling stories; creating and breaking routines.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 95)

Each of these dimensions can change our ability to engage in practice, provide an understanding of why we engage in it, and highlight the resources we have at our disposal to do so. Wenger (1998b) describes the process of communities of practice moving through various stages of development, each characterised by different levels of interactions and collaboration;



(Wenger, 1998b, p. 3)

The first stage, the potential phase, is characterised by stakeholders coming together in a community and finding commonalities in the hope that practice can be established. During the second stage, the coalescing stage, members' abilities are analysed and a community is negotiated to potentially establish a joint enterprise. In the third stage, stakeholders actively collaborate to develop sustainable practice by engaging in activities that mutually benefit each member. This includes the process of reification - sharing information and advice, and creating resources together to positively impact the developing community. Members no longer engage as

intensely in the dispersed stage but may stay in touch and communicate on a regular basis. The final stage, the memorable stage, is signified by the end of the community but with members retaining their identity.

According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), who examined ways in which teachers learned in four different secondary school departments in England, communities of practice can be enormously varied. The focus of their research was not to see whether communities of practice exist or not, but to identify their characteristics in relation to learning. The authors found that not being part of a close knit community, with mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of actions, simply defines a different type of membership and a different kind of community. The research does however, remain consistent with Lave and Wenger's (1991) claim that membership is an essential condition for learning, i.e. that learning is relational. The term 'community' implies spatial and social closeness and cohesion (Grix, 2004); therefore, it is important to investigate the extent to which collaboration occurs between each of the stakeholders in a school placement triad.

Patton *et al* (2005), in a study investigating the process of physical education mentoring through situated learning, also found that communities varied. The study found that each of the project stakeholders (teachers, mentors and researchers) learned through becoming members of different kinds of communities rather than working in isolation. Results found that "micro communities of practice" (p. 311) were created with the teachers in one community and the mentors/researchers in the other. However, as the participants interacted in different situations, the respective communities intersected, and what emerged was the sharing of ideas and expertise in the area of mentoring and teaching and learning. These micro communities are used within this study to explain the developing relationships between CTs and PSTs and to a lesser extent between CTs and UTs/teacher education institutions.

While strong school-university partnerships in the UK, the US and other countries encourage and up-skill, physical education teachers to undertake a mentoring role for PSTs on teaching practicum (Brooks, 2006, Darling-Hammond, 2006), the up until recent weak school-university partnerships in Ireland has resulted in minimal exposure that could contribute to the lack of structured communities of practice. In striving to encourage a learning community that constitutes university faculty (as members of the community but not leaders of the community), CTs and PSTs working together to create successful school placements, teachers require education, support and encouragement to most effectively contribute to supervising PSTs. This, in turn, provides the impetus to engage with, and become experienced members of, a community. This enforces Lave and Wenger's (1991) premise that;

To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of on-going activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation.

(p. 100)

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe legitimate peripheral participation as a gradual process whereby "newcomers move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community" (p. 29). This gradual progress does not appear evident in the school placement process in an Irish context. The context has restricted, to some extent, the point on the continuum in which CTs begin their learning trajectory towards becoming competent and confident supervisors. CTs, in an Irish context, may have further to travel in their learning trajectory than CTs in other countries who have support at other levels (e.g. government funding, school support, peer support). CTs are restricted in their ability to plan an effective placement due to the fact that they have no prior contact with the teacher education institution before the PST arrives at the school for a placement. At the same time, the teacher education institution has no knowledge of whether teachers have prior supervision experience or if they are qualified physical education teachers. This restricts the early development of communities for all members. The CTs have responsibility for the PSTs once they enter the school and start teaching with no form of induction into the supervision process. Some sense of a community is inadvertently created once a

PST arrives at the school, and for some CTs this may be their only opportunity to become a member of a community of practice. Many Irish physical education teachers work in one-teacher departments and geographically tend to be isolated from other staff in the school as well as physical education teachers from schools in the same region. Lave and Wenger (1991) state that “newcomer’s legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an observational lookout post, it crucially involves participation as a way of learning, of both absorbing and being absorbed on the culture of practice” (p. 95). It is important that this absorption into the role of a supervisor occurs with the help of an experienced UT and the teacher education institution. Opportunities should be provided for CTs to observe experienced UTs in their role, especially in the delivery of feedback, and for CTs to receive critical, yet constructive, feedback on their own supervisory practice. The CTs can gradually assemble their own idea of what constitutes the practice of a community and eventually develop their own ways of becoming effective supervisors.

Lave and Wenger (1991) state that, by being part of a community of practice the learners (CTs) are provided with a way of understanding the ‘sphere of life’ they are now part of. The strength of a community can determine the ‘how’ and ‘what quality’ of learning takes place. The role of the CT comes under scrutiny as to how they provide learning opportunities for the PST to become a successful teacher throughout the school placement. As already mentioned, to maximise participation in a community of practice there must be full access to on-going activity, old-timers (experienced CTs/UTs), information, resources and opportunities for participation. Newcomers (CTs) must also have access to ‘mature practice’ (observation of experienced UTs) appreciating that “acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners make learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the apprentice” (p. 110). CTs as ‘newcomers’ will be used to refer to both experienced and inexperienced CTs as they are new to the process of developing sustainable, professional relationships within the school placement triad. When there is a clear breakdown in communication and lack of interaction between members, as has been reported in an Irish physical education context, the

community “can also be dysfunctional in ways that subvert the quality of learning” (Flick, 2009, p. 540).

A key concept of a community of practice is a “person’s identity in relation to other members in the community, and the emotional investments individuals make in relation to their sense of who they are and where they fit in as a member of a group” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98). This study will examine ways in which the role of the CT can be strengthened in a community of practice. If CTs are effectively trained and provided full access, information and opportunities in functioning learning communities, the learning experience for all members involved in school placements can only be heightened.

### **4.3 Legitimate Peripheral Participation in Communities of Practice**

Legitimate peripheral participation provides a context through which learning can take place. Qualified physical education teachers can be provided with opportunities to learn and master the skills of an effective CT when supported in the school placement process. This can be delivered by teacher education institutions providing structure and guidance and allowing opportunities for qualified physical education teachers/CTs to undertake the role of an apprentice or ‘newcomer’. Lave and Wenger (1991) propose legitimate peripheral participation as a way of understanding learning and characterise the shifts in learning engagement in communities of practice, providing;

A way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person’s intention to learn is engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills.

(p. 29)

In terms of this study, we can map the notion of ‘newcomers’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 55) or ‘apprentices’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95) to CTs as they move towards full participation and the ‘communities of practice’ to be their colleagues in the school, PSTs, other teachers in supervisory roles and UTs. Situated learning has been examined, as already mentioned, with the learning and developmental experiences of PSTs and NQTs, in the context of maths and science (Anderson et al., 1996, Borko et al., 2000, Kahveci et al., 2008), the provision of authentic learning experiences for school pupils through the delivery of sport education in physical education (Kirk and Kinchin, 2003, Kirk and MacDonald, 1998), and the development of communities of practice with middle school teachers and university faculty to positively impact mentoring in physical education (Patton et al., 2005). Whilst a number of studies within physical education illustrate the application of Lave and Wenger’s work (Kirk and MacDonald, 1998, Laker et al., 2008, Patton et al., 2005), there is a gap in the literature exploring the potential for CTs to learn the role of a supervisor through the concept of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice.

Whilst appreciating the differing roles and relationships within the school placement triad (CTs, PSTs and UTs) in a community of practice, the main concern of this study is with the learning trajectories of CTs, acknowledging that a CT’s positioning as a legitimate peripheral participant is reliant to some extent on the PST and the UT. Legitimate peripheral participation occurs in a school placement whereby “learning does not occur in isolation, rather it is a social and active process” (Laker et al., 2008, p. 126) between the CT, the PST and the UT. The social and active process also includes the politics of the school, the school context and communication between the school and university. Apprenticeship is part of legitimate peripheral participation and ‘CTs as apprentices’ learn the role of a supervisor effectively in collaboration with PSTs and UTs. Fuller *et al* (2005) believe that a limitation with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory is that they focus learning solely on novices. Not all CTs are novices, with many being competent physical education teachers who have carried out the role of a supervisor before. However, they are ‘newcomers’ in the process of attempting to develop partnerships with both PSTs and the teacher education institution. The task of this study is to look

at ways to enhance CTs' knowledge and apply it to developing mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire with PSTs and UTs.

#### **4.4 Cooperating Teachers as Newcomers**

For CTs in Ireland to contribute to a community of practice that conveys and practices a genuine desire to formally nurture PSTs, they must undertake the position of 'newcomers' or 'novices' before being in a position to become experienced (old-timers) members of a learning community. It is acknowledged that a number of teachers are experienced in the supervision role but they remain newcomers to the learning community. Opportunities to become an experienced CT can only exist when there is effective structuring of resources for learning in practice. School placements can provide opportunities for CTs to work closely with PSTs and UTs, resulting in learning becoming a 'multi-directional process' (Chambers, 2009, p. 19). Learning (as an apprentice) is embedded in the activities of a related community and it could be argued that all three members of the school placement triad, i.e., post-primary physical education teachers, PSTs and UTs, are initially positioned as learners in some respects and experts in others. In practice, "the novice becomes the expert for periods of time" (Creswell, 2009, p. 64), reinforcing Lave and Wenger's (1991) suggestion that "everyone's participation is legitimately peripheral in some respect" (p. 117).

Multi-directional learning is evident when PSTs bring new skills and interests to the school placement and, as a result, the CTs' knowledge and teaching skills are enhanced as a result of working closely with PSTs. When supported and trained, the CT becomes an expert when supporting the PST in the intricacies of teaching and learning by observing and delivering effective and constructive feedback. The UT has the opportunity to be the expert when supporting the CT in the role of an effective supervisor but can also learn from the CT in terms of the reality of teaching on a day to day basis. This process of experienced stakeholders learning from skilled newcomers is not covered by Lave and Wenger (1991). Technically, in an Irish context, a physical education teacher becomes a CT when a PST arrives at the

school, meaning that a large number of CTs enter the concept of a community by default. How much they ‘buy into’ and interact with the PST and the UT is solely dependent on the teacher as there is no formal structure in place to state that the CT must supervise a PST on school placement.

#### **4.5 Defining Legitimate Peripheral Participation**

Acknowledging that each of the aspects of legitimate peripheral participation cannot be considered in isolation and that “learners must be legitimate peripheral participants in on-going practice in order for learning identities to be engaged and develop into full participation” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 64), it is useful to define the concept of each aspect with respect to the position of the CT and the process of supervision.

Learning is ‘legitimate’ (authentic and meaningful) in that CTs’ development of supervisory capabilities matters to the PST, the CT and the overall teaching community’s successful performance of its work. That is, to encompass the successful induction and retention of PSTs by engaging with all members of the community to provide an environment which supports and encourages student learning. For learning to be legitimate, CTs must understand their roles and responsibilities in the supervision process. In this context, the teacher education institution sends school placement handbooks (Cuenca, 2011) containing guidelines to all CTs supervising PSTs. Providing CTs with access to ‘tools of the trade’ (Cuenca, 2011, p. 121) facilitated legitimacy in the school placement. To enable CTs to develop supervision characteristics, UTs can work as facilitators. This can be done by UTs establishing the newcomers (CTs) as legitimate members of the group by allowing them a voice and encouraging them to participate in the supervision process, thus validating their position (Thomas, 2006). It is imperative that CTs understand the role of a supervisor and that training opportunities are provided by UTs and the teacher education institutions. Having access to resources and support legitimises the CTs’ involvement in the community. Importantly, PSTs must also be educated to recognise the role of the CT to validate and legitimise their position as

supervisors. If legitimacy is granted, CTs can develop a professional identity as a supervisor.

Learning is 'peripheral' to the evolving professional learning community early in the learning process, with CTs being introduced to the support they can provide to PSTs. Ideally, a learning trajectory intensifies with more entrusted activities, expecting to result in teachers eventual full participation in the community. In theory, a CT can undertake the role of observer in the first instance where learning occurs on the periphery, resulting in a limited degree of responsibility. As the CT gains in confidence, the learning trajectory intensifies, expecting to result in the teacher's eventual full participation in a learning community.

Learning involves 'participation' (through training and learning) in experiencing practices within the community, and CTs are involved in this through their support of the requirements and expectations for PSTs on teaching practicum. The teacher as a CT is a newcomer whose learning trajectory is expected to result in full participation as an effective supervisor (Cuenca, 2011). Fuller *et al* (2005) state that the nature and scope of what a full participant constitutes and means will vary according to the way relations with the relevant community is structured. This emphasises the importance of clear expectations and open channels of communication between all members of the community. For CTs to acquire new skills, they must engage in an active process as legitimate peripheral participants in a community of practice.

#### **4.5.1 Legitimate peripherality**

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise that legitimate peripherality crucially involves participation as a way of learning the 'culture of practice', acknowledging that "an extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs" (p. 95). Legitimate peripherality involves a CT joining the outskirts of a community to learn the skills necessary to effectively

supervise a PST. It is a continual process with CTs establishing and re-establishing identity via practice with others, in this case PSTs and UTs. When PSTs and UTs value the CTs' input, they feel their participation in the process is legitimate. Participation becomes legitimate when CTs have access to resources, support and training. When CTs are afforded an opportunity to become more involved in the supervision of PSTs, peripherality can be an empowering position. In instances where CTs are kept (legitimately) from participating more fully, for example, in the agreement of grades to be allocated to a PST's performance, peripherality is a disempowering position. If communities of practice 'define possibilities for learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), it is important to look into ways to support CTs to become effective 'masters' within a functioning community.

For teachers to develop from newcomers to experienced CTs through legitimate peripheral participation, it is imperative that teachers participate initially in tasks that are clear and straightforward yet productive and necessary to contribute to the goal of the community. Such tasks should initially celebrate CTs' disposition towards the community and their legitimate positioning to contribute. CTs can start with peripheral tasks such as prompting PSTs to reflect on lessons before developing participation more central to the functioning of the community. Examples of more central participation include the role of providing feedback to the PST and dialogue between the CT and the PST, allowing the teachers (newcomers) to become acquainted with the tasks, values and practices associated with the community. Observing, and having access to, the practices of experts, enhances teachers' understanding of the expectations as an experienced members of the community.

#### **4.6 Factors that support or hinder the learning trajectories of CTs**

Fuller (2005) stresses that it is the act of becoming a member that allows participation, and therefore learning, to take place. It is the processes, relationships and experiences which constitute the member's sense of belonging and underpin the nature and extent of subsequent learning. So, when supported in an effective environment, the learning trajectory of the CT can be positive. Chambers and

Armour (2009) investigated the ways in which CTs, UTs and school principals worked as ‘expert teacher educators’ to support Irish physical education teacher education students to learn within five case study schools. The study used legitimate peripheral participation to look at ways in which the process of supervision supported and, at times, hindered student learning. Whilst this study emphasised the role of the PST, it provides an avenue to question the learning trajectories of CTs to become confident supervisors. The process of legitimate peripheral participation in communities can facilitate the development of confident supervisors in that “acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners make learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the apprentice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 110). In considering the CT to be the ‘apprentice’, they need to be supported and valued by the teacher education institution, the UT and the PST to allow for legitimate participation in a community. Each role needs to be accepted and communicated and, as previously mentioned, all members will at some point undertake the role of ‘newcomer’ and ‘expert’ at various times in the school placement. However, at present, there appears to be a lack of communication in terms of the roles and responsibilities of CTs thus hindering their development.

#### **4.6.1 Various forms of participation**

Davies (2005) describes three types of membership in communities. ‘Full participation’ where the learner (CT) is on an insider trajectory, maintaining their relationship through participation in community practices. ‘Peripheral participation’ where CTs’ non-participation in certain practices is seen as an opportunity for learning, and ‘marginal participation’ where their partial participation is seen as a barrier to full participation and often results in an outbound trajectory. Ideally, CTs should initially acquire peripheral participation in order to learn the skills necessary to supervise a PST, resulting, at some point, in full participation where the CT can develop and maintain effective relationships with both the PST and the UT. CTs can potentially experience marginal participation when there is a breakdown or lack of communication and support within the community. Lambson (2010) identified that allowing newcomers the opportunity to participate on the periphery provided them with a safe place to observe, listen to and learn from others while growing in their

experience and understanding of the practices of the community. It gave them time to gain confidence and competence to work towards full participants. This study investigates whether CTs are supported on the periphery before moving to becoming full members of a professional learning community.

#### **4.6.2 Motivation as a factor for participation**

When analysing CT participation in a community, it is important to address the teacher's level of motivation. In describing the level of motivation needed for full participation Lave and Wenger (1991) state;

Moving toward full participation in practice involves not just a greater commitment of time, intensified effort, more and broader responsibilities within the community, and more difficult and risky tasks, but, significantly, an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner.

(p. 111)

This is reinforced by Chambers (2009) who found that a newcomer will only engage in legitimate peripheral participation if they are committed to a community of practice, respected for their prior knowledge, and guided by old-timers towards full participation. Chambers (2009) questioned what enticed newcomers to stand on the edge and want to move towards the centre of the community, reporting that the newcomer must be self-motivated but also supported by old-timers to “harness the potential energy at the periphery and thus move along the learning trajectory from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation in a community of practice” (p. 27). A full participant in a community of practice is the person who has been “transformed into a practitioner, a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skill, and discourse are part of a developing identity” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 122). This idea of identity and membership is strongly tied to the conception of motivation. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that there is a need to engage in a community's existing practice, which has developed over time, to become a full member. This however, is not yet possible in an Irish context as

formal communities between CTs, PSTs and UTs are only in the initial stages of development. CTs do have the ability to have a stake in the development of communities and “establish their own identity in its future” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 155).

#### **4.7 Challenges to Legitimate Peripheral Participation**

In examining challenges facing physical educators, Kirk and MacDonald (1998) reported that some legitimate peripheral participants were denied access to crucial resources and that this can adversely affect their learning and development towards participation in a community of practice. In Irish post-primary schools, barriers to CT participation include poor school-university partnerships (Chambers and Armour, 2011), the lack of clarity of the role of the CT from teacher education institutions, and the fact that CTs receive no financial or time benefits from their work with PSTs (Moody, 2009).

Research has shown that teachers can derive substantial benefits from the role of CT and many experienced teachers have made positive changes to their teaching as a result, often engaging as co-learners (Ganser, 2002, Patton et al., 2005). The possibility of “teacher educators shaping student behaviours” (Kirk and MacDonald, 1998, p. 380) is relevant in terms of the relationship between the CT and the PST and the potential impact an effective CT could have on the development of a PST. The effectiveness of these relationships and opportunities for learning are based on “a person’s identity in relation to other members of a community” (Kirk and MacDonald, 1998, p. 380) and how individuals are positioned in terms of power. This highlights the need for clear and agreed guidelines for each stakeholder involved in the school placement triad and community of practice. Legitimate participation can also be hindered by the presence of hierarchies. It is common for those in communities to be aware of those at the top, and the potential power they can yield. This may be reflected in the relationship between some CTs and UTs whereby the CTs see the UT as the member in control, especially as they decide the PSTs’ final grade. PSTs may also view a hierarchical relationship between

themselves and the CT, again leading to a breakdown in the community. This can have a detrimental effect on the potential development of relationships within communities.

Negative experiences as legitimate peripheral participants in communities can lead to a lack of learning. More importantly the quality of relationships developed within a community can have a huge bearing on the quality of learning. CTs' prior learning and previous experiences may support or hinder their role as a legitimate peripheral participant and their possibilities for learning.

Borko *et al* (2000) propose that another difficulty for legitimate peripheral participants may arise when members of the community (CT/UT/PST) hold different ideas about how a person learns to teach and the kinds of experiences that best facilitate such learning. This highlights the importance of the relationship between learning and the settings in which it occurs and the possible impact on PSTs' learning. The school setting can have a significant influence on what is learned and how learning takes place heightening how crucial it is to develop the role of the CT. Often, in an Irish context, when a PST has an effective placement with a supportive CT, it is due to luck and the diligence of a few CTs rather than clear and effective school-university partnerships. For legitimate peripheral participation to develop within a professional learning community, the learner requires a high level of intrinsic motivation for participation to be successful, highlighting the importance of 'intrinsic rewards' for the apprentice to become a full member. The CT must want to move towards full participation. Fuller *et al* (2005) stress that "the nature and scope of what a full participant constitutes and means will vary according to the way relations within the relevant community of practice are structured" (p. 56). It is the aim of this study to determine what constitutes a full participant and what is possible due to social and historical factors in developing competent physical education CTs in school placements in Irish post-primary schools.

Whilst being a legitimate peripheral participant can be an empowering experience, it may also be disempowering, with newcomers potentially posing a threat to old-timers and creating a dynamic tension between members. The CTs, as ‘old-timers’ in the physical education profession, may feel threatened by the PST as a ‘newcomer’ with new and innovative ideas. From another perspective, CTs as ‘newcomers’ to the process of supervision may feel threatened by the UTs, who bring professional knowledge and skills from the teacher education institution. The UT can make the experience an empowering one by helping the CT ‘learn the ropes’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 165) through shared observations and post lesson debriefs, enabling the CT to gain confidence and expertise in particular tasks. The UTs as ‘old-timers’ can also “establish the novices as legitimate members of the group by allowing them a voice and encouraging them to participate, thus validating their place at the table” (Thomas, 2006, p. 1666). This is evident when a UT strives to include the CT in the official UT visit to the school to observe the PST. However, as Harrison and McKeon (2008) found, some communities of practice do not allow this to occur due to unhelpful UTs and poor communication which may lead to the CT engaging in autonomous work to experience the essential components of observations, the delivery of feedback and conducting debriefs. Such barriers can adversely affect a CT’s learning trajectory towards full participation.

#### **4.8 Access to Communities of Practice**

The organisation of access into a community of practice can either promote or prevent legitimate peripheral participation and “the key to legitimate peripherality is access by newcomers to the community of practice and all that membership entails” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 100). This will involve the physical education teacher gaining the skills to become a confident supervisor. Physical education teachers will have to re-establish themselves in a new community, which is made even more difficult because there are no formalised, structured school placement communities in operation in an Irish context as yet and there is no format or template for them to follow. Developing partnerships between teacher education institutions and supportive schools can have a powerful effect on the development of a CT and the development of a school placement community. International research suggests that

there appears to be a lack of formalised links between teacher education institutions and schools, leading to the breakdown in the school placement process (Beck and Kosnik, 2000, Ganser, 1996, McCullick, 2000). This results in the breakdown of the apprentice/master relationship suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991). Borko *et al* (2000) suggest that legitimate peripheral participation may only work when the learner joins a stable, satisfactory practice, otherwise it will fail to be a powerful form of learning. This stable, satisfactory practice will only come about through the negotiation of meanings by all members of the community.

When given access to a community and participation is made legitimate, “learning occurs constantly” and members “participate in activities that are more and more central to the core practice” (Bullough and Draper, 2004, p. 91). This changing participation leads members (CTs) to take on new identities that are bound up with new knowledge and skills. CTs have the ability to become “agents of change” (Bullough and Draper, 2004, p. 92) through their new role in the community, enhancing the school placement experience for PSTs and enabling them to become effective teachers. In a study carried out by Sutherland *et al* (2005), access to the community came about through PSTs shadowing CTs, enabling peripheral participation for the PSTs. In terms of this study, this could be facilitated by the CT shadowing the UT during observing and post lesson debriefs, allowing the CT to actively engage, through peripheral participation, in the community’s practices. The CTs become legitimate within a community in that their ability to deliver effective feedback is essential for PSTs to develop, reinforcing the significant role the CT undertakes. The teacher education institution providing a handbook with guidelines, observation forms and tools for feedback portrays to the CTs that they are accepted as legitimate peripheral participants and supported in their role as supervisors. Such a practice supports the engagement of CTs in “meaningful professional-related tasks” (Dunning *et al.*, 2011, p. 90) to facilitate development in a community.

In an Irish context, it is common that CTs work autonomously as supervisors without support from the UT or teacher education institution due to the absence of functioning learning communities. It is acknowledged that many CTs in Irish

schools tend to “be cooperative and generous in their guidance of student teachers” (Coolahan, 2001, p. 354) but this is done without formalised support from the teacher education institutions. The creation and maintenance of a professional learning community within a school placement would be improved if CTs were provided with a “scaffolded (staged and careful) entry into the community” (Ganser, 2002, p. 159). Legitimate peripheral participation is motivated in part by ‘newcomers’ desires to become ‘full practitioners’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and this is reinforced by Sutherland *et al’s* (2005) findings from a study conducted with student tutors on the periphery of a university teaching community. The author found that the legitimate peripheral participants indicated a desire to provide positive learning experiences for their students and to be accepted as part of the teaching team. However, they did not necessarily have a desire to become full participants in the university teaching community. Similarly, in an Irish context, many CTs strive to become effective and supportive supervisors but are reluctant to get involved in the grading process and become full members in that respect (Mullins, 2004). Many CTs inadvertently become supervisors, through being appointed by their principals, rather than seeking out the opportunity. However, Laker *et al* (2008) in a study of sources of support for PSTs during school experiences reported that “the higher education institutions became less influential as they [PSTs] progressed through the series of school experiences” (p. 136). This strengthens Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of situated learning and highlights the importance of having quality, trained supervisors in place in schools to enable the PSTs to learn how to teach.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice is intended to convey the sense of authentic or genuine participation, where a person’s involvement in the practices of a community are meaningful to them as individuals and also hold significance for other community members. This study looked to signify a move towards understanding the most effective way in which to inform what communities should look like and how to begin developing them in terms of their structure, production and reproduction. It is envisaged that legitimate peripheral participation will be used to understand how

teachers' learning trajectories enhance or inhibit the move towards full participation in a community of practice. There are a number of relationships that may be facilitated in this community. While the ideal scenario would involve the CT, the PST and the UT, legitimate peripheral participation could be enabled through the CT and PST working closely together in a 'micro community of practice' (Patton et al., 2005). The community becomes cyclical in this instance with new members arriving and old members leaving. However, if the CT experiences a positive learning trajectory and gains the skills needed to supervise a PST, this will have significant impact on future interactions within school placements. This can be viewed as positive as it provides a varied and constant access to learning opportunities. This implies that it is valuable to train teachers to become confident and competent supervisors.

From a professional development perspective, service as a CT or mentor contributes to the success of schools as learning communities, especially when the veteran teacher's own knowledge and teaching skills are enhanced as a result of working closely with new teachers (Ganser, 2002). To be offered the opportunity to be a legitimate peripheral participant in a community of practice, the CT must be supported within the school environment, the teacher education institution and by the principal. To learn effectively, the CT must be involved in the 'sphere of life' that is teaching and supervising in a school, a form of situated learning. Borko *et al* (2000) state that "situated perspectives posit that the physical and social context in which an activity takes place is an integral part of the activity, and that the activity is an integral part of the learning that takes place within it" (p. 305). Consequently, the CT should be supported within their community whilst participating in supervisory activity and have access to feedback to reinforce behaviours. Lave and Wenger (1991) intended the term 'legitimate peripheral participation' to convey a sense of authentic and genuine participation and provide a framework for learning within a community of practitioners. This learning is legitimate as not only is it important to the CT but also the development of physical education within a school. When links are created between the school and the teacher education institution, learning can become a two way process where the PST is benefiting from regular feedback and support but also enabling the CT to learn new ways of effective supervision.

The strength of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory suggests that learning can take place effectively when legitimate peripheral participation occurs in communities of practice. The provision of school placements on teacher education courses provides opportunities for the development of communities to take place effectively. To do this, links must be developed between the teacher education institutions and the school, clear guidelines on the role of each member of the triad need to be distributed and continuous professional development opportunities for CTs must be provided. The focus should be on how structured quality placements can be facilitated and supervised, with trained CTs working closely with the PST and the UT. To do this, the teacher education institution must move towards identifying quality school sites and providing continued professional development for CTs to supervise PSTs. The positive nature of developing legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice is reinforced by Ganser (2002) who stated;

With support from educational leaders, schools as sites for student teaching and mentoring can be transformed into professional learning communities. In such schools, the lives of teachers at different career stages intersect regularly and meaningfully to their mutual benefit, the improvement of their profession, and ultimately a better education for the children in their classroom.

(p. 385)

The diverse application of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice are presented in this chapter to understand the challenges faced by CTs in attempting to become effective supervisors to PSTs on school placements. Mapping teachers' learning through their experiences of legitimate peripheral participation can facilitate the provision of support and training for CTs to become effective supervisors within the triadic structure. The constructs of participation, legitimacy and peripherality in a supervisory context will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 9.

# Chapter 5: Methodology

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## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose and significance of this study was to examine the learning trajectories of CTs in the school placement process and the possibilities for learning. This will inform the development and extension of the role of CT and the identification of a cohort of CTs in schools to build formal school-university partnerships. The data set was collected across five phases to address three research questions. The research methodology employed, and the methods selected to collect data, were chosen to elicit information that would aid in answering the following research questions;

### **Chapter 7: Cooperating teachers' perceptions of and responses to the role of supervision**

Research question one: What are physical education cooperating teachers' perceptions and responses to the role of supervision?

- (i) How do teachers perceive the role of the cooperating teacher in supervising pre-service teachers on school placements?
- (ii) To what extent are these perceptions acted upon and what is the reality of the role of the physical education cooperating teacher?
- (iii) What is required to enhance and develop the role to create confident and competent physical education cooperating teachers?

### **Chapter 8: Establishing communities in school placements**

Research question two: What are physical education cooperating teachers' intended and actual enactments of communities in school placements?

- (i) To what extent does a physical education cooperating teacher's participation in mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire impact their ability to learn the skills of a supervisor?
- (ii) In attempting to engage in learning communities what factors enabled or challenged the sharing of expertise between each of the school placement stakeholders?
- (iii) What variations in the infrastructure of a community led to physical education cooperating teachers experiencing a positive learning trajectory?

### **Chapter 9: The learning trajectories of cooperating teachers**

Research question three: To what extent is a cooperating teacher's learning facilitated and supported in their role as supervisor?

- (i) To what extent do physical education cooperating teachers' motivations encourage them to become legitimate peripheral participants in learning communities?
- (ii) To what extent does legitimacy contribute to cooperating teachers' learning trajectories?
- (iii) To what extent does peripherality contribute to cooperating teachers' learning trajectories?

The research questions are targeted to provide an insight and possible solutions to the implementation of a strategy to develop the quality of initial teacher education through addressing the needs of teachers to become confident and competent supervisors to PSTs on school placements. Competent CTs can provide collaborative and educational environments for PSTs to develop the skills of teaching and learning, thus enhancing the quality of an initial teacher education experience. Provision must be made to sustain and develop the progress and level of attainment of all PSTs in meeting the highest standards during a school placement. The chapter begins with a description and justification of a constructivist paradigm. This is followed by my personal positioning which is presented to inform the readers

of my background and the subsequent influence this may have on the interpretation of data. A summary of each of the study's phases is presented to highlight the timeline of the collection of data. The chapter then explores the data collection and analysis procedures employed to extract all relevant information from the data to answer the research questions. Finally, ethical considerations are discussed.

## **5.2 The Social Constructivist Paradigm**

To portray the subjective assessment of the attitudes and opinions of CTs, it was decided that a social constructivist paradigm was the most appropriate research design to employ. In a research context, the term 'paradigm' is defined as "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17) or "an established academic approach" (Grix, 2004, p. 25). Paradigms are research frameworks which can be used to shape or inform a study. A constructivist paradigm is based on the general principles that (i) learning is an active process, (ii) learners construct knowledge in relation to their prior knowledge, and (iii) knowledge is socially constructed (Rovengo and Dolly, 2006). Kirk and MacDonald (1998) state that:

Constructivist approaches emphasise that learning is an active process in which the individual seeks out information in relation to the task at hand and the environmental conditions prevailing at any given time, and tests out their capabilities within the context formed by the task and the environment.

(p. 376)

Acknowledging that learning takes place in social and cultural contexts and interactions, the constructivist paradigm encourages investigating CTs' concepts of prior knowledge and experience, and social interactions, allowing each of the research questions stated above to be effectively addressed. Physical education teacher education (PETE) is influenced by many forces including politics, society, culture, the economy and education itself. A constructivist approach enables me to highlight some of these forces and a range of current challenges facing teachers in their quest to successfully supervise PSTs on school placements. It is important to acknowledge how significant a CT's personal engagement in an activity is and the

social and cultural factors which may affect it. Devis-Devis (2006) states that researchers, in using a social constructivist approach in PETE, often pay close attention to meanings, values, beliefs, interactions, and practices, because of their potential to reproduce or challenge existing power relations in the profession. In this study, the intent is to address the needs of CTs in learning to become effective supervisors, to define future possibilities for learning and provide directions for initial teacher education.

Early influential constructivist theorists include Jean Piaget (1971) and Lev Vygotsky (1986). Piaget established a theory surrounding children's stages of development, finding that children gain knowledge quicker when they are active and find their own solutions to problems. He found that for children to learn they need to be personally engaged in the learning activity and that observing someone else doing a task has little meaning. Significantly, "he describes a process of continual accommodation to and assimilation of information as a means of knowledge acquisition" (Rovengo and Dolly, 2006, p. 243). Vygotsky also believed that children construct their own knowledge but stressed the importance of the influence of social and cultural factors. Miller (2003), cited in Rovegno and Dolly (2006), states that "Vygotsky's theory suggests that knowledge and understanding can be best advanced through interactions with others in cooperative activities" (p. 244). Vygotsky's argument was that the process by which learners were integrated into a learning community was more important than the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge. The growth and development of learners occurs through social interactions among people (Johnson and Napper-Owen, 2011). These activities in social interactions can help individuals develop their own views and knowledge, as in the CT working closely with the PST, the UT and the teacher education institution.

Creswell (2007) extends these views defining social constructivism as a worldview where "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, developing subjective meanings of their experiences" (p. 20). This supports the notion that people generate knowledge and meanings from their own experiences, a

consideration that is at the forefront of investigating CTs' views and perspectives of their supervisory experiences.

Kim (2001) provides four specific assumptions that are essential for using a social constructivist approach in educational research. The four assumptions are reality, knowledge, learning and inter-subjectivity of social meanings. Firstly, for the social constructivist, reality cannot be discovered, it is constructed through human activity. Secondly, knowledge is constructed both socially and culturally and meaning is created through interactions with others and the environment they exist in. Thirdly, learning is viewed as a social process and meaningful learning occurs in engagement in social activities. Lastly, inter-subjectivity states that social meanings are constructed through negotiation and communication in groups. Kim (2001) states that the construction of knowledge is "influenced by the inter-subjectivity formed by cultural and historical factors of the community" (p. 3). When members are aware of these factors, it becomes easier to understand new information and activities that may arise in the community.

Creswell (2007) concurs by stating that knowledge creation is impacted by both historical and socio-cultural factors throughout a person's life. Historically, previous experiences and the context in which they work can shape people's beliefs and understanding of situations while socially, views are formed through interaction with others. In this study, the emphasis centres on the CTs' interactions with PSTs and UTs and the potential knowledge gained from these experiences.

The socio-cultural and historical aspects are reinforced by Rovegno and Bandhauer (1997) who divide constructivism into two tenets. Firstly, individuals construct knowledge and the ways in which this knowledge is constructed changes over time. In this view, the learners actively seek and interpret information in terms of their prior knowledge. The US National Research Council (1999), cited in Rovegno and Dolly (2006), acknowledges that;

Humans come to formal education with a range of prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts that significantly influence what they notice about the environment and how they organise and interpret it. This, in turn, affects their abilities to remember reason, solve problems, and acquire new knowledge.

(p. 245)

Using a social constructivist approach can reveal how CTs experienced or viewed the process of supervision. Each of the CTs had varying prior experiences and these may have impacted the construction of their opinions, in both positive and negative ways. Rovengno and Dolly (2006) acknowledge, from studies carried out on school placement, in-service and professional development settings, that prior knowledge can either positively or negatively affect the learning trajectory of individuals. Notably, the results of the studies found that pre-existing conceptions are difficult to change, new concepts are difficult to learn, knowledge is constructed at different stages of a teacher's career and there are factors that facilitate or constrain learning (p. 254). Each of these topics guided the creation of interview questions for CTs.

Secondly, Rovengno and Dolly (2006) believe that knowledge is socially constructed and created through social interaction. It is with this in mind that the introduction of professional communities were developed and initiated into phase three (a) of the study. This allowed me to observe the interactions among CTs during each of the focus groups and interpret the information gathered, thus addressing the "processes of interaction among individuals" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). A study carried out by Tjeerdsma (1998) found that learners acquire knowledge through a range of social interactions. The study, carried out in the United States, described the impact of student teachers on seven CTs' beliefs and perceptions. At the end of the study, four CTs reported they had increased their reflections on their own teaching, five described feeling revitalised and six said they did not change their teaching when they worked with a PST. This led to the conclusion that "individuals' experiences vary due to differences in the context and the social interactions within these

contexts” (Rovengo and Dolly, 2006, p. 256). This highlights the fact that social interactions affect the possible avenue for learning, hence the importance of providing opportunities to develop sustainable and effective relationships which operate within the school placement process.

Behets and Vergauwen (2006) describe teacher development as a building process, where change, growth and development of knowledge can be described as voluntary and naturalistic and are influenced by formal teacher preparation programmes. Voluntary changes may be prompted, promoted, or supported by different kinds of sources of information (p. 411). Although the majority of the CTs who participated in the study were initially prompted to become CTs by their school principals, they all voluntarily agreed to contribute to the data collection process. The direction of change and degree of learning may not always be positive due to a lack of clarity of each of the stakeholder’s roles and responsibilities in a school placement and level of support they receive. Naturalistic research proposes that biography, experience, personality, and context play a role in the changes individuals make. This will become relevant in the data collection process where CTs’ biography, previous experience in supervision and the context of the school play a role in the potential changes CTs will make and the knowledge they gain.

Creswell (2007) states that “the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participant’s views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). Constructivist research involves posing questions in a broad and general manner to gauge an understanding of the participant’s views and beliefs. Creswell (2007) recommends that the questions should be as open ended as possible to allow the participants to respond in a realistic manner, set in their own context. It is important to note that the participant’s views and beliefs are “formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual’s lives” (p. 8). Constructivist research also focuses on the specific contexts in which people live and work. In the case of this study, the primary context is the school in which CTs teach and the associated (or not) infrastructure, e.g. supportive school management and principals who encourage CTs to be involved in supervision.

### **5.3 Personal positioning**

Creswell (2009) recommends that the researcher positions themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation of data flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. As my interpretations cannot be separated from my background, history, context and prior understanding, it is important that my personal positioning within this study is communicated. A detailed account is provided in the prologue. Utilising a constructivist paradigm acknowledged that my positioning and subsequent interpretations of data collected are inextricably linked, as such, every attempt has been made to interpret the data to convey the most truthful representation of the data provided, highlighting the importance of ethics and validity in carrying out research studies.

### **5.4 Validity and reliability in the study**

Qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem (Creswell, 2009). It is therefore imperative that the researcher strives to present data that are accurate and truly represents the participant's views. Hastie and Hay (2012) state that qualitative validity "is the extent to which the research succeeds in measuring that which it was intended to measure" (p. 87). Although validity is a key aspect of qualitative research, it is not an absolute and can rarely be fully guaranteed. Cohen *et al* (2000) attribute this to a degree of bias emanating from the participants based on their subjectivity, and their opinions, attitudes and perspectives. Creswell (2009) suggests that using multiple validity strategies will enhance the researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of the findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy. The following strategies (suggested by Creswell, 2009), were used to validate the findings:

- a. Member checking: transcribed interviews were sent back to each of the participants to determine accuracy and factual errors were addressed.
- b. Use of rich, thick description to convey the findings: this involves providing a detailed description of the setting, the research participants and the themes. The descriptions are rich in providing consensus on CT's perceptions of their role and relationships developed but it must be

acknowledged that they are limited due to not considering the particular school setting of each CT. Despite this, it is surprising how often similar issues arose irrespective of the setting. The detailed descriptions provided allow the reader to interpret the results in a more realistic and richer manner.

- c. Clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study: Qualitative research will include details about the researcher's background and how this may shape their interpretation of the findings. This has been covered in detail in the previous section 'personal positioning'.
- d. Presenting negative or discrepant information: all data that may have contradicted the generated themes are presented to provide a realistic and valid account of the findings.

In addition, all quotations were checked against transcribed verbatim texts and were used to validate the interpretations of the data presented in the thematic analysis.

In describing reliability, Hastie and Hay (2012) indicate that it “relates to the extent to which the results of a study could be reproduced using the same methods” (p. 87). However, in addressing qualitative reliability, Cohen *et al* (2000) highlight the fact that qualitative research cannot be replicated due to the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of situations. As such, the same authors qualify qualitative research reliability as a “fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched” (p. 119), thus enabling a degree of accuracy. In using qualitative methodologies, it is important to ensure reliability through authenticity, detail, honesty and depth of response. Reliability for this study was assured by checking the transcripts for any obvious mistakes (typing errors, misspellings, factual and contextual points) and ensuring that there was not an obvious shift in the definitions of the codes used during thematic analysis by using constant comparison.

## **5.5 Data Sources**

### **5.5.1 Summary**

The study involved five phases from September 2008 to December 2011, and included eighteen qualified physical education teachers, ten female and eight male, from fifteen schools. All teachers were full-time qualified physical education teachers with teaching experience ranging from three years to 28 years. The teachers' experience as a CT ranged from none to 15 years. The experience ranged from occasional support to full supervisory guidance. During the research period, the CTs worked with year 2, year 4 or Professional Diploma PSTs. The five phases evolved as the study progressed with each phase informing the next.

Study information sheets asking CTs to participate in each phase of the study investigating the role of the CT and the effectiveness of school placement triad relationships were posted to principals and CTs in schools (appendix A). The participating CTs were asked to formally supervise the PST over the school placement period. This included carrying out a minimum of two structured observations each week with written feedback and holding a weekly meeting between the CT and the PST where they would have the opportunity to discuss the week's teaching, the following week's lesson plans and set targets using PETE school placement criterion. All CTs received a copy of the physical education school placement booklet which contained guidelines that outlined and clarified the role of the CT, evaluation criteria and observation and weekly meeting sheets.

The physical education school placement booklet was compiled by members of the physical education department at the teacher education institution prior to the commencement of the study. One of my roles in the development of the booklet involved liaising with practicing physical education teachers in the development of the observation materials and finalising the guidelines for CTs in the supervisory role. These guidelines were then further developed in collaboration with the three Physical Education Teacher Education Institutions in Ireland (appendix D). The

booklet was provided to each of the CTs involved in the study to assist them in their supervisory roles. The structure of this approach was new to the CTs as there was no previous formal expectation from the teacher education institution to actively engage with the PSTs.

The data collection process for each of the phases was entirely separate from the PSTs' experience in the schools and evaluation process. It is acknowledged that the structured observations and weekly meetings may have helped the PSTs progress their teaching abilities. The following table provides a summary of the data collection in each of the phases and the demographics of the participants.

<b>Phase Number and Title</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Participants</b>				<b>Data Collection Methods</b>
<i>Phase 1: Setting the Scene</i>	September – December 2008  March – April 2009	Year 4 School Placement – 8 PSTs  Year 2 School Placement – 9 PSTs				Observation  Reflective Journal
		<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>M/F</b>	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>CT Experience</b>	
<i>Phase 2: The Reality of the School Placement Triad</i>  <i>Year 4 School Placement</i>	September – December 2009	Greg	M	6yrs	4yrs	Individual Interview x2  (45min - 1hr duration)  Pre and post school placement
		Mark	M	12yrs	3yrs	
		Laura	F	3yrs	1yr	
		Jane	F	7yrs	4yrs	
		John	M	6yrs	6yrs	
		Steven*	M	16yrs	15yrs	
		Sarah	F	10yrs	1yr	
		Luke	M	28yrs	5yrs	
<i>Phase 3a: Developing Professional Communities</i>  <i>Year 2 School Placement</i>	February – May 2010	Steven*	M	17yrs	16yrs	Focus Group Interview x3 (1hour duration)  Pre, mid-way and post school placement
		Jessica	F	10yrs	0yrs	
		Helen	F	7yrs	1yr	
		Anna*	F	20yrs	2yrs	
		Vicky	F	20yrs	0yrs	

<i>Phase 3b: CT Workshop</i>	September 2010	15 Cooperating Teachers				Workshop Evaluation
		Pseudonym	M/F	Teaching Experience	CT Experience	
<i>Phase 4: Developing the CT/UT Relationship</i>  <i>Year 2 School Placement &amp; Professional Diploma</i>	February – May 2011	Jennifer	F	34yrs	19yrs	Observations  Individual Interview x4  Pre-official visit 1  Official visit 1  Pre-official visit 2  Official visit 2
		Clare	F	14yrs	3yrs	
		Peter	M	10yrs	3yrs	
		Ronan	M	7yrs	6yrs	
<i>Phase 5: The Learning Experiences of CTs</i>  <i>Year 4 School Placement &amp; Professional Diploma</i>	September – December 2011	Steven*	M	18yrs	17yrs	Individual Interview x2  Pre and post school placement  Debrief sessions x3
		Daniel	M	7yrs	7yrs	
		Caroline	F	23yrs	1yr	
		Anna*	F	21yrs	3yrs	

Table 1: Data collection overview

\*Denotes CTs who participated in more than one phase

### **5.5.2 Phase 1: ‘Setting the Scene’, September 2008 – April 2009**

I became a university tutor at the teacher education institution in September 2008. I supervised eight year 4 PSTs in the autumn semester and nine year 2 PSTs in the spring semester. This gave me the opportunity to keep a reflective journal based on my observations whilst at the school placement sites. In terms of the reflective journal, I undertook a passive role, observing the interaction between the CT and the PST and the CT’s relationship with UTs. Following each visit, I compiled detailed reflections based on my impressions and interpretations of the intricacies of the school placement triad, in particular, the role of the CT. The following headings were used to guide my reflections; the role of the CT, the relationships between the CT and PST and between the CT and the UT.

### **5.5.3 Phase 2: The reality of the school placement triad, September to December 2009**

The findings from the observations as recorded in the reflective journal informed the development of interview questions for CTs in phase two. It was evident from the data collected in phase one that many CTs existed on the periphery of the school placement process and did not have a significant impact on the development of PSTs’ teaching capabilities. CTs carried out few structured observations and gave minimal feedback to PSTs and meaningful interaction between CTs and UTs was lacking. I conducted interviews pre and post school placement with eight teachers. During the pre-school placement interview, teachers discussed their role as a CT and what problems or challenges they faced in that role. A follow up interview took place after the ten week school placement period to gain an insight into the realities experienced by the CTs in striving to provide support for the PST and develop relationships with the UT.

### **5.5.4 Phase 3a: Developing professional communities, February – May 2010**

My analysis of the individual interviews in phase two revealed that the majority of the CTs were experiencing a variety of successes and difficulties in their role as

supervisor and many were isolated in their role within the school structure. Cognisant of such realities, the next stage of the study involved the introduction of structured professional communities where a group of CTs could meet throughout the school placement to share their experiences.

The schools selected were based in two geographical locations. Each of the schools had agreed to host year 2 physical education PSTs. The aim was to create two geographical clusters which could facilitate CTs to meet as a group throughout the placement to share their supervisory experiences and participate in focus group interviews. Three schools in one area and two in the other expressed their interest. I requested that the teachers attend two focus group meetings during the school placement period and a follow-up focus group interview to further explore issues which had arisen during the school placement experience. I facilitated each of the focus group interviews recording each of the teacher's responses with a dictaphone.

#### **5.5.5 Phase 3b: Cooperating Teacher Workshop, September 2010**

Data from both focus group and individual interviews from the previous phases indicated the need to address the ambiguity of the role of the CT in the school placement process, difficulties in delivering effective feedback and creating opportunities for accessible CPD. As part of phase three of the study I hosted a CT workshop at the teacher education institution in September 2010 (workshop programme, appendix B). It was anticipated that the workshop would address a number of issues that arose from data collected in the first three phases of the study. The workshop was available to those CTs who participated in the study to date as well as other interested teachers who act as supervisors to PSTs. A total of fifteen teachers, six male and nine female, from thirteen schools attended the workshop. Three of the CTs had participated in phase two and three (a) of the study and seven participated in later phases of the study. The remaining five CTs did not participate in any phase of the study. The CTs were asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of the workshop and their responses were considered. Many of the comments formed the basis for the next two phases of the study.

#### **5.5.6 Phase 4: Developing the CT/UT Relationship, February – May 2011**

The outcomes from the workshop provided the grounding for phase four of the study. The aim was to develop the school placement by creating a more structured role for the CT in the supervision of PSTs. CTs were asked to undertake more of a formalised supervisory role, undertaking structured observations and formalising the delivery of feedback to PSTs in formal post lesson appraisals. Study information sheets were sent out to each of the CTs who attended the CT workshop in September 2010. Four of the CTs agreed to participate in the study.

The study involved the UT visiting the CT prior to the first and second official graded lessons. Two UTs (myself and another member of the physical education department at the teacher education institution) were used in the data collection stage in this phase. The visits involved both the UT and the CT observing the PST teach a lesson, providing an opportunity to discuss the type and level of feedback required. A joint debrief with the PST then followed. It was anticipated that this would address a number of challenges faced by CTs in the delivery of effective feedback. This process also acted as a form of standardisation and provided the opportunity for CTs to share their knowledge of the PSTs and enhance school-university communication. A brief description of the structure of the four visits is provided below.

Visit one: ‘Unofficial visit A’ – The CT and UT observed a lesson together and discussed the type and level of feedback required and then held a discussion on the similarities and differences between the feedback they would give the PST and how it would be delivered. Prompts were provided to promote the discussion. A debrief led by both the CT and the UT was held with the PST.

Visit two: ‘Official visit A’ – The CT and UT observed the lesson and discussed strengths and areas for development. The CT was present in the post lesson debrief (led by the UT) with the PST and was encouraged to contribute when appropriate.

Visit three: ‘Unofficial visit B’ – As for ‘unofficial visit A’. The CT carried out the post-lesson debrief with the UT present.

Visit four: ‘Official graded lesson B’ – As for ‘official visit A’.

### **5.5.7 Phase 5: The learning experiences of cooperating teachers, September to December 2011**

Phase four encouraged CTs to contribute to the supervision of PSTs in a formalised role and it was expected that, as a result, CTs would become confident and competent supervisors. The formalised approach was similar to the other phases in that CTs were asked to formally observe PSTs a minimum of twice a week and schedule a weekly meeting. Consequently, the aim of the final phase of the study was to specifically investigate the learning trajectories of CTs as they became confident and competent supervisors to PSTs. I met with the four CTs individually at their school sites a total of five times over the ten week school placement period. The CTs were questioned about their role as a CT and what problems or challenges they face in the role and the relationships they develop with both the PST and the UT.

## **5.6 Qualitative research methods**

Qualitative methods, including reflective journals, individual interviews and focus group interviews, were used to yield maximal information and provide an in-depth analysis of the role of the CT in the supervision process. These primary data collection methods enabled the exploration of the participants’ experience and provided access to “the lived world of the subjects” (Kvale, 2007, p. 9) and were selected in light of their ability to address the specific research questions.

### **5.6.1 Reflective journal**

Creswell (2009) describes qualitative observations as “those in which the researcher takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site”

(p. 181). Observation can allow researchers to understand much more about what goes on in complex situations than they could discover by asking questions of those who experience them (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). Cohen *et al* (2000) state that observation allows the researcher to move beyond perception-based data, which is accessed through interviews, and to access live situations “in situ” (p. 305). Observation can give the researcher a more complete understanding of the situation in question.

Observation can be undertaken with the researcher as a participant or non-participant in the activity or setting being observed. It was decided to observe school placement practices in a non-participant role to allow for greater reflectivity. A reflective journal was used to record personal thoughts and impressions on what was seen and experienced and was written up as soon as possible following the observations. Grix (2004) suggests that in non-participant observation the researcher does not directly influence events, but observes interaction between subjects. The subjects’ interactions are unaffected by the researcher’s presence. Keeping a reflective journal allowed me to gain first hand experiences of physical education school placement practices and to contextualise the current situation in supervision practices in Irish post-primary schools. The observations focused on practice rather than individual behaviours and recording my thoughts in a reflective journal served to make the research more robust.

The observations were approached in an unstructured manner to generate hypothesis rather than test hypothesis (Cohen et al., 2000). An unstructured observation allows the researcher to review observational data before deciding its significance for the study. The data collected during the observations led to the development of detailed and explicit research questions that were explored through individual interviews and focus group interviews.

### **5.6.2 Individual interviews**

Qualitative individual interviews were used to acquire rich, detailed data from the participants in the study. An individual interview is a social interaction between two people involving the researcher conducting face to face interviews with participants (Creswell, 2009). Kvale (2007) states that an individual interview “attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world” (p. xii). The individual interviews took place at the participant’s school site and each lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour in length. Informed consent, entailing informing the participants about the overall purpose of the study and the main features of the design, as well as possible risks and benefits, was sought from all participants, pseudonyms were assigned and confidentiality was assured.

The interviews were semi-structured in format. Grix (2004) describes a semi-structured interview as in-depth where the interviewer has “in mind a number of questions...but which do not have to follow any specific, predetermined order” (p. 127). Semi-structured interviews allow for a certain degree of flexibility and can lead to unexpected lines of enquiry arising during the interview. Using a semi-structured format allows a researcher to elicit the participants’ own perspectives, provides a representation of an individual’s opinions and “allows interviewees to speak in their own voices” (Byrne, 2004, p. 181). The interviews were structured to initiate a dialogue and the participants were encouraged to reply to questions freely and openly. Each of the interviews began with a series of closed questions to determine the demographics of each participant. Information such as gender, school environment, teaching experience and supervision experience was elicited from each of the participants to set the scene. Following this, a set of open-ended questions were posed to the participants to determine their thoughts and perceptions. McNeill (1990) suggests the most successful format involves the researcher leaving it to the respondents as to how they word their answers. The role of the interviewer is to lead the participant towards certain themes, but not to specific opinions about these themes (Kvale, 2007). The participants were encouraged to discuss the topics and themes extensively and follow up questions were adapted based on the participant’s

responses. At various points during the interviews, probes and prompts were used to encourage in-depth answers and to elicit more information on certain topics. Interviews allowed for detailed responses from the participants and, as a result, rich, detailed data were obtained.

### **5.6.3 Focus group interviews**

Focus group interviews were used in phase three of the study in response to participants' views that many physical education teachers feel isolated in their role (i.e. the only physical education teacher in their school) and lack opportunities to interact with physical education colleagues. Focus group interviews can provide a rich source of information due to the purposeful interaction among participants. Gaskell (2003) states the objective of a focus group interview "is to stimulate the participants to talk and to respond to each other, to compare experiences and impressions and to react to what other people in the group say" (p. 46). Morgan (2004) describes three essential components of focus groups as:

- A research method devoted to data collection.
- Locating the interaction in a group discussion as the source of the data.
- Acknowledging the researcher's active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes.

(p. 264)

Focus groups can encourage genuine social interaction and lead to the development of more extensive data. Guiding questions, shaped by the research questions, were posed to the participants. Acknowledging that focus group interviews can provide insights into attitudes, beliefs and opinions, it is important that the structure does not silence individual voices of dissent (McLafferty, 2004). This can be achieved by the interviewer creating a non-threatening supportive climate that encourages all participants to share views and opinions. Kvale (2007) stresses that "the aim of focus group interviews is not to reach a consensus about, or solutions to, the issues

discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue” (p. 72). Hence the interactive quality of the interviews is the key feature.

The number of participants involved in a focus group interview is correlated with the amount and quality of collected data. If the group size is too big, the opportunity for each participant to provide opinions will be reduced (Morgan, 2004). The number of participants in this study’s focus group interviews was affected by work schedules, availability and location, and as a result there were only five participants. The focus groups did, however, elicit rich information about the range of perspectives and experiences of the participants.

#### **5.6.4 Interview transcription**

To enable data analysis to occur simultaneously with data collection, both the focus group interviews and the individual interviews were transcribed verbatim immediately after the interviews took place. No changes were made to the original format to ensure a trustworthy process. The transcribed text was inputted into a qualitative analytical tool, Atlas.ti, which provides a process by which to code the data. Interview transcripts were sent to the participants for verification.

### **5.7 Data analysis procedures**

#### **5.7.1 Grounded theory**

Data analysis in qualitative research involves preparing and organising the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes and representing the data in tables or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). For the purpose of this study, it was decided to use a grounded theory approach to analyse the data as it is best suited to research involving interaction between persons or among individuals and specific environments (Grbich, 2007). Grounded theory, as a methodology, provided a tool to navigate through the myriad of data collected in the five phases of the study. Wahyuni (2012) describes a

methodology as “a model to conduct research within the context of a particular paradigm” (p. 72). Kvale (2007) stresses that the purpose of grounded theory is not to test existing theory, but to develop theory inductively. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe grounded theory as “a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (p. 63). Charmaz (2006) proposes that by using a grounded theory approach it provides “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p. 2). A grounded theory methodology was employed to allow the development of a theoretical understanding of the experience or practice being researched.

The process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the generation of inter-connecting codes or categories. Grounded theory involves a process of data-driven coding where the researcher starts out without codes and develops them through readings of the material (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). To ensure validity in the process, a system of constant comparison of the emergent codes is required throughout the analysis procedure. A constant comparative method is a process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories (Creswell, 2007) which allows important concepts, practices and experiences to be revealed.

### **5.7.2 Thematic analysis**

Analysis consists of segmenting the data and reassembling them with the aim of transforming the data into findings (Boeije, 2010). Grix (2004) explains that within grounded theory, researchers seek relationships between concepts among the data they have collected and ‘code’ the data shortly after initial data collection and interpretation. Charmaz (2006) believes that coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and making analytical interpretations to develop an emergent theory. Coding provides a definition of what is occurring in the data. It is important, as a researcher, that data analysis is approached with no preconceived codes or

categories, as theory is generated from the data and evolves during actual research. In a grounded theory approach, 'substantive theory' (Grix, 2004) is generated during the process of open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Open coding is described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as "The process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (p. 61). The data are broken down and separated into distinct concepts. These concepts are then categorised into codes which are relevant to the research questions. This form of coding involves creating concepts and categories by analysing the data word for word and line by line. Open coding allows different themes and concepts found in the data to be distinguished and developed. By using the constant comparative approach, the data are organised into each of the categories, until the categories are 'saturated' (Flick, 2009) and no further insight can be obtained from the information. Constantly comparing categories aids the researcher in understanding the construction of their inter-connectivity. These codes can then be broken down further in a process of axial coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that following the process of identifying a number of substantive codes, the next step is to refine and differentiate the codes developed in open coding. Axial coding "relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data to give coherence to the emerging analysis" (Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding allows the researcher to determine the most dominant elements and get rid of the less important ones. Following this stage, Boeije (2010) highlights that the purpose of axial coding is to "reduce and reorganise the data set, synonyms are crossed out, and redundant codes are removed and the representative codes are selected" (p. 109).

To enable the exploration of the interconnectivity of the categories, a complex process of inductive and deductive analysis is required. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe inductive analysis as a process whereby "the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (p. 12). Whereas deductive analysis is referred to "data analysis that set out to test whether data are consistent

with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Inductive analysis, common in grounded theory, was employed to allow significant and dominant themes to emerge without the restraint of structured theories. Thomas (2006) suggests three purposes of using an inductive analysis approach:

1. To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format.
2. To establish clear links between the research objectives and the findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent and defensible.
3. To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data.

The final stage of the coding process is selective coding where core categories are identified and detailed theories emerge. Selective coding continues the axial coding at a higher level of abstraction (Holt et al., 2012) and the relationships between the concepts as they relate to the core category are explained and formulated. The final stage of coding enables the researcher to see connections between categories leading to a clearer understanding of what is emerging in the research data.

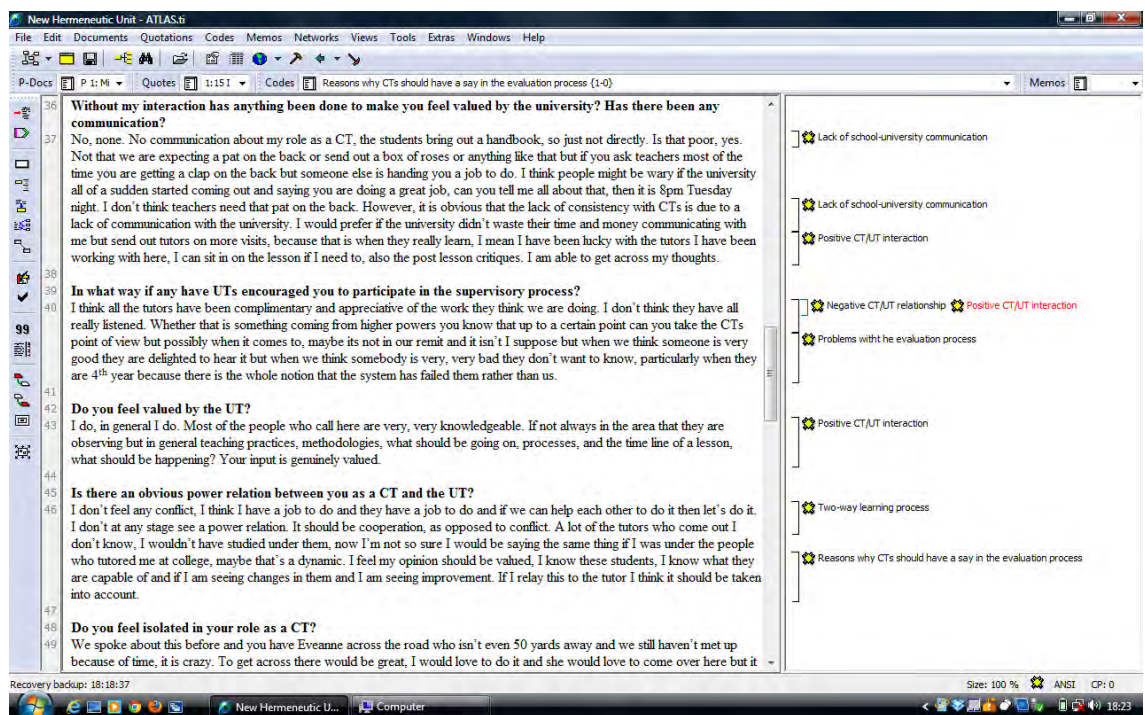
### **5.7.3 Computerised coding: ATLAS.ti**

To carry out the analysis in a coherent and structured manner, a computerised coding system, ATLAS.ti, was utilised. ATLAS.ti is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programme which allows initial analysis of the raw data, organising the data into codes (open coding) and then combining the codes into broader themes/categories, referred to as ‘families’ (axial coding). The computer programme helps to build up levels of analysis and view the relationship between the raw data and the broader themes (Flick, 2009). The interview transcripts were read repeatedly to identify codes. When a new code emerged, each of the other transcripts were re-analysed for this particular code. This continued until saturation occurred. When this was complete, codes were conceptualised into broader themes/categories (families) to aid further analysis. Using a computer assisted analysis programme, like

ATLAS.ti, removes the time-consuming process of manually coding data and ensures a more complete and rigorous examination. Codes can be retrieved at any time and a systemic overview can be provided to support the analysis process.

### 5.7.4 Application of analysis procedure

Following interview transcription the data sets were organised into themes through a process of condensing and coding. The three phases of coding described in section 5.7.2 (open, axial and selective) were utilised to interpret the transcribed interviews and reflective journals. After each phase, the interviews were uploaded on to a qualitative data analysis programme, ATLAS.ti. Once each interview was transcribed, open coding was utilised to break down and separate the data into distinct concepts. From this, the concepts were categorised into codes which identified references to the role of the CT in supervision and relationships within the triad. Exact quotations were assigned to a code and a constant comparison approach was utilised until all codes were saturated. This process was carried out following transcription of all interviews. An example of categories in the open coding phase in ATLAS.ti is presented in following screen shot:



During axial coding the codes were reanalysed and combined into broader themes, known as ‘families’. Examples of these ‘families’ included ‘Developing the role of the CT’, ‘CT/PST relationships’ and ‘Providing effective feedback’. The programme sorts all the quotations related to each of the families into one document to allow ease of analysis. The categories and ‘families’ are presented in a detailed table (appendix E). During selective coding, the ‘families’ were further condensed into three colour-coded themes. Each of the colour-coded themes relates directly to the research questions and are presented in three separate findings chapters.

### **5.7.5 Limitations in grounded theory**

Thomas (2006) stressed that the findings from raw data are shaped by the assumptions and perceptions of the researcher carrying out the data analysis. He also stated that for the findings to be usable, the researcher must make decisions about what is more important and less important in the data. It is important to avoid forcing data into preconceived codes and categories and allow them to emerge naturally. It should also be recognised that other researchers may interpret the data in different ways and may produce findings that are not identical. It is important to acknowledge my personal positioning and that my previous experience in supervision, and current beliefs and attitudes may have created a bias in my analysis.

### **5.7.6 Limitations of participant selection**

It is acknowledged that a small sample of CTs were utilised in the study and it is not the intention to generalise the results in any way. A number of voices within the school placement structure are under-represented in the study, including principals, UTs and PSTs. As the focus of the study was on the learning trajectories of CTs, this was deemed necessary to enable effective collection of data. However, there is some obvious influence from these stakeholders as a result of the relationships developed with the CTs during the course of the study. Also recognised are the limitations associated with CT self-selection. The study only represents the perceptions and opinions of supportive and motivated CTs who have an interest in the development

of supervision. As such, the voices and opinions of teachers who are dis-engaged with the process of supervision are not evident in the data.

### **5.7.7 Ethical Considerations**

Grix (2004) states that “ethical considerations are thought to be greater for those conducting qualitative research given the direct contact researchers have with people, their personal lives and the issues of confidentiality that arise out of this” (p. 120). In undertaking each phase of the study, I ensured that all relevant persons and organisations were consulted and permission was granted to collect data in a professional manner.

The study was initially approved and received ethical clearance from the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Research Ethics Committee (PESSREC 77/08) and at a later date with the extension of the study from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHSREC10-31). Both provided consent to conduct observations, individual interviews and focus group interviews with a sample of CTs. Flick (2009) strongly states that codes of ethics require that research should be based on informed consent, that “the participants agree to partake on the basis of information given to them by the researcher” (p. 37). Cognisant of this, prior to the commencement of each of the phases, an information letter was sent to the CTs (appendix A) detailing the study and expectations. Participants were provided with consent forms (appendix C). Confidentiality was assured with regards to data collection and a pseudonym was assigned to each participant. All consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher before data collection.

All information gathered in the study remained completely anonymous and strictly confidential. Interviews are identified using a code number (phase and interview number) and names were not recorded or used in any part of this study. Participants were made aware that involvement in the study was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This study was undertaken using a constructivist paradigm incorporating a number of qualitative data collection tools including reflections, observations, individual interviews and focus group interviews. In a social constructivist approach, the researcher relies on the participants' views and attitudes on the situation and then constructs a meaning and theory throughout the research period. In terms of data analysis, grounded theory, as a strategy of inquiry, was deemed the most appropriate approach as it allowed the generation of multiple themes based on the views of the participants.

The three main research questions that emerged through the inductive analysis process are presented in three separate chapters and will each address the specific research questions outlined in the introduction. Each of the research questions addresses the main aim of identifying CTs' learning trajectories to develop a cohort of effective supervisors. Chapter seven involves analysing CT's perceptions of and responses to the role of supervision. Chapter eight examines the establishment of communities in school placements. Chapter nine analyses the learning trajectories of CTs in the supervision process. Chapters eight and nine start with a theoretical section to contextualise the data in the sphere of supervision. In presenting the CTs' responses, they are not directly attributed to a specific phase of the study as the majority of the CTs were only involved in one phase. As a result, there was no scope to map progression or development in their thoughts and perceptions through the phases. In two instances where CTs were involved in more than one phase, their comments are attributed to the phases. There are a number of cases where direct quotations from CTs are used more than once to convey relevance to a variety of constructs.

# Chapter 6: Setting the scene

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## *Initial observations of the role of the co-operating teacher in school placements*

### **6.1 Introduction**

Phase one of the project involved keeping a reflective journal on visits made to both year 2 and year 4 PSTs on school placements. The aim was to observe the interactions between the CT and the PST and between the CT and the UT to establish the type of relationships evident in the school placement triad. The first school placement, in the autumn semester of 2008, involved visiting eight year 4 PSTs and the second placement, in the spring semester of 2009, involved visiting nine year 2 PSTs, both in a variety of schools around the country. Each PST was visited twice during each school placement. Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988) highlighted that often the weakest component of a school placement was the CT, and this was due to a lack of supervisory training, inconsistent selection of CTs and the lack of expectations, standards or competencies for CTs. Whilst Irish teacher education institutions do not have the luxury to select CTs, the lack of supervisory training and the lack of expectations are evident throughout the entries in the reflective journal.

The main insight gained from the journal reflections was that there was a ‘hit and miss’ system of supervision occurring and that there was no structured system of observation and delivery of feedback. In line with the ‘Learning to Teach Study’ (LETS) (Conway et al, 2011), there seemed to be a prevailing culture of the school placement acting as a site for working rather than learning for the PST. There was evidence of PSTs teaching classes unsupported when CTs were absent or away on courses. The majority of the PSTs taught classes on their own throughout the school placement whilst some CTs treated these classes as free time. This reflects a statement made by the advisory group set up to report on post-primary teacher education (2002) whereby they describe the role of the CT as a “relatively

challenge-free role in their relationships with students” (p. 69). Overall, there was a lack of interaction between the CT and the UT, with the CT often unavailable during tutor visits. There was also a lack of communication between the UT and the principal. More often than not, the principal was aware of the PST’s presence in the school but had no knowledge of their progress or whether they were being supported by the CT. Evidence of positive interactions that occurred between CTs and PSTs are presented in the next section. This is followed by evidence of limited interaction, support or collaboration observed between the CT and PST. The chapter also presents observations of the role of the CT, the evaluation process and the perceived relationship between the CT and UT. These topics were most prevalent in the observations and highlighted the intricacies of the school placement triad, in particular the role of the CT. The issues highlighted served to guide the development of interview questions for phase two.

## **6.2 Positive interactions between CTs and PSTs**

Effective practice was occurring in some schools and there were CTs who were willing to provide supportive and beneficial experiences for PSTs. It was observed that there were some informal developments in the establishment of relationships between CTs and PSTs. There were many aspects of positive interactions and there was a sense that there is a cohort of committed and supportive CTs who are willing to carry out the supervision role;

The cooperating teacher was very honest and explained some of the problems she was having with the pre-service teacher. She was unsure of some of the expectations and thought that guidelines should be sent out so cooperating teachers knew how to deal with issues and know what to expect.

(Autumn semester reflective journal entry, 2008)

This CT was very keen to get involved in providing support and developing a relationship with the PST at her school. She regularly observed the classes and gave verbal feedback on both strengths and areas for development. The CT wanted the

supervisory system formalised and the role of the CT recognised, legitimatising her position as a supervisor.

There were a number of examples where CTs were providing excellent support and guidance to PSTs. There was evidence that some were observing on a regular basis, giving constructive feedback and setting targets for the PSTs. In one school, the CTs would “normally sit and watch all lessons and either give written or verbal feedback. The PST discussed how useful this was as it made her focus on areas of weakness and reassured her when things were done right” (Autumn semester reflective journal entry, 2008). The benefits of having a supportive relationship with the CT was emphasised by one PST who remarked that, because of the feedback, she was able to get the basics right in the first few weeks and then move on to focusing upon lesson structure and catering for mixed abilities. An example of a good working relationship occurred where a PST had raised concerns about a certain class and, as a result, the CT team taught the class with the PST. The PST commented to me that “it was beneficial as it gave him [PST] the opportunity to see a number of different approaches to motivate the students and develop their understanding of gymnastics” (Spring semester reflective journal entry, 2009).

### **6.3 Limited interaction between CTs and PSTs**

#### **6.3.1 Limited working relationships**

There was evidence that many PSTs were not getting the opportunity to develop any form of working relationships with CTs. It was observed that there was a lack of support and guidance being provided by some CTs and that there appeared to be general apathy in terms of quality observations and delivery of feedback;

The PST commented on how the CT did not observe any of his lessons, apart from a few at the start. This meant that he was not getting regular or informative feedback to enhance his teaching and delivery of subject content. Unfortunately, this was somewhat evident in the lesson as the PST was not implementing some of the more basic teaching and learning points.

(Autumn semester reflective journal entry, 2008)

The CT/PST relationship was limited due to the lack of CT engagement in the supervisory process, CT absence from the PST's classes and that many PSTs believed they did not require structured supervision to progress through the placement. In many instances there seemed to be a lack of expectation from both the CT and the PST in terms of developing a relationship. Due to the lack of a formalised structure, there appeared to be a misconstrued image of what a relationship should entail and consequently what emerged was a culture of the CT 'protecting' the PST and vice versa. Examples of the CT 'protecting' the PST included the CT removing non-participants from the class on the day of the UT visit so the PST would not be distracted and discussing the PST's strengths although they had not observed them teaching. Comments made by CTs about the PST's teaching were vague and lacked evidence of regular observation, often restricted to the personality or demeanour of the PST, rather than the actual delivery of the lessons. PSTs also tended to rate their CTs in terms of friendliness rather than quality feedback and support, thus hindering the potential for developing a meaningful relationship.

### **6.3.2 Limited support for the PST**

A reoccurring issue throughout the reflections was the lack of support the PSTs were receiving from their CTs throughout the placement. This was reflected in a diary entry concerning a student who received no form of support from the CT during the entire placement, "I really feel that the lack of support has meant that the student has not fulfilled her potential throughout the ten week placement" (Autumn semester reflective journal entry, 2008). The reality of this meant that many PSTs were not receiving guidance on how to improve their teaching capabilities or opportunities to open up channels of communication. As a result, PSTs repeated mistakes throughout the duration of the placement. A visit made to two year 2 PSTs revealed that;

This particular CT has not observed any of their [PST's] lessons and has let them get on with it. This is the class they have most difficulty with in terms of motivation and completion of tasks. They have had no feedback in how to deal with these kinds of issues with this group.

(Spring semester reflective journal entry, 2009)

This theme crops up throughout the reflections and is reinforced with comments like “it is clear that the CTs do not observe on a regular basis and do not give feedback after the lessons” (Autumn semester reflective journal entry, 2008) and “The CT has little contact with the PSTs and rarely gives feedback” (Spring semester reflective journal entry, 2009). At times, the PSTs were making basic mistakes in terms of organisation and communication which could have been highlighted earlier in their placements had they had a supportive relationship with the CT. This led to many PSTS not reaching their potential over a six or a ten week block placement.

#### **6.4 Perceptions of a supportive CT**

It emerged that the PSTs had varying perceptions of what a supportive CT should be. One PST, when asked to rate his CT out of ten by the External Examiner, replied with an ‘eight’. When questioned, the PST based this on how welcome he felt at the school and that the CT would allow him to use the sportshall when it rained. The External Examiner re-phrased the question in terms of developing a supportive relationship and the delivery of feedback and the PST in his response rated the CT at a ‘three’, conveying a marked difference. This was reinforced in another visit when it was noted that;

The CT up to this point let the PST carry on with whatever he chose to teach and rarely stayed for the duration of the class. Feedback was limited due to this fact, although both students feel they are being greatly supported by the CTs. However, only one [CT] carries out formal observations and structured feedback.

(Spring semester reflective journal entry, 2009)

It is possible that the reluctance of CTs to become involved in the supervision process is linked to a lack of experience and confidence in their supervisory abilities. The data revealed that CTs are often reluctant to provide opportunities for PSTs to observe their teaching. There appears to be a lack of tradition in Irish post-primary schools of observing each other’s teaching, subsequently affecting the lack of opportunities PSTs have for observing the CT teach.

## **6.5 Initial observations of CT-UT interactions**

There was evidence that some CTs were interested in developing relationships with UTs and were conscious of the importance of their role as a supervisor. Some CTs were engaging with their PSTs on a daily basis, observing classes and delivering effective feedback. This was evident in the progression some PSTs were making between tutor visits:

There was evidence of pupil learning and understanding due to the use of ICT in the lesson. This was achievable due to the high level of support she receives from her cooperating teachers. They observe her teaching, use the UL criteria to give her feedback and create targets for her to work towards each week.

(Autumn semester reflective journal, 2008)

As a result, CTs wanted to communicate with UTs to give their opinion on the progress (or lack of progress) PSTs were making in the school placement. One CT asked the UT for the school placement assessment criteria and observation templates to be made available to allow her to be more effective in her supervisory role. Another CT was unsure of CT and PST expectations and requested clarification on a number of issues including attendance, attire and involvement in extra-curricular activities. Such information not being disseminated to the CTs revealed the lack of a supportive and nurturing partnership between the school and the university.

## **6.6 Evaluation of PST's on school placement**

In terms of the evaluation process for PST's on school placement, many CTs appeared uncomfortable when asked to remain in the lesson and debrief during the UT visit. One CT in particular stated that she was uncomfortable discussing the PST's progress as she was aware that she had no role in the process and did not want to impact the PST's grade. To another extent, another CT discussed that he would welcome a say in the evaluation process (at a minimum to be consulted when the UT visited the PST) as he was the one who saw the PST teach on a daily basis and saw the PST's development. The reflective journals highlighted the lack of a relationship between the CT and UT and the absence of effective school-university partnerships,

in particular the ambivalence of the role of the CT and the lack of interaction between the CT and the UT. Traditionally, CTs have been left to their own devices and consequently the concept of collaborative partnerships will need to be a gradual and agreed process between the schools and the teacher education institutions.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The outcome of the reflections added credence to anecdotal suggestions of how effective or not the relationship between CTs and PSTs is in Irish post-primary schools, prompting the need to investigate how best to develop productive and sustainable communities of CTs and PSTs and potentially between CTs and UTs, to positively impact CTs' learning trajectories. This was facilitated through four additional phases of the study that have been noted in the methodology chapter. The following three chapters are representative of the final four phases that relied on in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with CTs who hosted PSTs at their schools. Responses are not directly attributed to specific phases as the majority of the CTs only participated in one phase although phases are highlighted for the two CTs who participated in more than one phase. There are a limited number of cases where specific direct quotations from CTs are used more than once to convey relevance to a variety of constructs.

# Chapter 7: Cooperating teachers perceptions of and responses to the role of supervision

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## 7.1 Introduction

Internationally, there is a growing trend to move towards a system of school-based teacher education, resulting in the role of the cooperating teacher (CT) becoming more prominent (Koster et al., 1998). Currently, a large number of countries, including the United States, Australia and England, recognise and utilise qualified physical education teachers as ‘supervisors’ or ‘mentors’ to pre-service teachers (PSTs) on school placements (Furlong, 2000, Hobson, 2002, McWilliams et al., 2006, Wright and Smith, 2000). This role can include supporting the PST by carrying out a pre-lesson briefing, a formal observation of the lesson and a post lesson debrief (Behets and Vergauwen, 2006) and orientation, personal support, instruction and guidance and providing feedback (Koster et al., 1998). The role of the CT can also include evaluation and assessment of the PST and involvement in delivering certain aspects of the teacher education curriculum (Koster et al., 1998, Simpson et al., 2007). Currently, in an Irish context, CTs work voluntarily as informal, untrained, unpaid supervisors during a school placement (Chambers, 2009). CTs, in a gesture of goodwill, offer learning support to PSTs in the area of classroom management and pedagogical content knowledge (Kiely, 2005). As a result of this there is great inconsistency in both the quantity and quality of learning support offered to PSTs by CTs. Just as importantly CTs remain untrained and seem to be confused about their exact role as a CT (Bullough and Draper, 2004, Dunning et al, 2011, Ganser, 2002).

Data collection was informed and guided by the interest in addressing the following research question:

**Research question one: What are physical education cooperating teachers' perceptions of and responses to the role of supervision?**

To answer the research question three sub-questions were identified;

- (i) How do teachers perceive the role of the physical education cooperating teacher in supervising pre-service teachers on school placements?
- (ii) To what extent are these perceptions acted upon and what is the reality of the role of the physical education cooperating teacher?
- (iii) What is required to enhance and develop the role to create confident and competent physical education cooperating teachers?

The demographics of the participants involved are outlined in table 1 in the methodology chapter. The data presented in this chapter are drawn from all phases to address the specific research question. The chapter begins with the CTs' perceptions of supervision and their role in the process. The next section presents the CTs' actual role in supervision and the successes and difficulties they face in attempting to provide a supportive structure for PSTs. The chapter finishes by discussing CTs' recommendations to enhance their supervisory role.

## **7.2 The role of the cooperating teacher**

### **7.2.1 Attraction to CTs of supervising PSTs**

A number of questions were posed to the teachers (to determine their perceptions of being a CT) before they were to work with a PST on a school placement. It is important to note that the decision to accept PSTs on school placements is undertaken by the principals and not the CTs. However, all eighteen CTs welcomed the opportunity to work with PSTs and demonstrated a number of positive perceptions, mainly referring to the reasons why they chose to undertake the process and the personal and professional benefits they achieve from doing it. Six of the teachers stated the reason they carried out the role of a CT was to 'give back' to the teaching profession, acknowledging that they had a professional responsibility to prepare future teachers. This is reinforced in a study carried out by Hynes-Dusal

(1999) who found that CTs enjoyed the supervisory experience because it gave them the opportunity to ‘give something back’ to the profession and that the process made them better teachers, even if it meant that they had more work. As well as giving back to the profession, the process of having a PST also impacted positively on the physical education departments;

I really benefit of knowing that you are doing something good for whoever is coming out and sending them off on a good professional footing. In the school you are seen as a department that take people in and obviously work with them...your status as a department rises as well.

(John, pre-SP, phase 2)

Of the eighteen CTs three reported that they had positive experiences while they were PSTs on school placements and wanted the same experience for their PSTs, while seven had negative experiences and did not want their PSTs to have similar experiences. This latter experience is reflected in Anna’s comment;

When I was in college we went out every year on teaching practice and to be honest we were just left to our own devices, the teachers didn’t really give us a lot of feedback...we just learned from our own mistakes really. So I suppose now that I have so many years’ experience it’s good I can guide younger teachers along the way so that they won’t make the same mistakes that I made.

(pre-SP, phase 5)

Laura reinforced the importance of having support on a school placement acknowledging that “it can be really daunting coming into a new school trying to teach for the first time...I think it’s great to be able to ask someone for some constructive feedback on your classes” (pre-SP, phase 2).

### 7.2.2 Professional Benefits of being a CT

Comiskey and Cotson (1997) highlight a number of benefits experienced by mentor teachers through their work with PSTs. These included being exposed to a diversity of teaching styles, pupils motivated by fresh ideas, reflection on their own teaching and a form of professional development. Each of these was discussed by the CTs, particularly that the school placement provides a two-way learning process for both the CT and the PST. Not only were the CTs there to guide and advise the PSTs and help them learn, the PSTs were in turn benefiting the CTs in terms of sharing new activities, teaching strategies, curriculum and instructional models and schemes of work. Steven highlighted the benefits he received from supervising a PST;

I get a rest, it's a good thing! The kids get somebody else, that's a great thing. We see new things, that's what I love about it, you might get somebody in from a different sporting background, and you might get somebody in who is trying something new and sit back and say 'I haven't seen that before, fantastic'.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

Steven elaborated by describing how he had 'stolen knowledge', in the form of a new game, while observing the PST teaching a health-related fitness lesson. He had never seen the activity before and was shocked at the pupil's enthusiastic response. The focus of the activity involved a combination of heart rate response and energy systems and Steven stated that it was "brilliant, absolutely fantastic" (interview 4, phase 5) to see something new and innovative. Steven stated that it was definitely something he was going to try in other classes and appreciated the student's attempts at innovation. This two-way process was reinforced by Luke;

I'm learning from them [PST], they are the new kids on the block so hopefully these kids would be teaching me a few tricks and I do pick up another game...so new drills, new teaching points, it's a learning process.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

Anna twice stressed the benefits of having PSTs at her school;

I really enjoy having the students [PST] come out, especially for ideas for my own teaching; it's great to vary the warm-ups and drills. Being the only PE teacher, it provides a little community for me.

(pre-SP, phase 3)

It has been very positive, I've benefited enormously from it as well because it has made me look at my teaching and I am getting ideas from the students coming in...I like the interactions, I am learning all the time from it as well, I think it is helping my teaching.

(pre-SP, phase 5)

Anna felt that she was benefitting professionally from having PSTs on placement in her school, particularly in terms of gaining new ideas and content knowledge. Anna gave two specific examples of 'stolen knowledge' from the PSTs in phase five. The first involved an incident with a pupil with special educational needs (SEN) who was having difficulty mastering a number of badminton skills. To overcome this, the PST introduced balloons into the class to enable the pupil to achieve a higher level of success. Anna observed the pupil's positive reaction and wondered why she had never thought of introducing balloons before. The second example also involved a badminton class. Some pupils were struggling to master the backhand lift shot, so in response, the PST brought indoor Frisbees to the class as the technique was similar for both skills. Again, Anna was impressed with the PSTs innovation and appreciated seeing activities taught in a variety of ways.

Both of Anna's comments above imply the notion of the development of a learning community, this will be discussed further in chapter eight. Professionally, supervising a PST also encouraged six of the CTs to maintain a very structured department, ensuring that the PSTs were able to experience different strands of the Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE) curriculum. Greg stated that he "wouldn't like somebody coming in and not being impressed by it [the department], I want somebody to come in and be able to take over and find it a good school to teach in" (pre-SP, phase 2). Having a PST in the school also acted as a form of continuous professional development (CPD) for all of the CTs. The fact that the PSTs were

bringing new ideas, activities and teaching strategies helped the CTs stay up to date and relevant in the teaching of physical education. Seven of the eighteen CTs had admitted to at times being 'stuck in a rut', and that the presence of a PST and their new approaches helped them revitalise their teaching. It also enabled them to develop and retain links with the teacher education institution;

In a way it's like you get an in-service every year. It's great like, you get their ideas and new strategies and techniques...you get to meet tutors, you get to see what is going on.

(Greg, pre-SP, phase 2)

Caroline and Anna discussed, on a number of occasions in the interviews, the benefits they received from observing their PSTs delivering lessons through instructional and curriculum models, in particular Sport Education. Both CTs' valued the opportunity to see lessons delivered in innovative and new ways and were cognisant of the fact that the pupils were responding very positively to these new methods. The introduction of Sport Education, particularly the use of team affiliation, home courts, festivity and culminating events, provided both Caroline and Anna with new ways to deliver a number of activities in the junior and senior cycle curriculum.

### **7.2.3 Personal Benefits of being a CT**

The personal benefits derived from supervising were discussed by all of the CTs, especially in terms of seeing their PST achieve success and progress throughout the placement. Steven commented;

The benefit for me, the real benefit, which is completely selfish, is that I actually felt that I was helping someone. There is a huge sense of achievement, or purpose of what you are doing...it was very pleasing to see how the student progressed.

(post-TP, phase 2)

In interviewing Steven again in phase five it was obvious that his enthusiasm for the role had not diminished. He still took satisfaction from seeing the PST reach their potential and this remained one of the personal benefits he derived from the supervision process;

It's gratifying in lots of ways. It is a nice feeling helping someone, it is great to see them improve, when they come and ask you for advice, that's gratifying. If you see what you are giving, the information you are imparting used, then it is even better, I enjoy it.

(final interview, phase 5)

Similarly, Anna reiterated this benefit;

I suppose it is just watching the students develop over the block, watching them gain in confidence, watching them become more competent as teachers.

(pre-SP, phase 5)

#### **7.2.4 CTs' perceptions of the role**

Rikard and Veal (1996) acknowledge that CTs have a great influence on the PST and that the nature and quality of that influence seem to be critical factors in determining the development of the PST. It was therefore important to explore the CTs' perceptions of the role of the CT and what supervision role they had played in the past. Koerner *et al* (2002) discusses research by Enz and Cook (1992) who found that CTs ought to be selected because they demonstrate the qualities of effective mentors. However, it is interesting to note that in the case of this study, none of the teachers had any prior communication with the teacher education institution. They had either been asked or informed by their school principals that they would be supervising a PST. None of the CTs had been trained for the role of a supervisor or given the opportunity to carry out any CPD in the area of supervision. Paese (1984), referred to in Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988), contends that untrained CTs will make little or no difference in affecting change because they are uncertain about what to observe and are not aware of supervisory techniques. Tannehill and Goc-

Karp (1992) also state that it is often the need for sheer numbers of CTs (in an American context) that overshadows the importance of selecting ‘good’ CTs. This is also the case in Irish teacher education context.

Albasheer *et al* (2008) state that the CT should facilitate the PST in gaining skills, knowledge, practices and attitudes of the professional teacher, and this is similar to what each of the CTs stated when asked about what the role of the CTs should entail. All CTs were questioned prior to the school placement about their perceptions of the role of the CT. The main consensus about the role of the CT was to encourage the PSTs in their planning, teaching and reflections and help them gain confidence in delivery. Similar to the findings of Tjeerdsma (1998), it was agreed that a CT should highlight problems, give constructive feedback and be a source of information on a range of issues including classroom management and subject knowledge. The interviews revealed there was little or no expectation for the CT to carry out any structured supervision role. The irregular presence of the CT in the class was explained in terms of tradition, where historically teachers did not stay in the class and they were unaware of what was expected of them;

I think in the past there has been a tradition in schools when there is a student [PST] and the teacher leaves or they might just be there for roll call and then go. I know when I first started...I wasn't expected to stay so I think in a lot of schools with senior PE teachers they are not used to being asked to stay in the class.

(Anna, pre-SP, phase 3)

Two CTs, Greg and Jane, raised the issue that there were CTs in schools who were happy to leave the PST to their own devices, and in effect, gain time when a school placement occurred. This gained time was as a result of CTs leaving the PST to teach classes unsupervised. This proved a source of frustration for some of the teachers;

I know there are some people who are just delighted by the fact that they are getting a student teacher because they can sit in the staffroom and drink tea or coffee and I don't think you can change those types of teachers.

(Jane, pre-SP, phase 2)

All of the CTs agreed that they were there to act as a guide. There was a general consensus that the role of the CT should involve them making the PST feel welcome in the staffroom and school environment, introducing them to staff, ensuring the PST was aware of school procedures and getting them involved in extra-curricular activities. Mark also believed that the CT should act as a significant other, someone who the PST can go to for ideas and support and as a point of contact for the PST if they have any issues or problems. John described an effective CT as;

Someone who is there to guide them [PST] and there for the right reasons, not just handing over their timetable, giving them the keys to the gym and off into the sunset.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

This was echoed by Steven where he stated that the PST should use the CT as much as possible to help them reach their potential. In describing his role as a CT, he stated that, "I would see myself as a tool, as an instrument for them to use as much as they possibly can" (pre-SP, phase 5). CTs referred to the role of CT as 'facilitator', 'mentor', 'coach' and 'advisor' regularly throughout each of the phases. Each of the CTs revealed that they were comfortable with the assistance role described by Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008).

Questions relating to what constituted an effective CT revealed that thirteen CTs believed that they should be present in the majority, if not all, of the PST's classes. They believed that the role of an effective CT should be to observe the PST on a regular and consistent basis throughout the placement. Feedback should be positive, constructive and supportive, and should be delivered both verbally and in the form of written critiques. Steven highlighted that written critiques are important as verbal feedback can be less effective at times, especially if it is delivered straight after a

lesson. Ideally, a CT would have time to discuss a written critique with a PST as soon as possible after the lesson. Equally, if the CT meets the PST at the end of the week, written critiques provide a framework for the meeting, emphasising progress or areas for development.

Observations by CTs were highlighted as a key way for PSTs to learn whilst on placement. Thirteen of the eighteen CTs believed that they should be present in the majority of the PST's classes while the remaining five CTs believed that they should be in and out of the class to allow the PST to assert their own authority with the pupils. Sarah believed that "they [CTs] need to be in most of the classes and I think they need to have a form to fill out, an official form or something they can fill out so they can comment on how the teachers are getting on" (pre-SP, phase 2). This is in contrast to Vicky's beliefs that the role of the CT should "not be there all the time but to be pottering about, in and out of the store, to be there but not to interfere in the lesson" (pre-SP, phase 3).

### **7.2.5 CTs' previous experience as supervisor**

The previous supervisory role carried out by the CTs had similarities but the range of support and perceptions of what their role should entail varied considerably. In terms of previous similar supervisory experiences, all CTs had limited contact with the PSTs and the teacher education institution prior to the placement. Fifteen of the eighteen CTs took responsibility for the creation of the PSTs timetable, for both physical education and the elective subject, whilst the other three CTs' principals undertook this role. The CTs ensured that the PSTs knew which topics to cover from the JCPE curriculum and that they were given information on the pupils in their classes.

Working with previous PSTs the frequency of observations varied between the CTs from seldom to being present in all classes. It is encouraging that observations were taking place and that the PSTs were receiving some form of feedback, whether it

was verbal or written, prior to the commencement of this study. Jane reflected that she would sometimes sit in on the PST teaching or observe from the sports hall balcony to give some distance. Whilst observing she would make some notes and attempt to meet with the PST after the lesson. Prior to this study, Jane also tried to meet with the PST on a weekly basis to discuss lesson plans and evaluate the previous week's lessons. This practice was also carried out by three more CTs. Luke followed a very structured process;

I am actually always present, it's a two way process, I am actually learning from the student who is learning from me so I would tend to give the student feedback, sometimes written, sometimes verbal after every lesson and we would have weekly meetings to discuss various things.

(pre-TP, phase 2)

However, Sarah, in her first year as CT, found that her role in terms of supervision was unclear. She found that there "seemed to be little onus on the cooperating teacher to do anything at all" (pre-SP, phase 2), and found herself doing less than she expected to in terms of observing and giving the PST feedback. Helen echoed this sentiment, stating that she would regularly observe her PSTs but never wrote down any feedback or formalised its delivery in any way as there did not seem to be any expectations from the teacher education institution or the PST. Daniel seemed to take a different approach in that he would watch a couple of lessons but, "won't ever offer feedback unless it is asked of me...I wouldn't like to interfere too much" (pre-SP, phase 5). Caroline summed up her previous CT role by stating;

I suppose just advisory, give them help, give them advice, ask them do they want to come in and watch my classes. I suppose to give them a shot at reality, to let them see what a PE teacher is and give them a few things you have learnt along the way.

(pre-SP, phase 5)

## **7.3 The CTs' role in reality**

### **7.3.1 Study outline for CTs**

As a result of the observations made in phase one and the comments made in the initial interviews in phase two, the CTs were provided with a physical education school placement Booklet in each of the phases. This Booklet contained guidelines which outlined and clarified the role of the CT, evaluation criteria and observation and weekly meeting sheets. The aim of the booklet was to encourage structured participation incorporate reification into the practices of the communities developed. As already mentioned, the CTs were asked to carry out a minimum of two structured observations a week with written feedback and hold a weekly meeting to discuss the weeks' teaching, the following week's lesson plans and set targets using the school placement criteria provided in the Booklet.

### **7.3.2 Day-to-day supervision**

Fifteen of the CTs' perceptions of their role were reinforced and enhanced following supervision in the study phases and it became obvious that evolving partnerships were emerging between most of the CTs and the PSTs. All CTs commented on the benefits of having a more structured role in the supervision process. While nine of the CTs were very proactive prior to these placements, the presence of clear guidelines and observation protocols enabled them to be far more effective in their role. The booklets provided opportunities for rich and complex learning situations, where CTs, through a process of reification, enhanced their supervisory skills. John described his role as one that became more structured, finding himself sitting down with his PST discussing forthcoming lessons and suggesting targets that would enable the PST to improve. Steven (phase three) stated that his role was slightly different in that he was helping with classes, giving advice, helping with content and the level of the class. Three CTs who previously had worked with PSTs, but had not fully engaged in the process, described the difference in their role;

It was certainly different to being a CT before when you really only set out a timetable for the student and then maybe give them a few tips along the way, whereas now it was really hands on. I felt a little more responsible about what they were doing, if you could help them or not on a week to week basis.

(Mark, post-TP, phase 2)

It definitely wasn't the same as every other time, this time there was more interaction between the student and I because there was that notion that the interaction was working, that the interaction was being sought after, he wanted to learn.

(Steven, post-TP, phase 2)

I was present, I was around, I was discussing their classes with them and how they went but I wasn't playing as active a role as I am now.

(Anna, pre-SP, phase 5)

The notion that the formal supervisory process benefited the PST was also highlighted by the CTs. Their increased level of support led to the PSTs seeking advice on a more regular and consistent basis. They also found that the PSTs had more confidence as a result of the increased interaction. Mark discussed the value of having a more structured role in terms of the development of the PST;

Having someone there who was more supportive than anything else. She was bouncing ideas off me all the time, whereas that hasn't really happened before on a consistent basis, all the time. Reading through her lesson plans and things like that, she was more confident because I was okaying it.

(post-SP, phase 2)

Mid-way through phase three, the five CTs in this phase of the study believed that the PSTs were also benefitting from their involvement. Helen commented on the

fact that she was worried about one of her PSTs at the start but as a result of the observations and feedback she felt he had improved significantly;

I have seen a massive improvement in them from the first day to now...they have come on leaps and bounds. I was really worried about one of the students at the start but he is doing well now. I hope he has benefitted from my input.

(mid-SP, phase 3)

Anna (phase three) commented that the more formal supervision approach benefitted the PSTs in that it helped them think about teaching more effectively and led to more in-depth reflections. This led to the sharing of ideas and the CT having the opportunity to look through lesson plans before each class or in the weekly meeting. All eighteen CTs believed that if they were going to spend time observing and delivering feedback, the PSTs should be open to feedback and, in turn, attempt to be creative in their planning and take initiative in classes. Steven (phase 2) discussed how this occurred and how his role evolved to developing a real partnership with his PST over the placement. This improved the one on-one relationship between the CT and the PST and led to discussions between the two on teaching styles and concepts and how to deal with situations and develop on from each lesson. This was a process which the CT found worthwhile for the PST and a necessity for the PST to progress in their teaching. An example of this occurred when Steven's PST approached him with a problem he was experiencing in his basketball classes. The PST was having difficulty disassociating coaching from teaching, in particular the difference in having twelve children who want to be at a practice and thirty pupils who want to play anything but basketball. Steven met with the PST and encouraged him to focus on learning-based outcomes as opposed to performance-based outcomes. Steven and the PST discussed the issue and developed it and, as a result, Steven saw a gradual improvement in the PST's approach to the class. Steven believed that for a PST to develop effectively on a school placement there must be a close relationship where the PST is open to support and advice.

However, Vicky and Daniel found their PSTs reluctant to accept feedback and resulted in the CTs feeling like their role was not taken seriously. They found themselves repeating feedback on numerous occasions and the PSTs not taking on board the advice given. They highlight the same issues every week including many of the basics such as roll-taking, removal of jewellery, chewing gum and having a watch and a whistle. Vicky stated;

I felt I was overstepping the line if I asked for their lesson plans. I just felt, in the end, giving back the critiques that I was being invasive. The reception I was getting when giving back the sheets, I just felt there was no value in what I was doing.

(post-SP, phase 3)

Eleven of the CTs began asking for lesson plans prior to the PST's teaching and encouraged the PSTs to observe them teach when possible. This also led to the partnership between the CT and the PST becoming stronger. Greg, whose student was extremely organised and well prepared, found his main role was working with the PST on classroom situations, such as behaviour management and the effective application of planning during lessons. This promoted regular discussions between the two parties. Caroline found that her role became more of an advisor than a supervisor to the PST. She found herself guiding her student in terms of lesson content and delivery and then reflecting upon the lesson with the PST leading the discussion. Caroline discussed how she approached the role with a lot more structure and enthusiasm. With previous PSTs she found herself extracting non-participants from the class and supervising them but this year she did not as she wanted the PST to experience dealing with all aspects of the class. To provide structure, Caroline formalised the process by giving the PST a sheet at the start with her department's protocols. The protocols included how to start a lesson, information on the changing rooms and policies on jewellery and non-participation, wanting the PST to be aware of the department's expectations. She was also conscious that most PSTs were not aware of the day-to-day intricacies of teaching and wanted the PST to be confident in his initial lessons with the pupils. Caroline explains her change in approach;

I think this year I was more organised and by me giving him the protocol that kind of set straight away a tone, this is what I expect from you as opposed to last year I suppose I tried to be on the same level whereas this year I think I was kind of more 'this is what we do here' whereas last year I was asking him how he would like to do it, this year I think I gave more direction.

(interview 4, phase 5)

The evolving relationship between the CT and the PST will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8 and 9.

On previous placements, whilst all the CTs had some presence in the class, fourteen of the eighteen CTs commented upon the fact that they would not get involved in the actual teaching, preferring the PST to experience the reality of teaching. Vicky discussed how she wanted to step into the lesson but was unsure if it was appropriate. To her it was obvious that the PST was struggling to deliver the lesson content and was losing control of the class. Instead of stepping in, Vicky waited until after the class to discuss what the PST could have done differently;

A lot of the time I would have liked to have stepped in but I felt we were only supposed to step in if it was a health and safety issue so I have been holding my tongue. I waited until afterwards to ask them what they could have done differently.

(mid-SP, phase 3)

This was echoed by Helen;

I remember the very first lesson one of the students had, I don't think he had planned for it at all and he came to me three times asking me what to do. I felt so bad for him but at the same time I didn't know whether I should go out and stop the lesson.

(mid-SP, phase 3)

In terms of the role of the CT, five CTs highlighted the importance of team teaching with the PST, especially when they are on their year 2 placements. This differed from some of the interviews, prior to the school placement periods, where fourteen of the CTs believed that they would not interfere in the class taught by the PST. It was highlighted that many year 2 PSTs lack subject knowledge and sufficient progressions to fully engage the class so therefore some form of intervention in the lesson was appropriate. An example included the CT stepping into the class to effectively progress a skill or guide the PSTs in a different direction, then stepping back and allowing the PST to continue. The CTs believed that the PSTs could learn a lot more through team-teaching, especially in the first few weeks rather than having negative experiences with classes;

I think there is a role for the cooperating teacher to team-teach with the students, especially with second years. Not in a takeover role, but just step in quietly, it doesn't have to be when there is a problem, when something is going well you can step in and say that is really excellent and maybe show them how to move it on even more or in a different direction. It helps them think outside the box but at the end of the day it is their class.

(Jack, post-TP)

Steven, in phase five, described how he incorporated team-teaching into his supervisory role to benefit the PST's delivery. Due to a lack of content knowledge, Steven was aware that the PST was having difficulty in progressing flight in gymnastics. Rather than let the PST continue, Steven and the other physical education teacher in the school (who happened to free at the time) decided to team-teach the lesson with the PST. Following the lesson, issues were raised about what was missing from the class and suggestions were made on how to improve. As a result of choosing to incorporate team-teaching, Steven observed the PST address the issues successfully in the next class.

One suggestion made by the CTs was for PSTs to have the opportunity to observe teaching in the school for one to two days and then a few days of team-teaching at

the start of a school placement to help ease the PSTs into the role of a teacher rather than the 'sink or swim' mentality that, at times, seems to prevail. This is reinforced by Johnson (2011) who stated that a quality placement should involve the PST observing a CT model and teach lessons, followed by a phase where the PST gradually takes on more responsibility.

### **7.3.3 The frequency of observations and feedback**

The importance and value of CT feedback to PSTs is highlighted in a study carried out by Kahan *et al* (2003) where results revealed that CTs provide limited feedback, yet when it is provided, the influence of the CT's feedback can have a greater impact on the PST than that of the UT. One of the projected outcomes of this study was to see an improvement in the quality and quantity of feedback by instilling greater confidence in the CTs' ability to deliver effective feedback. Reflections from phase one revealed a lack of structured observations and feedback being provided to PSTs on school placements. This provided the impetus to provide a physical education school placement booklet to all CTs supervising PSTs from the teacher education institution. The booklets contained CT guidelines, school placement teaching criteria and observation and feedback templates. The introduction of official observation sheets was positively received by all of the CTs. The lesson observation and weekly meeting sheets proved easily accessible and provided both the CTs and the PSTs with a structure and a focus. The CTs found that the formality of filling out the forms benefited the PSTs as it generated an increased level of feedback to positively impact their teaching.

### **7.3.4 The reality of a structured approach**

Throughout each of the phases of the study seventeen of the CTs managed to formally observe their PST on a regular basis during the placements. These seventeen CTs formally observed once or twice a week using the criteria and observation sheets provided. The response from these CTs was positive and supported the introduction of a more structured approach;

I followed the format, that format gave a structure to it, before I used to write down a couple of points but now I was focusing on, let's say the first week, after the first lesson we picked something we thought was a weakness.

(Greg, post-SP, phase 2)

The availability of the assessment criteria allowed the CTs to focus and set targets, giving them new direction and structure in the process of supervision. Jane commented on the benefit of having the booklet in the supervision process;

Before I got this booklet I definitely wouldn't have been confident in the technicalities of the feedback process. I'd just be looking at the practical stuff and how you would improve things for your everyday teaching but with that booklet I suppose it focuses you more and brings back what we did in college.

(post-SP, phase 2)

In phase two and phase four where two teachers from the same school were involved in the formal observations, the school placement criteria served as a form of standardisation. By using the evaluation criteria and the terminology, they felt like they were delivering the same message to the PST, as well as preparing the PST for their UT visits.

For the purpose of the study, the CTs were asked to observe their PSTs a minimum of twice a week. However, fifteen CTs, in particular those who were the only physical education teacher in the school, tended to watch most lessons and give feedback to the PST on a regular basis. The CTs acknowledged reification and appreciated the fact that there were observation sheets set out and ready to use, making the process more "teacher friendly" (John, post-SP, phase 2). The biggest variation in observations taking place with PSTs was quantity. Three CTs observed the requested number of classes (two per week) while the remaining fifteen CTs sat in on most, if not all, classes and gave consistent and regular feedback. Vicky was one of the CTs who only observed and gave feedback on the two lessons conveying

that she was carrying out the prescribed role rather than displaying the motivation in becoming an effective supervisor;

I have done the two critiques per week. I have been present at all the classes but may have been on the balcony or in the office, in and out of the lesson. I comment at the end of some of the classes, others I wouldn't, where I think there was a problem I would have commented.

(mid-SP, phase 3)

Daniel did not observe his PST on a regular basis. Daniel attributed this to the fact that the PST was not taking on board feedback given in the first few weeks and felt that the PST did not see the value in receiving constructive feedback. As a result, the CT did not observe or attempt to give the PST any feedback in the final few weeks of the placement.

Consistent and regular lesson observations emerged in the interviews undertaken prior to the placements as a characteristic of an effective CT. The delivery of feedback was also discussed as a necessity for the process to be beneficial to the PST. Initially, all CTs attempted to deliver feedback straight after the lesson. This varied from five minutes (in instances when the physical education teacher had a lesson directly after to 20 minutes. Feedback was both written and verbal. The importance of delivering verbal feedback in conjunction with the written feedback was reinforced by the five of the CTs. It was felt that this was most beneficial for the PST as it was difficult to put everything into writing and talking it through clarified the meaning of the feedback and put it into context. The CTs acknowledged that not everything could be documented on the observation sheets and that interaction between the CT and PST post-lesson was necessary. The combination of participation and reification through formal and informal interactions solidified the development of communities.

Mark stated that the actual process of writing up an observation form and giving feedback to the PST was not an onerous task as CTs were now present in the class. Mark also stated that having the process in place made him stay in the lesson rather than looking in to observe how the class was progressing, which is what he had done with previous PSTs. The CTs believed that the delivery of feedback in the first two weeks was very important as it is a steep learning curve for the PSTs. John commented on how beneficial it was to have written feedback to back up verbal feedback, as it increases the level of reflection. The CTs found themselves giving advice on subject knowledge, discipline issues and lesson structuring and the process of setting targets, step by step, helped the PSTs see progress and positively impacted their level of confidence. In terms of weaker PSTs, the ability to deliver feedback on the basics and then develop them week by week enabled the PSTs to see definite progressions in their teaching. When questioned on what kind of feedback they delivered, Steven described his interaction with his two year 2 PSTs;

Formal, informal, straight after the lesson, later on in the day, debriefs, weekly meetings. On their own, together, it's just working out really well.

(mid-SP, phase 3)

The quantity and frequency of feedback tended to diminish towards the end of each of the placements because the CTs believed that the PSTs were achieving most of the criteria to an acceptable standard. They did not see the need for such detailed feedback towards the end of the placement;

I started off giving written critiques and then didn't have to later in the practice because the input that I would have would have been less and less and some of the input that I was giving him would have been better delivered verbally than written down because at that stage it was getting to be nit picking, often silly at times.

(Steven, post-TP)

However, Vicky, Helen and Daniel discussed that they found their PSTs to be lacking in interest in the process and commented that they were the ones who initiated feedback and, at times, the PSTs were almost dismissive of the advice given to them. In terms of feedback, some CTs noted that they felt they were constantly repeating the same points and that the CT role was made redundant;

I just felt that they were dismissive, even in their reactions in receiving the critiques, they weren't taking it on board and some of the points that I highlighted had been brought up by the tutor in the visit.

(Vicky, post-SP, phase 3)

I didn't do a lot [of supervision] to be honest, initially I watched his classes and offered feedback, feedback wasn't really taken on board, and then I left him to his own devices because it was obvious he didn't overly want me in the room.

(Daniel, post-SP, phase 5)

This unexpected lack of interest from the PSTs led six of the CTs to be disillusioned as regards supervision.

### **7.3.5 Weekly meetings**

In many cases, feedback that was delivered after each lesson was reinforced with weekly target setting meetings between the CT and the PST. The CTs managed to carry out a number of weekly meetings throughout each of the placements, some more consistently than others. The CTs who managed to consistently carry out a formal meeting each week did so because they were able to set aside a dedicated time where they met to discuss weekly issues. This was carried out by six of the CTs;

We had a review meeting every Friday, where as many of the qualified PE teachers in the school and student all sat in together...the meetings always took place on Fridays, during our free time.

(John, post-SP, phase 2)

I watched two double classes a week for the entire placement. Then we had a tutorial one hour a week or maybe a half hour each week just to go back over those two classes and think about next week.

(Mark, post-SP, phase 2)

The content of the weekly meetings was similar amongst the CTs in each of the schools. Discussions centred on the lessons taught that week, strengths, areas for development and suggestions for the next week's classes. The meetings resulted in the CT and the PST having discussions on many topics including teaching strategies and behaviour management. One PST who was having some difficulties in delivering a block of lessons through Sport Education led to the PST and CT discussing what was working and what was needed for the classes to develop, resulting in a working relationship that was new to the CT. Overall, the meetings allowed the CT to develop a more supportive relationship with the PST and created a time for the PSTs to discuss any concerns or issues they were having throughout the placement.

Five of the CTs felt that the weekly meetings were made redundant after week two of the placements as they felt that, due to interacting with the PSTs on a daily basis, feedback and advice tended to become repetitive. It was suggested by the CTs that initial meetings should occur in week one to highlight expectations and lay the ground rules. Another reason put forward for the possibility of conducting weekly meetings was if the PST was weak or struggling. Jessica stressed that her presence in all of the PST's classes, and her interaction with them on a day to day basis, was equivalent to the purpose of having a weekly meeting and felt she would only be reiterating feedback if she was to conduct a weekly meeting. Anna, in her supervision of two year 2 PSTs in phase three, echoed this by stating;

We did a lot of our evaluation of critiques with the three of us, we would be hopping things off each other, that worked very well and I felt that did the job of a weekly meeting...I think the idea of a weekly meeting happens anyway.

(post-SP, phase 3)

However, in phase five Anna reflected on her supervision in phase three and highlighted the fact that she would welcome the time to carry out a weekly meeting with her PST;

During the week a lot of material would have been gone over but it would be good to actually take the one hour and really work through a new idea or plan.

(pre-SP, phase 5)

Sarah mentioned the difficulty in securing time for a regular weekly meeting, an issue which was highlighted by sixteen of the CTs. She initially tried to schedule the meetings for Wednesday afternoons but invariably something cropped up whether it was matches, meetings or the PST being asked to do supervision. This was reinforced by John who appeared more critical of the expectation that they should find time to carry out weekly meetings;

Time was a challenge as well though, in terms of these conferences [weekly meetings] they can take a bit of time and they are in your own time and this is a free service we are offering.

(post-SP, phase 2)

Steven, in phase two, three and five, discussed that he did not carry out the formal weekly meetings as requested, choosing instead to speak informally with each of the PSTs throughout the week. These discussions occurred after lessons, at break-times or over a cup of coffee after school. Steven was able to develop a very supportive relationship with the PSTs whereby they were regularly asking for advice and feedback on a number of issues. During these discussions, Steven and the PST would identify an area to work on, class by class, and week by week. They developed a two way partnership where their discussions benefited both of their teaching. Steven believed that they achieved the notion of a weekly meeting but not on a formal basis. This relationship was aided by the fact that the PST was extremely conscientious and had a “hunger to learn” (Steven, post-SP, phase 2). In contrast, Caroline timetabled a structured weekly meeting every Friday morning

with her PST. She had a negative experience with a PST the year before regarding developing a working relationship and, as a result, wanted to approach supervision in a more professional, structured manner. Caroline found the weekly meetings beneficial to both her and the PST and she believed that;

I think it sends out a very clear message that I have expectations because I am going to sit down with you now and have a chat about how things are going so therefore I am a lot more involved and interested.

(interview 4, phase 5)

John, experiencing a lack of preparation from his PST, highlighted that a PST must fully engage in the process for the structure to work and to be beneficial. John found that he was the one leading the weekly meetings rather than the PST coming prepared with questions. He was concerned about the lack of eagerness of the PST to get fully involved in the process, recommending that the university prepare PSTs to discuss issues with CTs and how to lead weekly meetings;

Those meetings were good but students must be prepared to lead them because it's a big workload on us, we can answer questions as opposed to prepare them. We are busy with 22 hours and it's fairly intense and sometimes if you are spending even 10 minutes thinking about it could put you off mentoring a student again.

(post-SP, phase 2)

This serves to highlight the role the teacher education institution has in preparing PSTs for school placements. PSTs must be aware of the benefits of regular observations and feedback and how this can positively impact their placement. The PSTs must be prepared to be observed and have observation sheets ready for the CT to complete. They also need to know how to conduct feedback sessions and weekly meetings, allowing them the opportunity to evaluate their performance in a lesson.

### 7.3.6 Difficulties in delivering feedback

One of the difficulties encountered by the CTs in the delivery of feedback was a lack of knowledge and confidence. Mark was apprehensive and worried that he was delivering the wrong advice;

The problems were probably all my end in that I didn't want to be telling her what to do and I was a bit apprehensive that I was guiding her in the right way because I wasn't given certain criteria that maybe the [university] tutor who was giving the grade had.

(Mark, post-SP, phase 2)

Whilst three CTs felt confident in their delivery of feedback, the remaining fifteen felt that they lacked the skills to effectively observe and deliver feedback to the PSTs. The lack of sufficient or up to date subject specific content knowledge was given by eleven of the CTs for the lack of confidence, especially by the seven CTs who graduated over ten years ago. Vicky, Clare and Caroline all attributed their lack of confidence to the fact that they were unsure as to whether they were up to date with teaching strategies and instructional models. Clare described the lack of confidence in her own content knowledge;

Sometimes I feel that I myself need to go and do a refresher course in the different areas so I know exactly what I am looking at because sometimes I feel like I am learning more from them than they are learning from me. I think it is a lack of confidence on my part.

(pre-SP, phase 4)

For me it always comes back to 'Am I missing something? Was there something glaring I should have spotted?' So it all comes back to me and my confidence and my experience I suppose.

(interview 2, phase 4)

Mark lacked confidence in his ability to judge the appropriateness of the PST's lesson aims and objectives in relation to the Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE) curriculum. He attributed this to the amount of time that had lapsed since he graduated and was unaware of the 'academic based' side of things, referring to the theoretical underpinnings of teaching and new instructional strategies. Another reason for the lack of confidence was CTs' unease at observing and delivering feedback to adults. As they were unsure of the extent of their role as a CT, they were wary in their approach to the provision of feedback.

Coulon and Byra (1997) found that when post lesson debriefs were held, untrained CTs tended to dominate the dialogue and feedback was found to be too general, vague or negative. This is somewhat similar to some of the comments made by the CTs in this study. CTs agreed that they should provide constructive feedback throughout the placements. However, five of the CTs felt that, at times, they were too critical in their delivery of feedback and they found it hard to find a balance between constructive but realistic feedback, and this was acknowledged as a result of a lack of training. Vicky, conscious of the fact that she was unaware of the institutions assessment criteria, felt that she was overly critical and picking up on too many little things. As a result, many of the post-lesson appraisals became negative and confrontational, and the PSTs were not taking the advice on board. Vicky gave an example of a dance class in the fourth week of the placement, where the PSTs' did not incorporate a warm-up and no music was used for the first forty minutes of the class. Vicky commented that these were issues she had discussed with the PSTs in previous weeks. Vicky described the experience as;

I felt that as time went on I felt like I was just going through the motions of giving feedback and it was the same stuff being repeated. I really don't think they appreciated it, they just saw their teaching practice being given a grade by the tutor and the role of the cooperating teacher wasn't seen at all.

(final interview, phase 3)

Jessica and Peter felt that they were giving too much feedback at times and doing too much of the talking rather than letting the PST reflect and analyse the lesson themselves. In addition, the CTs understood that their opinion was subjective and did not want to come across as hypocritical or condescending when delivering feedback. Laura was only in her third year of teaching and worried that her opinion was not valid. This was reinforced by Mark who admitted to not being entirely confident in delivering feedback but was comfortable giving his opinions and views on teaching. Both these examples serve to highlight the fact that CTs require some form of training in the delivery of feedback. The criterion needs to be explained and related to teaching episodes to aid clarification. Another reason for having difficulty in giving feedback was when a PST was not taking on board advice or was not open to the process, with some CTs constantly repeating the same feedback. This led to the CTs becoming disillusioned with the process. Eight of the CTs were more critical, pointing to the fact they do not feel prepared for the role of a supervisor, stating that there needs to be some form of structured CPD for them to become confident and competent in their supervision role. This is linked to Sudzina *et al's* (1997) findings that CTs are generally unprepared for the task of supervision and traditionally few CTs receive any training or support. This lack of training results in PSTs working with supervisors who are not familiar with the teacher education programme goals and, as a result, tend to have unrealistic expectations and are tentative about the kinds of feedback they share with PSTs.

### **7.3.7 Cooperating Teacher Workshop**

Data collected in the first three phases raised a number of issues relating to the development of effective CTs. These included the ambiguity of the role of the CT in the school placement process and the need for effective and accessible professional development, particularly with respect to building confidence in providing feedback to PSTs. To address the key issues, a CT workshop was held at the teacher education institution (workshop programme, appendix B). The workshop was specific to the study and was the first form of supervisory CPD provided at the institution for CTs. Fifteen teachers in total attended the workshop, six male and nine female, from thirteen schools. Three of the CTs had participated in phase two and three (a) of the

study and seven participated in later phases of the study. The remaining five CTs did not participate in any phase of the study. In addressing the key issues, the workshop included:

- ‘Experiences of being a cooperating teacher’: a discussion led by two CTs on their experiences of being a cooperating teacher. This provided an open forum for CTs to talk about their experiences and to discuss any problems or challenges they face in their role as a CT. It was highlighted by CTs in phase two and phase three that workshops would be more effective if delivered by experienced teachers who could share their experiences.
- ‘Effective feedback – The stages of delivering effective feedback’: This section of the workshop included a session led by a member of the physical education department at the teacher education institution, on the stages of delivering effective feedback. To enable the CTs to experience the process of delivering feedback, DVD footage of a PST teaching and the application of school placement observation criteria was incorporated and explained. The DVD contained segments of a year 4 PST teaching a class on a school placement. The DVD was part of the PSTs final year project and permission was granted by the PST to use on the day of the workshop. The CTs participated in structured role plays whereby they had the opportunity to give and receive feedback (in the role of CTs and PSTs) based on the scenarios on the DVD.
- The workshop ended with an explanation of the physical education programme at the teacher education institution and a discussion on ways forward in the development of the school placement process. The CTs were asked to complete evaluations forms on the effectiveness of the workshop.
- Feedback from evaluations on the effectiveness of the workshop from the CTs was very positive. The content was deemed relevant and appropriate and comments included “the role play was a great way to focus me on the pitfalls and facilitator skill of a debrief” and “fantastic, pin-pointed many areas I need clarification”. When asked about what they gained from the workshop responses included “I learnt what my role is, more clear, I now know what I have to do”, and “I gained clarity about the structures in place”.

The outcomes of the workshop informed phase four of the study. These included the development of opportunities to observe UTs complete lesson observations and post-lesson appraisals and work closely with UTs in the delivery of effective and appropriate feedback. In attempting to meet the needs of the CTs the phase involved the UT visiting the CT prior to the first and second official graded lessons to provide support and advice on the role of the CT. The visits involved both the UT and the CT observing the PST teach a lesson and provided an opportunity to discuss the type and level of feedback associated with the lesson. A joint debrief with the PST then followed. The aim was to address a number of challenges faced by CTs in the delivery of effective feedback. This process also served to act as a form of standardisation and provide opportunities for CTs to share their knowledge of the PST and develop school-university relationships. The four CTs in phase four and three of the four CTs in phase five participated in the workshop. As a result of the workshop, a number of changes occurred in the CTs' supervisory behaviours. Observations and the delivery of feedback became more structured and debriefs were approached in a more professional manner. Clare had admitted to not really knowing where to start in terms of delivering feedback but attendance at the workshop changed her approach;

I put a lot more time into my post lesson appraisals and I did talk to her [PST] after every lesson I was here for, so really a lot more time was put into it and it was more structured...It definitely made me think a lot more about my lessons, definitely, yeah. It gave me more confidence in dealing with the student.

(post-SP, phase 4)

Clare also acknowledged the benefit she got from working with the UT as it gave her more awareness of how to observe, how to deliver feedback effectively and understanding the guidelines provided in the physical education school placement booklet. Peter found that he was doing less talking in the debrief and introduced new ways to question the PST about issues that arose in the lesson. With previous PSTs, he found himself doing most of the talking and giving too much information whereas now he let the PST talk before telling him what he observed;

The workshop emphasised it more, what we should be doing, getting more out of the students themselves in terms of what they thought of the lesson rather than just saying right I think you did this and that. Trying to get information out of them and how they think they can improve.

(interview one, phase four)

This was echoed by Jennifer;

For me I would always give feedback, most of the time immediately after the class and then in the weekly mentor session but...from what I have experienced here, you have to spend five minutes knitting the whole thing together, putting a whole framework on it first and then giving feedback...that has been the valuable asset of this process.

(interview two, phase 4)

One of the main benefits from the workshop for Jennifer was knowing that she needed to sit down and prepare the debrief before she spoke to her PST, becoming conscious of developing the PST as a reflective practitioner. She also highlighted that she was becoming a lot more reflective as a result of the improved approach. Her interaction with the UT and watching him conduct a debrief also enhanced her confidence, "I liked your [UT] debrief, I thought it was very appropriate and you were hitting on the same things I was thinking" (interview 2, phase 4). Jennifer raised an issue that had been bothering her in relation to the formal writing up of lesson feedback. She was concerned that UTs would read the feedback in the PSTs file and there was the possibility they would pick up on negative teaching episodes that may not occur in the assessed visit and, as a result, may have an impact on the PST's final evaluation. Caroline also discussed the benefit of attending the workshop;

Prior to this I would not have understood the importance of the role of the cooperating teacher and I feel I have more confidence now in giving feedback or recommending the student observes me. Offers in the past have now become recommendations and/or expectations of the cooperating teacher.

(interview 2, phase 5)

### **7.3.8 Challenging aspects of being a cooperating teacher**

The lack of time allowed in the school day to be an effective CT was an area which received significant attention. While all CTs attempted to carry out some form of supervision with PSTs, the main obstacle for all of the CTs seemed to be finding the time to meet with the PST to deliver feedback. The lack of time was attributed to poor timetabling, extra-curricular activities and the realities of day-to-day teaching. To carry out the role effectively, the CTs explained that time was needed to sit down with the PST to discuss the lesson, the strengths and the areas for development. This also led to giving PSTs advice on their planning and some CTs extended this to checking PST's lesson plans before the class, again requiring more time. All eighteen CTs found it difficult to find time to sit down with the PST on a regular basis, which made their role frustrating;

I suppose time really, time is a big one because if you're going to help them it's going to take a lot of time. Like they have your class so you are probably making a few scribbles, making a few points and then it's no good on a piece of paper, you have to talk to them so that's maybe another class. If they have two or three classes with you, they might come to you before a class and they are asking about their lesson plan and we try and sort them out there.

(Greg, pre-SP, phase 2)

When asked what could be done about the issue of time, Greg suggested;

If they could say I have a class off for this, so I have to help them, that's what I'm here to do and I should be helping them. I think people then would put a lot more into it.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

Peter suggested that if he was the one to structure the PST's timetable, rather than his principal, he could factor in time after classes to meet with the PST as he believed that the lapse in time made the feedback less effective;

Time, if we gave her the classes and timetable we could make sure we were free after to give feedback. The next day it loses its importance. She has forgotten and you are trying to remember what she did.

(interview 2, phase 4)

Jennifer and Caroline discussed the need to timetable structured time within the week to sit down with the PST to go over each of the lessons and agree areas for development;

The biggest difficulty is making sure you have the time and even though I am one hundred per cent committed to doing it I found the later weeks more difficult mainly because we have a lot of things going on but you have to. If I have another student I am going to make sure, at the very initial stages of the first planning meeting, I will be saying 'We will be having our weekly meeting on 4-5pm on Monday's, is that ok with you?' Then I know the student is ready and I will be ready and it is established.

(Jennifer, interview 2, phase 4)

Although fifteen CTs were very committed and gave their time freely, three remained reluctant;

It's still a matter of time, I have a student coming out this year and he has two doubles a week for me and I am happy to cooperate with him after these two classes I have with him during the week but outside that I have a full timetable and teach five days a week.

(Daniel, interview 1, phase 5)

The issue of a lack of time to commit to the role was reinforced through the work of Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Simpson *et al* (2007). Hobson (2002) suggested that

not all CTs were supportive of the role of supervision due to the lack of incentive or reward they received throughout the process. Interestingly, only two of the eighteen CTs mentioned the need for reward or payment to carry out the role effectively.

Another reason for the CTs' hesitancy in supervision was the lack of clear and structured guidelines from the teacher education institution prior to their participation in this study. This supports previous research by Bennett (1995) who found that the lack of agreement about roles and responsibilities hampers the effectiveness of the CT as a supervisor. There is no formal reinforcement of guidelines for the role of the CT, so CTs felt that while they were happy to put in the time and effort, there were many CTs who provided minimal, if any, supervision to PSTs. Prior to the study, CTs were unaware of how many times they should observe a PST and the type and frequency of feedback required. The lack of formal guidelines also meant that the CTs were unsure of how to address inappropriate behaviour or appearance of the PST;

When you have to say to them that's not appropriate dress or appropriate behaviour for a PE teacher. It's like you don't want to come across as a teacher correcting a student because you are actually a CT, you're meant to be helping them but sometimes you feel like giving them a right ticking off and you just can't do it.

(Greg, pre-SP, phase 2)

This reflects a blurring of professional boundaries, whereby some CTs see their role as a guide and a friend, rather than a 'critical' friend, someone who can give constructive but direct feedback and advice. John linked the lack of guidelines to the CT's reluctance to get involved in the grading process. He believed that it may not be a good idea to get involved in the process without guidelines and training because it would put a strain on the CT/PST relationship. This is in line with the research carried out by Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) who stated that combining the roles of assistance and assessment could only be successful when CTs were supported and trained to do so. A study carried out by Rikard and Veal (1996) revealed a number of drawbacks in the process of supervision. These included interruption of classes and instruction and disrupted classroom routines. My findings

confirm that six of the eighteen CTs found the process of ‘turning their classes over’ to the PST a drawback in being a supervisor;

If you have a bad student that lets things like gear slip or time in the dressing rooms, there is a lot of picking up the pieces that has to be done afterwards and sometimes you say is it worth it? I think that is where a lot of teachers are coming from now, that they don’t want the student because it is so much hassle.

(Caroline, interview one, phase 5)

## **7.4 Development and enhancement of the role of the CT**

### **7.4.1 Benefits of a formalised supervisory structure**

Overall, the CTs were satisfied with the structure and design of the more formalised approach to supervision and were in favour of including it in future placements with PSTs. Twelve of the CTs found that the PSTs reacted well to the more formalised structure and felt that they provided a more supportive environment for the duration of the placement. The main change these twelve CTs found was the improved interaction between the CT and the PST. The PST sought feedback and advice on a regular basis and tried to implement the suggestions in their lessons. Mark noticed the improved communication, “Benefits, definitely in that the student felt she had someone she could talk to at any time and bounce ideas off” (post-SP, phase 2). The CTs found that the quality of planning improved, especially in terms of lesson plans. Eight of the CTs asked for lesson plans before the class and the content of the lesson plans became a discussion point during the weekly meetings. As the placement progressed, Mark found that interaction led to the PST becoming a lot more confident in their own delivery and their ability to adapt to the needs of the learners became more evident;

The great thing about the student was no matter what her lesson plan was she taught what she taught and if it didn’t correspond to the lesson plan it didn’t matter because she had adjusted something during the class because it wasn’t working.

(post-SP, phase 2)

A further comment by Anna on the benefits for the PST was particularly revealing;

I would feel that it is of a great benefit to them, my students said they were talking to other students who never saw a PE teacher from the day they went into the school. They were saying how helpful it was to have somebody there who is there to give you advice, filling them in on the pupils in their classes, if you know about the students you are teaching it helps a lot more, you have a better understanding of how they learn.

(post-SP, phase 3)

The benefit of having the physical education school placement booklet was described by Luke;

The sheets were well laid out, you had your observation sheets and weekly meeting sheets. It's the same as everything, if you have it in front of you and prepared, you can adapt a little bit. It generates a lot more for the students.

(post-SP, phase 2)

This was echoed by Vicky who found the booklet to be very informative as she was new to the role of a CT, "I thought the PE Booklet was very good, I thought that was good as a new cooperating teacher and seeing what my role was" (pre-SP, phase 3). However, she stressed that, even though resources and information were being provided by the teacher education institution, it was still up to the CT to make the role of supervisor happen. This supports the work of Wenger (1998) who stated that participation (supervision) and reification (observation resources) must be considered a pair. When addressed together the process of supervision can be a successful experience.

Clare, who attended the CT workshop, discussed the benefit of the study to her teaching and level of confidence in delivering feedback. She also felt that she was being supported in her role as CT;

For me personally I am getting more ideas for my teaching and getting a different outlook on things. In that sense I suppose I am gaining more confidence through it. Yeah, I feel I am getting more support.

(interview 2, phase 4)

Acknowledging the benefit she received from attending the CT workshop, Clare realised that she needs to attend more workshops and in-service as she lacked confidence in her knowledge in specific areas, such as curriculum models and assessment. She was aware that CPD would make her a more effective and confident CT in the future.

Caroline agreed with the improved level of confidence as a result of attending the workshop, but interestingly it was the knock-on affect her participation in the study had on her teaching colleagues in her school that surprised her most. Staff in the other subject departments noticed the increased level of interaction between Caroline and the PST and the improved level of confidence in Caroline's supervisory approach. As a result, they decided that they would attempt a more formal supervisory approach with future PSTs attending the school for placement;

As I said the whole framework is something that other departments are picking up on here, it's brilliant. I certainly think that they said to me that it is a great idea, especially sitting in on the classes, nearly something they always wanted to do but were afraid to do and now they see it working. They have said that the next time they have a student they will say it the very first day and make sure the expectations are there from the very beginning.

(interview 2, phase 5)

#### **7.4.2 Recommendations to enhance and develop the role of the CT**

A number of recommendations were made throughout the study to enhance and develop the role of CT. There was a consensus that the role of the CT needs to be formalised and recognised by the teacher education institutions. It was stressed that roles and responsibilities need to be communicated to all members involved in school placements to ensure successful supervision of PSTs. It was highlighted that CTs and schools would be more willing to take PSTs if there were clear and

appropriate guidelines from the institution. Sarah described the importance of introducing a more formal role for the CT in the supervision of PSTs;

I think it is a really valuable role and it needs to be done properly, a little bit more structure to it, a lot of teachers are willing to do it but maybe they are not aware of what they need to be doing. When the students are accepted [at the school] they [CTs] are told this is exactly what they need to be doing. Hopefully they might then go with it.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

Four CTs emphasised the importance of having some prior information on the PSTs to enable them to become more effective in their role as a CT. They recognise that if they had an understanding of the background and experience of the PST then they would be able to support them more effectively and work to develop their areas of interests and any weaknesses;

If we had prior information it would be fantastic. If you were able to come to me and say that Billy is coming out to you in 2 weeks' time...he is a little weak, he's shy, he has delivery problems, and then we would be able to work on that. He needs content in basketball, we can work on that.

(Steven, pre-SP, phase 2)

This was reinforced by John who agreed that they need prior information if they are to carry out their role to best serve the PST. He suggested that PSTs arrive with a sheet highlighting areas they have covered on the course, their level of confidence in each activity and areas that they need to develop;

An effective PST will also have a CV ready to give the school when they come out so they know who they are because the PST comes in and the school is not aware of the qualities. Prior knowledge would be a great help.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

John also suggested that a CV should be initiated by the university and be designed specifically for school placements. He emphasised that it should be short and workable, preferably a one page document. This would provide the CT with guidelines and a starting point from day one. This was reinforced with feedback from the CT workshop where it was suggested that a PST CV be provided and information on the PST communicated before the placement.

Another area for improvement that the CTs highlighted was to increase the number of observations the PSTs completed. The CTs wanted the PSTs to observe as many physical education classes as possible and from a range of teachers when in a large department. They believed that this would be invaluable as PSTs would see a range of teaching and classroom management styles. Steven had a positive experience with his PST in terms of extra observations where he encouraged his student to get involved in team teaching, until gradually the PST could teach the majority of the content;

He often came into my class which I thought was unusual. He came in and he sat and then he came in and he took part and then he came in and he helped out and then one day he came in and he took over.

(post-SP, phase 2)

Daniel recommended that the PST should have a gradual entry into a placement, involving shadowing a CT for a period of time, developing on to team-teaching and only then teach a class on their own. The CTs highlighted that PSTs need to be aware of the role of the CT and know how to develop constructive and professional relationships whilst on a school placement. Learning how to receive feedback effectively must also be addressed. They suggested that this should be addressed and developed in the university programme before the school placement. The relationship between the CT and the PST will be discussed further in chapters eight and nine.

The reason for CTs' reluctance to get involved in supervision was their lack of confidence in delivering effective feedback. It was acknowledged that the study encouraged them to carry out the role in a more structured format. The issue of CPD was debated in each of the phases. CTs who attended the workshop highlighted the benefits;

Well I think what we got at the college at the workshop on feedback was very important and think we need more of that and this element of feedback was very important. So I think a whole group set-up, a one day in-service like we had the last time should be continued, very definitely. It should be continued because the CT gets so much out of it, I certainly got a lot out of it.

(Jennifer, interview 2, phase 4)

CPD on grading and evaluation was highlighted as an area which needed attention;

A little more exposure to watching students teach. It would be really good to see what an excellent student was like and a mediocre student and a poor student. To me he looked like a weak second year student but I'm just judging on my knowledge and I have nothing else to base it on. So more exposure would be fantastic.

(Laura, post-SP, phase 2)

Thirteen of the eighteen CTs were prepared to attend CPD to enhance their role as a CT, conscious that time and location were barriers to attendance. They were willing to attend evening courses (if they were relevant) and were interested in interacting with other physical education teachers. John suggested that the incentive of gaining accreditation may attract more teachers to become trained as CTs. John and Luke also mentioned the possibility of having concessionary time or free classes to carry out the role of the CT effectively, or similarly, in attending courses, have time off in lieu. What was interesting was the fact that those teachers most reluctant to attend CPD were those teachers who had the most teaching experience and seemed a little despondent towards attending any type of CPD. The younger teachers were more than willing to attend CPD and saw it as a way of enhancing both their role as a CT and as a teacher. It was also suggested that to make the professional impact greater, CPD should be made more relevant to CTs. This could be done by identifying schools that carry out successful supervisory programmes for PSTs and have those CTs speak at a forum in various parts of the country. Having teachers talk about

their own experiences makes it more realistic and attainable for other (potential) CTs. The CTs suggested that some of the reasons teachers do not attend CPD may include the lack of payment, lack of refreshments at in-services and the absence of cover for classes to attend CPD. John also mentioned that there would be a percentage of teachers who would ‘shy away’ from making the role of the CT more formal. A significant issue was raised by Sarah;

I do think if they [CT] are going to accept a student into their school they should sign something to say that they acknowledge that they should be in most of the classes with the student and that they fill out five or six forms that you think is appropriate.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

This highlights the importance of selecting school sites for PSTs, creating effective school-university partnerships and developing the role of the CT. Lastly, it was proposed that the teacher education institution formally acknowledge the work of the CTs for their work with the PST during the placement. This was addressed in this study by sending a letter to each of the respective school principals highlighting the work carried out by the CTs throughout the placements.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

Overall, the data conveyed a positive perception to the structuring of the role of the CT. All eighteen CTs were willing to formalise their supervisory approach if they were supported by all stakeholders and the role of the CT was recognised. The CTs agreed that the role was of utmost importance to the development of the school placement but the lack of clarity, in terms of expectations and responsibilities, restricted development and negatively impacted a CT’s learning trajectory. All CTs attempted to provide supportive and educational environments for PSTs but were hindered due to a number of factors, including a lack of time to carry out the role effectively, a lack of recognition and understanding of their role from the PST and the absence of relationships in the school placement triad. The following chapter addresses CTs’ learning trajectories when involved in various structures of

communities and the factors which supported or hindered the development of relationships.

# Chapter 8: Establishing Communities in School Placements

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## 8.1 Introduction

The structure of communities of practice can be enormously varied (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004). The aim of this study is to analyse CTs' learning trajectories when involved in various structures of communities and factors which enabled or challenged them in cultivating relationships with school placement stakeholders. Describing learning as a social process, Lave and Wenger (1991) imply the significance of the development of relationships, membership within communities and identity construction. The CTs, by formally engaging in a supervisory process, experienced each of these characteristics in various forms resulting in different learning practices. The different configurations of membership, based on the three dimensions of a community (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire), allowed CTs to believe they were involved in some form of collaboration. Collaboration in one context was not necessarily deemed as such in another context.

Data were collected throughout each of the five phases to determine the CTs' interpretations and experiences of the development of professional learning communities. The data revealed CTs' intended and actual enactment of relationships and the establishment of communities on school placements. The data were analysed to address the following research question:

**Research question two: What are physical education cooperating teachers' intended and actual enactments of communities in school placements?**

To answer the research question, three sub-questions were identified;

- (i) To what extent does a physical education cooperating teacher's participation in mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire impact their ability to learn the skills of a supervisor?
- (ii) In attempting to engage in learning communities what factors enabled or challenged the sharing of expertise between each of the school placement stakeholders?
- (iii) What variations in the infrastructure of a community led to physical education cooperating teachers experiencing a positive learning trajectory?

There is no equity of experience for PSTs in Irish post-primary schools due to the lack of a tradition of supervision in schools and poor school-university partnerships (Conway et al., 2011). The absence of formalised and structured roles for CTs has resulted in a fragmented system lacking in consistency (Moody, 2009). There are many CTs who resist involvement in any form of supervision whilst PSTs are on placement in their schools. However, as the data will show in this chapter, there are CTs who provide supportive and engaging learning environments for PSTs and are willing to develop the role of the CT in the supervision process. It seems the time is favourable for the development of a formalised structure of supervision, with associated training and support, as teachers are interested and engaged.

PSTs' inequity of experience is reinforced in the 'Learning to Teach Study' (LETS) (Conway et al., 2011) examining the development of Postgraduate Diploma in Education students' curricular and cross-curricular competences during initial teacher education. The study acknowledged that the "level of support they [PST] receive within the school can vary widely" (p. 25). This was founded not only on the school PSTs were placed but also the individual encounters they had with CTs. The students in Conway *et al's* (2011) study had limited opportunities for observation and the emphasis in the school setting was on working rather than learning. The study recommends;

There is a need for teacher education providers to develop policies, in collaboration with schools, on how best to draw upon the expertise of accomplished teachers in supporting the next generation of teachers learn to teach, centred on enhancing observation and pedagogy-focused dialogue opportunities between student teachers and the experienced teachers in Teaching Practice schools.

(Conway et al., 2011, p. 33)

As discussed in chapter three, this is in line with the new regulations for initial teacher education, signed by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2009, stating that PSTs are required to have observation opportunities on school placement practicums (Conway et al., 2011a). It is acknowledged that the role of the school, and importantly the role of the CT, deserves further research and that “there is considerable scope for recognising the important influence that school-based experiences have on the development of student teachers and for re-considering and possibly extending this role” (Conway et al., 2011, p.30). There are a number of studies and initiatives, regarding the development of school-university partnerships, currently underway in an Irish context. Two, in particular, focus on the development of mentoring systems in physical education; the Dublin City University Cooperating Physical Education Teachers Programme (Belton et al., 2010, Dunning et al., 2011) and the University College Cork Telemachus Mentor Training Programme for physical education teachers (Chambers and Armour, 2012). This chapter addresses the importance of school-based experiences by investigating how and what type of relationships CTs can develop with PSTs and UTs to enhance the school placement process and provide recommendations for future developments of CTs as school-based educators.

In line with the literature review on the development of communities of practice (Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011, Fuller et al., 2005, Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger 1998), four key constructs were evident in the data and will be presented in this chapter. These include the key properties which underpin communities, the characteristics required for success, and the enablers and challenges faced by stakeholders in their attempts to create effective communities.

This chapter will provide evidence that either support or challenge each of these constructs to establish the possibility of developing sustainable communities in the school placement process. The chapter begins with a brief recap of each of the constructs and how they relate to the development of communities in teacher education. Each of the constructs is then analysed in detail in relation to the data collected throughout the five phases.

## **8.2 Establishing communities of practice**

Acknowledging that CTs can learn the skills of an effective supervisor by actively engaging in a school placement process, it was important to analyse how the CTs engaged with PSTs and UTs and to what extent relationships and communities were developed. Wenger (1998) defines a community of practice as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis” (p. 4). For the purpose of this study, a community of practice is described as an infrastructure that supports change, a setting where the school placement stakeholders come together to learn from each other and identify professional development needs and opportunities, and acknowledgement that working together as a learning community enhances a sharing of expertise (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998). As such, a community can provide an infrastructure where working together enhances both knowledge and teaching performance.

The data provided in the next section of the chapter conveys that functioning communities of practice involving the triadic stakeholders (CT, PST and UT) in the school placement process do not exist in an entirety in an Irish context. Instead, the development of various forms of learning communities evolved throughout the study. These variations were determined by a number of factors. Firstly, the extent to which CTs, PSTs and UTs engaged with the key properties of a community of practice; mutual engagement, joint enterprise and identity and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Secondly, the level of engagement was determined by the existence

of characteristics which work to scaffold the development and existence of a community, and thirdly, the presence of enablers and/or challenges to the attempts made to progress the development of learning communities. In terms of the CTs' learning trajectory, the strength of a community, based on these factors, can determine the 'how' and 'what quality' of learning takes place. Each of these factors is summarised to situate the data analysis section in 7.3.

### **8.2.1 The three dimensions of practice**

Participation in a community is based on access and exposure. To establish a community, "participation must provide access to all three dimensions of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 100), that is, mutual engagement, negotiation of an enterprise and a shared repertoire. The data highlight factors that can address and establish each of the key properties required in the construction of a community. Mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire defines the development of social practice in a community (Davies, 2005, Fuller et al., 2005, Safran, 2010, Sutherland, 2009).

#### **8.2.1.1 Mutual engagement**

Dimensions of mutual engagement include engaged diversity, doing things together, relationships, community and maintenance (Wenger 1998). Wenger (1998) states that "membership in a community is a matter of mutual engagement...that is what defines a community" (p. 73). In the case of this study, many factors make mutual engagement possible including the presence of a PST on school placement, interactions in daily routines such as at break-time and lunch-time, sharing extra-curricular responsibilities and discussing classes. When a CT and a PST are supportive in the development of a relationship to enhance each other's role, mutual engagement exists. Evidence from the data are presented in this chapter where positive interactions occurred due to the acknowledgement that the relationship was working and benefitting both CTs and PSTs in new ways. It is important to note that "being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a communities practice, just as engagement is what defines belonging" (Wenger 1998,

p. 74). It is therefore important that, for a community to be established, each stakeholder must treat each other with respect and involve them in the practices of the school placement (Davies, 2005, Fuller et al., 2005). To do this, the CTs in the study agreed to formalise their approach to supervising a PST which involved increased interactions throughout the placement and attempting to initiate a collaborative learning community. For mutual engagement to be successful 'community maintenance' must be addressed for the duration of the placement (Davies, 2005). For example, a CT making time for a PST at break-time to discuss classes or to socialise and allowing a PST to use the gym in wet weather conditions to make teaching a class easier contributes to the maintenance of a community. For mutual engagement to be successful, the stakeholders must recognise the diversity of each of the members, what makes a community is each member's mutual engagement in the school placement process and how they work towards creating a successful learning experience. A breakdown in the community can occur if and when members do not connect effectively and, in such cases, progression within a community may not be experienced. Significantly, Wenger (1998) highlights that in communities "mutual engagement involves not only our competence, but also the competence of others" (p. 76), reflecting the dependence on the efforts made by all members to engage and contribute to the development of a relationship.

#### **8.2.1.2 Joint enterprise**

Dimensions of joint enterprise include negotiated enterprise, mutual accountability and interpretations (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) states that "defining a joint enterprise is a process, not a static agreement" (p. 82). The negotiation of an enterprise occurs and develops throughout a school placement, often getting stronger as relationships are developed. Joint enterprise was established between most CTs and PSTs in the study but occurred in different ways due to the context in which they were situated (i.e. the school culture, the personality of each of the members and the approaches they undertook). Some CTs, like John and Caroline, negotiated their positioning with the PSTs at the beginning of the placement whilst others developed their positioning through 'trial and error', eventually coming to a negotiated meaning of the school placement. Irrespective of outside forces (e.g.

teacher education institution, the UT, the principal) a joint enterprise is defined by the participants of a community as “their negotiated response to their situation and thus belongs to them” (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). Given the potential differences in each of the members’ teaching philosophies and beliefs, it is important that, for a community to develop and engage in joint enterprise, they must find a way to work together, understand their differences and coordinate their aspirations (Safran, 2010, Wenger, 1998). Although Wenger (1998) emphasises that external forces have no direct power over the negotiation of practices, she recognises that they may be influenced or manipulated, as well as supported and inspired. This can be linked to the external presence of the teacher education institution and the influence they inadvertently possess. Finally, creating a joint enterprise involves a level of mutual accountability. In relation to the CT and the PST establishing a joint enterprise for the school placement process, accountability includes not only teaching but also being social and active, sharing information and resources and having an awareness of others difficulties.

### **8.2.1.3 A shared repertoire**

The dimensions of a shared repertoire of a community includes

Routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 83)

Two significant characteristics of a shared repertoire are a reflection of mutual engagement and the fact that it remains inherently ambiguous, thus allowing new meanings to be generated (Safran, 2010). A shared repertoire between CTs and PSTs was inherent in the development of the relationships in the study. Again, routines and ways of doing things were either negotiated at the beginning or gradually took shape and, as a result, some relationships flourished. For communities to function, it is important for all members to share ideas, commitments and ways of approaching and performing actions.

### **8.2.2 Characteristics of a community of practice**

Wenger (1998) states that many communities of practice can be formed without being named as such and, as a result, many members within these structures may be unaware of their identity. What facilitates the identification of a community are the characteristics which make them separate from normal day to day interaction. Wenger (1998) highlights fourteen indicators or characteristics that underpin a community of practice, as referenced in chapter four, section 4.2. The following characteristics, whether supported or challenged, were the most prominent in the data;

- Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
- Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- Mutually defining identities
- Sharing stories

(Wenger, 1998, p. 125)

The characteristics of communities prominent in the data reflect each of the three dimensions of practice (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire) to varying degrees of application. Defining a learning community for the stakeholders in the study included the process of sharing information and advice, collaborating to solve problems and exploring ideas on teaching and learning. Other characteristics included the development of personal relationships, establishing ways of collaborating and interacting and the formation of a common identity. The degree to which each of the stakeholders engaged in the three dimensions determined the success of the community. The characteristics and the extent to which they enabled communities to develop is discussed later in this chapter.

### **8.2.3 Enablers and challenges to the development of communities**

Lave and Wenger (1991) state that membership in a community is an essential condition for learning. The extent to which each of the stakeholders is supported in

their attempt to become a member of a community determines how powerful the learning experience can be. The opportunity for CTs to learn, based on collaboration with PSTs and UTs, were enabled or challenged by a number of factors. The data revealed a range of enablers which had a significant impact on the successful development of relationships, particularly between the CT and the PST. These included acceptance and support from principals and colleagues, the introduction of a supervision structure and provision of a school placement booklet, positive interaction with UTs, provision of a supervision workshop and positive previous experience in the supervision process. A significant number of challenges also emerged from the data which negatively impacted the CTs' opportunity to learn and hindered the development of effective learning communities. The challenges included time constraints, the absence of reciprocal relationships, poorly defined roles and expectations and limited school-university partnerships. Evidence of CTs experiencing a range of these enablers and challenges will be provided and discussed in detail.

### **8.3 Situating learning in communities**

Membership is an essential condition for learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In an Irish context, the potential for various forms of communities is inadvertently created when a PST arrives at a school on placement. The potential for the development of a community was created by a PST carrying out their school placement at the CT's school and teaching the CT's classes. For each of the CTs in the study, there was the possibility of establishing a professional learning community with the PST and potentially the UT. This was dependent on the willingness and motivation of each stakeholder to get involved and to what extent. To produce an environment where the potential for the development of relationships existed, the CTs participating in the study were asked to initiate structured support for the PST throughout the school placement. This support involved formally observing the PST a minimum of twice a week, providing both written and verbal feedback, and facilitating a weekly meeting. The aim of the weekly meeting was to give the CT and PST a forum to discuss issues relating to planning, teaching and learning, sharing of resources and the placement in general. CTs were provided with a physical education school

placement booklet which contained CT guidelines, school placement criteria and observation sheets. Providing the CTs with the initial stages of a structure and a set of guidelines (in the booklet) relating to the role of the supervisor went some way towards establishing their positioning in a developing community. As a result, seventeen of the eighteen CTs became more active in the supervisory process and enabled certain degrees of social closeness with the PST.

### **8.3.1 Application of characteristics**

Where the characteristics of a community were evident, the potential for the development of relationships existed for a combination of stakeholders.

#### **8.3.1.1 Mutually defining identities**

The extent to which the stakeholders engaged in the negotiation of a joint enterprise helped establish a common sense of identity. A key aspect in the development of these identities transpired in the relationships where weekly meetings and/or regular interaction occurred. Setting aside dedicated time each week enabled the CT and PST to develop a close and cohesive relationship. Wenger (1998) describes the way in which identity is created and how practice is made personal to that community;

Our experience and our membership inform each other, pull each other, transform each other. We create ways of participating in a practice in the very process of contributing to making that practice what it is.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 96)

Where weekly meetings were successful, they served to highlight both the CT's and PST's expectations and a common sense of identity emerged. For those communities where weekly meetings did not formally occur, defining their identities occurred through regular contact and interaction during each day. For example, Steven, in phase two, three and five, discussed that he did not carry out the formal weekly meetings as requested, choosing instead to speak informally with PSTs throughout

the week. These discussions occurred after lessons, at break-times or over a cup of coffee after school. Steven and his PSTs were able to develop supportive relationships whereby they were regularly asking for advice and feedback on a number of issues, thus strengthening their joint enterprise. During these discussions Steven and the PSTs would identify areas to work on, class by class, week by week. This allowed them to develop a two-way partnership where their discussions benefited their teaching and established mutually defining identities. As such, identity construction was enabled by being socially active participants within an emerging community.

### **8.3.1.2 Establishing and sustaining mutual relationships**

Motivated CTs, like Helen, enabled social and spatial closeness to develop early on in the placement by creating opportunities for relationships and a joint enterprise to develop. This involved inviting the PSTs in for a day before the placement began to help them integrate into the school. This gave Helen the opportunity to lay the foundations of a professional learning community;

We have our two students coming to school tomorrow for an orientation day. It starts with a meeting with me in the morning, just going through how the cooperating teacher system will work and I will be meeting them as well on a weekly basis to go through how they are getting on. We are giving them a timetable to follow different teachers during the day to have a look at something different.

(interview 1, phase 3)

Steven, in phase five, also invited the PST into the school for an observation day to aid the PST's orientation into the school and give him an opportunity to meet staff and pupils. By providing this opportunity, the CT established the basis of mutual engagement, enabling the negotiation of a joint enterprise and initiating a shared repertoire.

The role of the CT in developing communities was also discussed in the interviews. All eighteen CTs stated that to sustain a relationship they should initiate mutual engagement by acting as a guide and a point of support for the PST and be someone they can go to for ideas and advice. For thirteen of the CTs, this became a reality and led to the development of close and effective communities. Luke articulated how his relationship evolved to the development of a community;

I think it evolved over the placement, it was interesting to have the fact that I had to do it as opposed to I was doing it, in place. But it did evolve and it got better and I got close with the student. It was very worthwhile. I think it led to more discussion about teaching practice, about teaching theory and concepts of how to take situations forward. It evolved by getting a better one on one relationship with the student.

(post-SP, phase 2)

### **8.3.1.3 Shared ways of engaging in doing things together**

In terms of sustaining engagement in a community, Steven believed that the basis of a relationship must be forged on a strong professional boundary where “friends are left at the door” (interview 1, phase 3). The relationship should be structured on the basis of respect and both parties acknowledging each other’s roles. Steven attempted to describe his role in structuring a community with the PST;

There is a relationship, if that ends up being friends, so be it, but it has to be a professional relationship where if I were to come to you and say, ‘That was absolutely superb’ and sit down over a cup of coffee and say ‘That was brilliant’ that should be done. But there is also the case where you have to say ‘You aren’t dressed appropriately, go change’ or ‘The way you dealt with that situation wasn’t acceptable’. There has to be both ways, it’s a hard one.

(interview 1, phase 3)

Anna (phase five) echoed Steven’s sentiment by believing that the establishment of relationships within a community must be based on respect between all stakeholders to allow the delivery and acceptance of both positive and negative feedback. The

presence of respect between stakeholders is what defines mutual engagement. All eighteen CTs agreed that the structure must include both formal and informal interactions as both are valuable in establishing a bond. Shared ways of engaging were created as a result of CTs and PSTs meeting on a daily basis, observing each other's classes, seeking advice, delivering constructive feedback, and communicating any problems or issues.

#### **8.3.1.4 Sharing stories**

The development of a shared repertoire formed the basis of many of the established communities and led to an enhanced experience for most of the stakeholders. The process of sharing information occurred in both formal and informal settings as CTs agreed that both were valuable in establishing a bond. Successful communities were created as a result of daily interaction and collaboration, weekly meetings, observation of classes, seeking advice, delivering constructive feedback, and communicating any problems or issues. The data revealed that the increased interaction and sharing between CTs and PSTs led to the PSTs developing confidence, especially in approaching the CT for advice and support. Peter and Jennifer found that their PSTs were approaching them on a more regular basis to check lesson plans and look for opinions on lesson content. Highlighting the change in interaction between himself and his PST, Mark commented;

She was bouncing ideas off me all the time, whereas that hasn't really happened before on a consistent basis, all the time. Reading through her lesson plans and things like that, she was more confident because I was okaying it.

(post-SP, phase 2)

To establish a culture of sharing, Anna ensured that she told the PST that she was not necessarily the expert but was giving them the benefit of twenty years teaching. What was important was that she was also telling them that she was learning as well and was very open about this. This format was undertaken by five of the CTs throughout each of the placements. Jennifer highlighted that she often slipped into a 'master-apprentice' role which she did not think benefited either her or the PST. As

the placement progressed, she found that she was developing more of a 'co-enquirer' stance which led to an in-depth and constructive relationship being developed.

At the beginning of the placements, it was the CTs who initiated communication and collaboration. However, six of the CTs found that as the placement progressed, the PSTs began to instigate the sharing of information and resources more and the communities' identities were strengthened by the mutual appreciation of knowledge exchange. The positives of sharing information was highlighted by Steven;

That is why it is so gratifying for John [other physical education teacher] and I, we see things that we are suggesting being used and working and I got a game from him that I had never seen before and I am delighted.

(interview 4, phase 5)

Caroline also highlighted a number of benefits of sharing information. The issue of potentially low participation rates with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year girls arose in the weekly meeting with her PST in week six of the placement. Caroline's PST discussed work he had completed at the teacher education institution on various approaches to engaging this particular age group. Caroline felt that she had left university without those experiences and appreciated gaining this new knowledge from her PST. Another issue arose in relation to Sport Education; Caroline felt that, at times, there were high levels of inactivity during the PST's class. As a result, Caroline used the weekly meeting as an opportunity to work with the PST to come up with ways to address the levels of inactivity. This was an example of the CT and PST working together and sharing stories to enhance the delivery of quality physical education and support the PST's school placement experience.

## **8.4 Enablers**

The potential for the development of valuable and sustainable learning communities was somewhat dependent on a number of enabling factors. When these factors

existed and the stakeholders engaged, they provided the foundation for the successful development of school placement communities.

#### **8.4.1 The introduction of structured supervision**

For the purpose of the study, CTs were given guidance to develop relationships and a school placement booklet. This guidance included formally observing and giving feedback to the PST a minimum of twice a week and holding weekly meetings. The presence of expectations of both the CT and PST in the physical education school placement booklet (appendix D) aided clarification in the process and helped set up an effective working relationship between the two. The introduction of the physical education school placement booklet was well received by the CTs, stating that it was informative and easy to use. When roles were reified, the CTs became more confident in their supervisory behaviours and welcomed the improved interaction and enhanced mutual engagement with both the PSTs and UTs.

Fourteen of the eighteen CTs found that the PSTs reacted well to the more formalised structure and, as a result, the CTs attempted to provide a more supportive environment for the duration of the placement, leading to the negotiation of a joint enterprise. The main change the CTs reported was the improved interaction between the CT and the PST, at times leading to effective collaboration. The PST sought feedback and advice on a regular basis and tried to implement the suggestions in their lessons. As a result these CTs found that the quality of planning improved. One of the reasons for this was eight of the CTs began asking for lesson plans before the class and many discussed the content of the lesson plans during the weekly meetings. John stated the importance of sharing expectations at the start of a placement;

We say to them [PSTs] ‘we want your lesson plan before you go into the classes and we need to see that in advance because we can’t give you feedback if we don’t have it’. A meeting at the start, having a good start is very important and have a structure base.

(post-SP, Phase 2)

CTs in the focus group interview in phase three agreed that there should be dedicated time at the beginning of a placement to enable the establishment of a relationship with the PSTs. They stated that a meeting should take place at the start to highlight expectations and “lay the ground rules” (Vicky, interview 3, phase 3). The importance of time to develop a structure at the start of a placement to initiate a community is reinforced in Moody’s (2009) work investigating the key elements in a positive practicum; “Time is needed, particularly at the start of a practicum, to develop the supportive and professional relationship between the teacher and the pre-service teacher” (p. 168). The expectation on the CT to take a more active role and provide a certain level of structure in their approach led to the establishment of positive relationships for some stakeholders;

I think it evolved over the placement, it was interesting to have the fact that I had to do it as opposed to I was doing it, in place. But it did evolve and it got better and I got close with the student. It was very worthwhile. I think it led to more discussion about teaching practice, about teaching theory and concepts of how to take situations forward. It evolved by getting a better one on one relationship with the student.

(Luke, post-SP, phase 2).

#### **8.4.2 Characteristics of a PST**

The CTs also deemed the characteristics of the PST as an important enabler. To make school placements worthwhile and successful, CTs wanted to work with PSTs who were punctual, organised, well prepared, enthusiastic and acted upon advice and feedback. These characteristics were similar to those reported by Broadbent (1998). When these characteristics were displayed by a PST, the possibility of a community developing was more common. CTs believed that an effective PST should get involved in the whole school environment and participate in extra-curricular activities as often as possible. It emerged that these qualities of an effective PST were more prevalent when the CT was supportive and actively involved in the supervision process. Steven described what he believed was an effective PST; “Someone who listens, someone who we can improve. It doesn’t really matter how much we improve them but if they are prepared to listen to us then we will improve them” (pre-SP, phase 2).

To enhance the development of collaborative opportunities, the CTs highlighted the need to increase the number of observations PSTs completed. CTs wanted PSTs to observe as many physical education classes as possible and from a range of teachers when placed in a large physical education department. They believed that this experience would be invaluable to the PST as they would see a range of teaching and classroom management styles and possibly widen the scope of the developing community. This supports previous research by Moody (2009) where she discusses;

A culture of mutual observation will need to be fostered, one which focuses on the development of the pre-service teacher. The pre-service teacher needs to see experienced teachers at work and needs to learn how to gain the most from this observation

(p. 168)

The topic of observation and associated team-teaching arose in a number of the interviews. The PST at Anna's school admitted to being nervous about teaching aquatics and asked whether she could observe a class before she taught a lesson. Anna suggested that she not only observe but also help out in the class to build her confidence. Both Anna and the PST found this to be a very positive experience and revealed that they worked very well together. As a result, Anna also got involved in some of the PST's gymnastics and Spikeball classes to support both their learning. In a similar manner, Jennifer mirrored this by acting as an assistant in some classes as an alternate way to provide feedback. This example of imparting expertise enhanced their shared repertoire and strengthened their community's practices. Steven acknowledged the potential of team-teaching and provided opportunities for the PSTs to observe a range of classes to situate their learning in real classroom experiences, reflecting the development of a collaborative relationship. The interaction involved in lesson observations and team-teaching set up opportunities for collaboration and enabled the CT and the PST to establish increased mutual engagement as they supported each other's development.

### **8.4.3 Previous supervisory experience**

A CT's previous positive and negative experience in supervising PSTs, enabled the formation of communities. Jennifer had a successful placement with her PST the previous year and wanted to replicate it again. This involved meeting at a scheduled time each week, observing classes and delivering feedback on a regular basis, and sharing and creating resources together; "I would have to say last year I was really happy with the student, I had more time with him and I ended up doing co-enquiry and it was a fantastic result for me as well as for the student" (Jennifer, interview 1, phase 4). This positive experience was brought about by the fact that Jennifer and her PST had compatible personalities and the fact that she had time to cultivate the relationship. These factors are not always possible in the school placement process due to the lack of a formalised system and the teacher education institution not matching PSTs to schools. This is in line with Murphy's (2010) findings that in many cases little consideration is given to the degree of compatibility between the CT and PST or which school placement would offer the best learning experience. As there is no formalised structure of supervision in Ireland as yet, matching PSTs to certain schools and CTs is unattainable.

On the other hand, Caroline's previous experience as a CT highlighted the need for a renewed and innovative approach to accommodating a PST at her school. Caroline had a negative experience with a PST the previous year (where she was unable to establish a working relationship) and, as a result, she approached supervision in a more professional, structured manner. Caroline found that when the CT and PST worked together they both benefited personally and professionally. This new approach resulted in Caroline and her PST developing a supportive community. She attributed some of its success to the fact that they had, by chance, compatible personalities and that they were working towards the same joint enterprise of a successful placement; "I think what has facilitated the development of a good relationship is two compatible personalities who are both willing to put time into developing the relationship" (final interview, phase 5). The data revealed that the communities were not only personality driven but also based on the CTs' and PSTs'

familiarity and confidence with the supervisory structure. This emerged whether the CTs were motivated or not to carry out the role of supervisor.

#### **8.4.4 Support from the principal**

Jennifer, Caroline and Helen attributed the support from their principals as one of the contributory factors in the development of a successful community. The principals in these schools were united with the CT and PST in establishing a joint enterprise, one where they were working towards providing an educational and supportive school placement experience to benefit all stakeholders. In an Irish context, the decision to host a PST ultimately lies with the principal as they are the direct line of communication with the teacher education institution. In most cases, initial contact between the principal and the PST existed in two forms. Firstly, the PST made contact with the principal before the school placement to organise a visit to the school and secondly when the PST was introduced. Common practice revealed that the principal handed over responsibility for the PST from that first phone call and the PST would deal directly with the CT after that. However, four of the CTs' principals carried out formal introductions where they had a meeting with the PST, outlining the school procedures and policies. Helen's principal, who was completing a Diploma in Mentoring, was involved throughout the placement, instigating opportunities for interaction between all stakeholders. Jennifer's principal acknowledged her supervisory behaviours by publically praising her in front of colleagues in the staffroom and allowing her time to attend a supervision workshop. Caroline's principal was extremely supportive of both the CT and the PST in the development of a community. The principal welcomed and introduced the PST in the staffroom and made a presentation to thank the PST at the end of the placement. Regular discussions occurred between the principal, the CT and the PST emphasising the principal's interest and support in the community;

I am always surprised about how much he [the principal] knows about the students, he spots their demeanour around the school, he calls them in for a chat, certainly when they arrive first he welcomes them in the staffroom, which I think is nice, I never got that in any school. Something else that I don't think is done in many schools is we always make a presentation to the student on their last day and that was a tradition started by the principal. It makes the students feel valued. He always takes the students in before they leave and have a chat with them. He would often ask me how he was getting on or how things were. He would be very aware of the student and their ability.

(Caroline, final interview, phase 5)

Another contributory factor to the development of a relationship was that the principal gave Caroline control over constructing the PST's timetable, allowing her to provide structured time to meet each week. The strength of a learning community in a school placement can be determined by the extent to which the initial support from the principal (in the decision to accept a PST) is transferred into support in the actual placement, as experienced by Jennifer, Helen and Caroline. Future principal involvement in the school placement process may alleviate some of the obstacles CTs face in the development of their role and their potential learning trajectories in communities.

#### **8.4.5 Reinforcement from colleagues**

A significant finding was the effect of Caroline's structured relationship with the PST on the rest of the staff at her school. During the placement, Caroline mentioned to other subject teachers that she was observing and giving the PST feedback and, as a result, a number of other staff had begun similar practices;

The whole framework is something that other departments are picking up on here, it's brilliant. They said to me it is a great idea, especially sitting in on the classes, nearly something they always wanted to do but were afraid to do and now they see it working. They have said that the next time they have a student they will say it the very first day and make sure the expectations are there from the very beginning.

(interview 3, phase 5)

This example from the data shows that, not only were Caroline's colleagues providing her support, they were also reinforcing her role as a CT by modelling her supervisory behaviours. This resulted in enhancing Caroline's intrinsic motivation and gave her the encouragement to continue building learning communities within the school placement process. As a result of this support, and an awareness of her own professional development, Caroline introduced an innovative approach to her interactions with the PST. In the final week of the placement, she gave her PST a questionnaire based on her role as a CT, looking to consider the PST's comments and use them to inform her future supervisory practice with PSTs.

#### **8.4.6 Supervision Workshop**

One of the factors which impacted the CTs' ability to create effective relationships was the provision of a supervision workshop. Johnson (2011) suggests that a successful placement is more likely when "student teachers have effective and appropriate supervision, support and encouragement from cooperating teachers who utilise effective supervision strategies" (p. 14). It is acknowledged that the CTs volunteered to participate in the study as they wanted to enhance their supervision skills and were interested in developing supportive and professional relationships with PSTs on school placements. Whilst there were instances of positive supervisory experiences it was decided, based on data analysed from phases one, two and three, to facilitate a CT workshop to satisfy the CTs' demand for CPD in supervisory behaviours. Seven of the eight teachers who participated in phase four and five attended the CT workshop. The roles and responsibilities of the CT were reinforced and CTs were engaged in feedback and debrief role plays. All seven CTs acknowledged the benefit of attending the workshop and that it contributed to the development of stronger supervisory behaviours and enabled the development of effective relationships. Comments included "more focused idea of my role is as a CT and how to provide effective feedback" and "gained clarity about the structures in place".

Jennifer felt supported in her role as a CT with the provision of the workshop. Acknowledgement of participation from the subject department within the teacher education institution strengthened her position in the school as it was recognised by her principal and her work as a supervisor was highlighted to other staff. This motivated Jennifer to continue in her role and look to ways to create more effective relationships;

Well I think that what we got at the college at the workshop on feedback was very important and think we need more of that. It should be continued because the CT gets so much out of it, I certainly got a lot out of it.

(Jennifer, interview 2, phase 4)

## **8.5 Challenges**

### **8.5.1 Time constraints**

The issue of time was referred to when asked about barriers to developing mutual engagement and a joint enterprise and resulted in restricted participation in a community. Wright and Smith (2000) attribute unsuccessful placements to lack of time made available to cultivate relationships, leading to frustration for all stakeholders. Due to the lack of a formalised role, many CTs found that there was an absence of dedicated time to meet with the PST to deliver feedback and discuss the placement. Jessica commented “It’s not easy, because of timetabling and there is so much going on. There isn’t ten minutes where you can sit sometimes” (final interview, phase 3). Jennifer reinforced the limitations of time and revealed her intentions for setting out time with future PSTs;

The biggest difficulty is making sure you have the time and even though I am 100% committed to doing it I found the latter few weeks more difficult mainly because we have a lot of things going on...if I have another student I am going to make sure, at the very initial stages of the first planning meeting, I will be saying we will be having our weekly meeting on 4-5pm on Mondays. Then I know the student is ready and I will be ready and it is established.

(final interview, phase 4)

Even though Jennifer was motivated in her role as a CT, she was frustrated by the lack of time to develop relationships. For Jennifer to become what she believed was an effective supervisor, she needed dedicated time to sit down with her PST each week and discuss teaching and learning, feedback, target setting and general conversation to get to know the PST. The importance of finding the time to interact with the PST was also emphasised by Clare;

Even trying to do a weekly debrief I think I only got to do two of them. I think they are needed because they summarise the week that went before and it cements and hammers home different areas that might need to be worked on. Finding the time to do it was the difficulty.

(final interview, phase 4)

Although agreeing with the concept of structured meeting times once a week, Anna (phase five) believed they were mostly unachievable due to timetable constraints and the inevitable busy life of a school. As a result, she strove to develop a working relationship with the PST through informal interactions during the school day. This, she found, was just as valuable in the development of an effective relationship. Moody (2009) states that for time to be effective it must be acknowledged and resourced. This will have monetary implications to free up teachers to undertake the role of a CT as well as implications for time-tabling. In terms of the timetable, an ideal situation would involve the CT having a free period after the observed class in order to carry out a post lesson debrief and having dedicated time each week to meet formally. Establishing time for effective feedback would benefit the development of a sustainable relationship and reinforce the CT within a community as it formalises and provides structure to their role.

### **8.5.2 Lack of reciprocal relationships: CT – PST**

Rajaun *et al* (2007) highlighted that problems can occur on school placements due to CTs and PSTs having differing expectations of their own and each other's roles. These conflicting expectations can serve as a "major obstacle to the formation of productive mentoring relationships" (Rajuan *et al.*, 2007, p. 224). Some CTs

experienced conflicting expectations and as a result failed to develop professional relationships with their PSTs. Seventeen of the eighteen CTs, by virtue of taking part in the study, engaged fully and sought opportunities to develop functioning learning communities. During the study, five CTs experienced aspects of negative relationships with the PST during a placement due to their lack of mutual engagement. This was attributed to factors such as unmotivated PSTs, PSTs' inability to develop relationships, lack of clear CT and PST roles and responsibilities, personality clashes and CTs' perception of what an effective supervisor entails. All five CTs discussed the fact that the PSTs seemed disinterested in the process and had limited expectations of the role of a supervisor. The apathy towards feedback was a great source of frustration for the CTs. John found that some PSTs were not ready to develop a relationship and did not know how to take feedback, equating the debrief session to "beating your head against a brick wall in some cases" (pre-SP, phase 2). Laura concurred by repeating that she felt she was giving the same feedback week after week, without any improvements. She felt disillusioned as she had suggested that the PST watch her classes and had provided opportunities for observation. However, she felt he was not taking on board any advice and was in effect ignoring her feedback. Laura believed she was putting effort into the development of a relationship but was hindered by the lack of a joint enterprise with the PST. Helen and Vicky attributed their lack of a developing relationship to the inability of PSTs to accept and take on board feedback. Helen found one year 2 PST to be dismissive of the feedback;

I just felt I was saying the same things all the time in the first few weeks, it was all the same things, the roll call, the chewing gum, even to the last week they didn't have a watch and they were using a mobile phone. During one visit from the tutor he [PST] asked all the children to get rid of their phones and then his phone went off in the middle of the class. I just felt like a parrot and they weren't taking a lot of it on board.

(final interview, phase 3)

Vicky noted her frustration by stating that she was the one who initiated feedback with the year 2 PSTs throughout the placement and that if she had not she did not

think they would have looked for it. She admitted that this lack of interest made her feel redundant in the process and led to the absence of a relationship;

I felt I was overstepping the line if I asked for their lesson plans. I just felt, in the end, giving back the critiques that I was being invasive. The reception I was getting when giving back the sheets, I just felt there was no value in what I was doing.

(final interview, phase 3)

Some PSTs did not use their CTs to their advantage, they did not seek advice on lesson planning or content, did not observe the CT teach or request feedback at any time. It must be noted that the PSTs' lack of engagement in some of these relationships may have been due to their lack of confidence and experience. The inability of PSTs to initiate and develop meaningful communities with CTs must be addressed by the teacher education institution, acknowledging that they have a role to play in educating PSTs about the benefits of supervision and the potential improvements that can be derived from actively collaborating with CTs.

Reflecting these difficulties, the weekly meeting proved to be a source of frustration due to six of the PSTs not appearing to value the efforts invested by the CTs;

Now some students, after a few weeks you realise that they are not listening to what you are saying or they are only doing it to keep on your good side, they don't really care about it...we know they are not listening to feedback anymore so there's no point in really giving it to them.

(Greg, pre-SP, phase 2)

John felt that the weekly meetings he carried out were very one sided and became CT led rather than a collaborative, sharing environment. He agreed that the meetings were a good idea but stressed the importance of the teacher education institutions in preparing the PSTs effectively to interact with CTs. John suggested that this could include having questions prepared before the meetings, providing lesson plans for the following week and keeping a record of the main discussion points of the

meetings. John was experiencing the pressure of time in the supervision process and seemed a little disillusioned;

We are busy with 22 hours and it's fairly intense and sometimes if you're spending even 10 minutes thinking about it, it could put you off mentoring a student again. You want to make the process as teacher friendly as possible and having sheets there and having them lead the meeting would definitely aid that.

(post-SP, phase 2)

### **8.5.3 Lack of reciprocal relationships: CT – UT**

The lack of reciprocal relationships extended to the CTs' interactions with UTs. Anna was left disheartened and disappointed with the way the UT treated her in phase five. Anna was attending a school match for the first UT visit so did not get the opportunity to meet with the UT early on in the placement. When the UT arrived at the school for the second visit, Anna felt ignored and believed that the UT was unaware of the role she was carrying out with her PST;

There was no communication, no acknowledgment of anything I had been doing with [PST], she didn't even look in her file, and she asked just for her scheme of work and her post-lesson appraisal for the previous week. As far as I am concerned she didn't look in her folder, didn't see any reflections that I may have given her, any of the appraisals I had given [PST].

(final interview, phase 5)

When the UT did ask her how the PST was getting on, Anna felt she was asking just for the sake of it and did not take it on board. Anna suggested that she would stay in the observed lesson and carry out an appraisal but this was not acknowledged by the UT and the observation was not discussed after the class. Anna commented "really she just pushed me aside at the end of the lesson" (final interview, phase 5). The UT made comments in the post-lesson debrief that Anna believed were not warranted and was annoyed that she was not there to support the PST;

There was another case where three students have to leave early for English as a second language support class and she told [PST] that she shouldn't have let these students out of the class because it upset the arrangement of her groups. I just felt I should have been there to give my input on those issues.

(final interview, phase 5)

As a result of this experience, Anna felt very upset and frustrated and wondered why she carried out the role of a supervisor if it was not going to be acknowledged by the UT;

I just felt what was the whole point of my support, now I know it has been a benefit to [PST], the fact that I have worked closely with her over a number of weeks but I just think in terms of the outcome for [PST], I hope that this particular class isn't going to have a very negative impact on her final grade.

(final interview, phase 5)

Anna stressed that UTs must be made aware of the role CTs are attempting to carry out and invite CTs to stay in observed lessons and post-lesson debriefs. She suggested that UTs are trained to develop effective, professional relationships with CTs to aid not only the PSTs' development but also the CT's professional development. The role of the UT in providing learning opportunities for the CT to become a successful supervisor will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **8.5.4 The absence of a school-university partnership**

### **8.5.4.1 Poorly defined roles and responsibilities**

Guidelines were not clear and stakeholders were generally unaware of their role in the supervision process. This supports previous research by Jeong and McCullick (2001) and Bullough and Draper (2004) who recognised that the roles and role expectations held by all the stakeholders in the school placement are often unclear, shifting and ambiguous. Moody (2009) stated that if true partnerships are to be

fostered, then the roles, rights and responsibilities of the different stakeholders must be considered in great detail.

#### **8.5.4.2 Lack of communication between the CT and the UT**

Many comments were made regarding negative experiences and interactions between CTs and UTs and the absence of professional relationships. For sixteen of the CTs there was no prior contact with the UT before the day of the visit. University protocol requires UTs to send a postcard to the school stating the week of the visit and in all cases this was the only information the CTs received. The CTs felt they were only there to meet and greet the UT upon arrival and felt disregarded as most conversations about the PSTs' progress appeared superficial. This lack of interaction from the UTs led the CTs to feel that their role was devalued and not genuinely involved in contributing to the school placement;

The introductions would be for the tutor coming into the principal and I may as well not have been there and there were times when whatever I said no notice was taken, it was purely from my point of view, tutor to student, without me being involved at all.

(Luke, pre-SP, phase 2)

This standpoint was echoed by Daniel;

I have zero relationship with them [UTs], they come in, they see the principal at the office, they ask to meet the student, they meet the student and talk to them. If they bump into me well and good, if they don't they go about their job anyway.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Sarah believed that UTs should initiate the development of communities and make contact with the CT to see when was an appropriate time to visit rather than "just turning up and landing on your doorstep" (pre-SP, phase 2). If this prior contact was made, the CTs agreed that they could ensure they were there on the day of the UT visit to support the PST.

There was diversity in the experience CTs had with UTs when they visited to observe a PST. While five of the eighteen CTs had positive experiences, the remaining thirteen felt that they were not involved in the process; “Formally I suppose we don’t really have a role at all, informally some tutors will come and ask you your opinion. Some tutors are very good...and some tutors basically don’t really want to know” (Greg, pre-SP, phase 2). This level of inconsistency and the lack of a negotiated enterprise only served to dishearten the CTs who attempted to carry out the role of an effective supervisor. For the structuring of communities to work, there must be a higher level of communication between the CT and the UT both prior to, and during, the visit to establish some form of mutual engagement.

#### **8.5.4.3 The lack of formalised partnerships**

A significant issue raised by the CTs was the lack of a formalised partnership between the school and the teacher education institution. The lack of communication and unclear roles and expectations for all stakeholders in the supervisory process led to the CTs feeling disillusioned and frustrated. At present in Ireland, the partnership between schools and universities in relation to the school placement, as highlighted by Conway *et al.* (2011b), is very much the work-place/host model. By structuring the process of supervision it was hoped to provide CTs with the tools to effectively supervise PSTs on placement and to make strides towards developing aspects of the co-ordinator model in school-university partnerships (Maandag *et al.*, 2007). One of the main stumbling blocks in the school placement is the fact that all correspondence from the teacher education institution goes through the principal with no direct contact with the CT. This means that the institution is sending PSTs to schools without direct knowledge about whether the teachers have any supervisory experience or even if there is a qualified physical education teacher employed at the school. Three of the CTs in this study (Laura, Jessica and Vicky) were new to the role and received no guidance or support from the university. As a result, they felt that they were unprepared for when the PSTs arrived for their placement and ‘struggled’ in their attempts to initiate a community. None of the CTs had any initial contact with the institution regarding the placement of a PST at their school. The

fact that the university has no prior knowledge of the CT or any direct links developed restricts the early development of learning communities.

The CTs believed that the complete lack of communication reflected a lack of respect from the university and devalued the role they were attempting to carry out. In three cases, the CTs were contacted by the PSTs directly, before the school had been approached by the university;

What I thought was bad was that the students informed me before the school had been told, that didn't go down well with the principal. That shouldn't happen. Then the letter came and that was it then and no contact since from the university.

(Vicky, interview 1, phase 3)

Bullough and Draper (2004) found that the lack of effective communication between CTs and university supervisors was a widely recognised problem. The development of effective learning communities can be hindered when there is a clear breakdown in communication and an obvious lack of interaction, resulting in dysfunctional relationships and inadequate learning opportunities for CTs. Tercanlioglu (2004) stated that communication between the university and the school can influence the success of school-based training. However, Steven attributed the inconsistency of CT involvement to the lack of communication with the university. Echoing this, Sarah stated;

I think that it is a really valuable role and it just needs to be done properly, a little bit more structure to it, a lot of teachers are willing to do it but maybe they aren't aware of what they need to be doing. When the students are accepted they are told this is exactly what they need to be doing, hopefully then they might go with it.

(post-SP, phase 2)

This highlights the need for schools to accept their role in the development of school placements and formally identify suitable CTs to work directly with PSTs.

## **8.6 The establishment of various communities**

Patton (2005) states that social interaction between stakeholders facilitates membership in different kinds of communities and reduces the potential of members working or acting in isolation, which can be a common occurrence in an Irish context. Due to the lack of a formalised structure of supervision in Ireland, there seemed to be a misconstrued image of what a relationship should entail. As a result, the CTs in the study developed their own ideas and based their communities on what worked for them in their own context. The extent of the social interaction within the relationships, and the development of the three dimensions (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire) necessary for the establishment of communities, determined the strength of the relationships.

For the CTs, the initiation of relationships was important as the potential for “learning occurs when interaction occurs” (Falk, 1997, p. 4). There is evidence in the data of the development of a variety of communities in which the CT interacted with a range of stakeholders, the most prominent being the relationship between the CT and the PST. For fourteen of the CTs, this interaction and collaboration in communities positively impacted their learning trajectory. Each community developed its own identity and practices and established ways of working together.

Possibilities for the creation of communities are infinite. However, the data revealed the following variations:

- Dyads/micro-communities consisting of the CT and the PST
- The CT, the PST and other physical education teachers in the school
- The CT, the PST and Professional Diploma student teachers
- The CT, the PST, a mentor teacher, the principal, elective CTs and other PSTs in the school
- The CT, the PST, physical education teachers and PSTs from other institutions

While none of the variants of communities presented above could be described as communities of practice in their fullest sense as found in the literature (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998, Wenger, 1998b), elements of learning communities are evident, based on the characteristics and dimensions required for the establishment and maintenance of relationships. The fullest form of communities of practice is restricted by each of the stakeholder's lack of experience and confidence in the supervisory process, the scarcity of time to cultivate relationships and the absence of established school-university partnerships. The various relationships presented all constitute communities as they were underpinned by a number of the characteristics required to create communities and were all based on aspects of social interaction and closeness.

### **8.6.1 The CT-PST community**

Where successful relationships were developed between CTs and PSTs, it was due to the CT adopting the role of a supervisor and the PST acknowledging this role, thus validating the CT's positioning. Creating successful structured relationships will hopefully serve as a significant factor in shaping the PST's experience of teaching and has the potential to lead to the practice of associated behaviours when they become future CTs themselves.

Caroline ensured that the structure of her relationship was a professional one from the beginning by providing the PST with a protocol which outlined procedures and expectations. She believed that this form of reification sent out a clear message to the PST that she was interested and wanted to be involved. By providing this structure at the beginning of the placement, Caroline enabled an opening, a way of gaining access to a community and negotiating a joint enterprise with the PST. Steven recognised that the development of a relationship with PSTs was not always straightforward but when they worked together they achieved successes;

It wasn't plain sailing all the time but the problem-solving, the voyage that we went on, the adventures we had, we came across moments and periods of diversity that we just came through and he was excellent.

(final interview, phase 5)

Thirteen strong, two-way relationships were developed which facilitated the learning of both CTs and PSTs. In five cases, the CTs commented that, through trial and error, the PST had become more like a colleague rather than a student, becoming part of the physical education department. The extent to how a professional and respectful relationship developed was summarised by Steven in describing his interactions with the PST;

He is definitely part of the department. He is the kind of fella you can sit down with and have a chat, you can talk about general conversation, and how the rugby went at the weekend then all of a sudden we can tap into PE specific information and then come back out of it. You can't necessarily have that level of comfort with somebody that you don't know as well and don't respect.

(interview 2, phase 5)

Where the CT was the only physical education teacher in the school (seven CTs), the data strengthened again the benefits of developing a community with the PST. In an Irish context, many physical education teachers feel isolated in their role due to the absence of other qualified physical education colleagues in the school, and the fact that many physical education facilities are located away from the main body of the school building. Having a PST on school placement enabled these seven CTs to develop a physical education department for a period of time. The benefits included having someone to bounce ideas off, sharing the day to day tensions of teaching, professional interaction and helping out with the provision of extra-curricular activities. In effect, displaying the presence of a number of key characteristics of communities. Supporting this, Anna highlighted the benefit of having a PST as "providing a little community for me" (phase 2, final interview).

### **8.6.2 Extended communities**

Anna developed an effective community with her PST in phase three. This was further developed in phase five when she had a year 4 PST and a Professional Diploma PST on school placement at the same time. This enhanced her experience of supervision and led to increased collaboration. She encouraged both PSTs to not only observe her but each other and provided time when all three could sit together to establish mutual engagement and dedicate time to the delivery of feedback;

They are both free so we meet as a group. I have actually organised in the staffroom that they both have free desks together so they are actually working together down there and I have left all the PE resources there as well. It has become their corner in the staffroom. We actually talk about the classes, what we have done, what has worked.

(interview 3, phase 5)

This extension of the CT-PST community was experienced by four more CTs. Jennifer also had the opportunity to have a year 4 PST and a Professional Diploma PST at the same time. She replicated Anna's approach by having the PSTs observe each other's classes and all three being involved in meetings once a week. John extended the school placement community to include the other qualified physical education teachers in the school and a PST from another institution that was on placement at the same time. They attempted to meet once a week as a group to discuss school placement issues. Steven, in phase two, three and five also encouraged the PSTs to work with both himself and the other physical education teacher in the department. He found that the interaction increased because of the supportive environment they were creating and the notion that they were interested in developing relationships, thus reinforcing their joint enterprise. Steven found the interaction so effective in phase five that he referred to the PST as "becoming a fourth member of the department" (final interview, phase 5). Steven also found that having a pair of year 2 PSTs on placement increased the opportunity for interaction and provided a new angle to his notion of a community.

The idea of extending the community to include more members was explored in Caroline's school by including the principal. The principal was extremely proactive and openly welcomed and supported PSTs in the school. The principal welcomed the PST in the staffroom at the beginning of the placement and the PST's name was put up on the board to make every teacher aware of his presence in the school. Caroline stated that this made the PST feel welcome and part of the wider school community. The principal met with the PST at the beginning and end of the school placement and engaged in conversation with both the PST and the CT about his progress. The principal, acknowledging the presence of the PST and engaging in conversation about his progress, strengthened the CT's positioning as a supervisor and made her feel valued in the process, adding to her motivation to carry out the role. This allowed Caroline to construct her identity as a CT and was strengthened by the fact that other teachers recognised and replicated her supervisory role. This acknowledgement and acceptance by the principal and staff at her school contributed to Caroline's confidence in the established community. In another example, Helen's principal was very supportive of developing the role of mentoring in the school and initiated the development of a professional community which met, not only at the beginning of the placement, but also at various points throughout. The meetings included the principal, the school mentor, the physical education CT, the mathematics CT and all year 2 PSTs in the school. The creation of this community, instigated by the principal, validated the CT's role and strengthened the positioning of the PSTs in the supervisory experience. The aim of the meetings was to introduce the PSTs to the school and make them aware of the school's expectations, share supervisory experiences and maintain the established community.

### **8.6.3 CT – UT communities**

For communities to be developed between CTs and UTs, CTs stated that it was imperative that they are recognised and supported in their supervisory role. The UT can be instrumental in the development of the role of the CT, especially when positive relationships are built over the school placement period. The CTs, when questioned about what they wanted from UTs, stated that they wanted to be supported in their supervisory role and their opinions to be considered and valued.

While the study revealed the presence of dysfunctional relationships between the CT and the UT, the study also revealed that there is potential for the development of effective learning communities between the CT and the UT where learning can take place. Sudzina *et al* (1997) highlight the impact of communities on the learning trajectories of CTs;

Student teachers need a guide, a teacher, a mentor to help them as they struggle to navigate the often frightening distance between their college preparation and the beginnings of their teaching career. Cooperating teachers also need a guide and a mentor as they navigate the waters of providing effective supervision and mentoring.

(Sudzina et al., 1997, p. 33)

The presence of positive relationships between CTs and UTs emerged during the study. Learning occurred more readily when the UT involved the CT in the active process of supervision. Seven of the CTs had dealings with UTs who were professional in their approach and initiated the development of close working relationships. Only two UTs indicated when they were going to visit and this procedure allowed the CTs to ensure they were available to meet either before or after the lesson to discuss the PST's progress. Importantly, the CTs appreciated the fact that the UTs seemed to listen to their opinions on the progress of the PSTs they were supervising at the time. It was important to the CTs that the UTs acknowledged that, whilst they may have been newcomers in the process of developing partnerships, they were competent physical education teachers, many with previous supervisory experience. Positive examples were given where UTs interacted with CTs before and after the observed class and at times invited the CT to stay during the class and the post lesson debrief. Listening and taking on board the CTs comments and interacting with the CT were deemed the most important characteristics of UTs visiting the schools; "I've had tutors come out and actually get involved in the class in a very positive way, that worked fantastically and ended up the three of us [PST/CT/UT] were stuck inside of it" (Steven, pre-SP, phase 2).

When these conditions were in place, they were the potential beginnings of the development of effective communities between CTs and UTs. Steven described the importance of his interaction with the UT again in phase three;

I think painting in the background and the tutor then did the main body of the picture, what she saw there was what she got and she reported back on that and I just gave some background information, our feedback was very similar. It was nice to be involved.

(Final interview, phase 3)

In phase five, where he developed an effective partnership with the UT, Steven was also positive about the relationship;

I was delighted with the tutor, I thought she was real, realistic, I thought she was very supportive of the student, very interested in what I had to say, I thought she was great. It was a very open relationship.

(final interview, phase 5)

Anna, in phase three, appreciated that the UT invited her to stay in the observed lesson and asked her opinion on the PST's development. Vicky was happy that the UT had read her observations that were in the PST's file and acknowledged the work she was carrying out with her PSTs. It transpired that both Vicky and the UT were commenting on the same aspects of the PST's teaching, giving Vicky more confidence in her delivery of effective feedback. The acknowledgement from the UTs made Anna and Vicky feel supported in their position as supervisors. Anna articulated the importance of having time to meet with the UT after the observed class as it aided her development, especially in the delivery of effective feedback and how to structure and conduct a debrief;

I really found it worthwhile listening to how he questioned them and liked the way his questions got them thinking. I just felt he was very, very thorough with them, even suggestions he made I remember thinking I would never have thought of that, so that is something I would use now.

(Final interview, phase 3)

The development of a community between the CT and the UT in terms of learning was reiterated by Clare;

I think I have benefited big time from working with a tutor because it has given me more awareness of how to observe, how to deliver feedback and knowing the guidelines, so I definitely did benefit.

(interview 2, phase 4)

Following the success of the CT workshop on the role of the CT and the delivery of effective feedback, four of the fifteen CTs who participated in the workshop agreed to take part in phase four of the study. The CTs had the opportunity to work closely with the UTs throughout the PST's placement to develop confidence in their supervisory role and establish the initial stages of a community. The UTs made four visits to the school, involving the CT in each of the lesson observations and debriefs. A joint enterprise was developed in many instances where the CT and the UT observed a lesson and discussed the type and level of feedback required. This was followed by a discussion on the similarities and differences between the feedback they would give the PST and how it would be delivered. The CT then had the opportunity to lead the lesson observation and debrief in the two unofficial visits, with support from the UT. This allowed the CTs to gain confidence, resulting in an acceleration of their learning trajectory. These findings are supported in the literature. For example, Veal and Rikard (1998) found that CTs value having conferences with UTs. A number of studies support the idea that the UT should work closely with the CT at the school site, spending their time helping the CTs become confident in the role of supervisor (Beck and Kosnik, 2000; Borko and Mayfield, 1995; Koster et al., 1998).

The role of the UT in phase four of the study was to facilitate conversations between the CTs and PSTs and aid the CT in the development of strategies for conducting effective post-lesson debriefs. The four CTs who participated valued the increased interaction with the UTs and felt that they had benefited professionally from the development of close working relationships. This is in line with research carried out

by Beck and Kosnik (2002) who found that CTs reacted positively as a result of the support provided to them by UTs. This experience enabled the CTs to become 'agents of change' as their ability to deliver effective feedback positively impacted their PSTs' development.

A comment made by Clare revealed how she dealt with the UT in previous placements;

I would have stayed in the lesson but I wouldn't have been present in any of the post-lesson appraisals or debriefs, I would have made myself scarce. I would have touched base with the tutor then before they left the premises. I felt a little uncomfortable staying especially when I may have given them some help and guidance and you feel responsible when something didn't go well.

(phase 4, interview 2)

As a result of the new and improved interaction with the UT, Clare felt that she had become more confident in delivering feedback and it enabled her to develop a stronger community with the PST. This improved confidence was also experienced by Anna as a result of the openness of the UT in phase three where the UT invited her to stay in the observed class and carry out an appraisal and then compared notes after the class. The fact that they were 'singing off the same hymn sheet' reinforced her behaviour and was appreciated by the PST. This UT in particular made contact at the beginning of the school placement with a phone number and email address in case she had any concerns, leading to the establishment of a community between the CT and the UT.

The importance of building relationships between the CT and the UT was emphasised by Caroline. She acknowledged that if you had the same tutor each year it would be easier to develop a trusting and professional relationship. Caroline suggested that to initiate a relationship, the UT should make contact early on in the placement to see how the PST is getting on;

I think what might be no harm very early on in the ten weeks that if the tutor touched base or maybe even gave a number where you could contact them directly...maybe just a number where they gave a buzz at the end of the week to see how things are going or if I had any issue just give me a quick call or text. I think I would be more comfortable if that relationship was there.

(interview 1, phase 5)

It transpired throughout the interviews that most of the CTs only felt comfortable talking about the PST's progress if they had built a rapport with the tutor and there was an element of trust involved. Steven highlighted the positive interaction he had with the UT;

I was involved, I came in and met his tutor, she asked me how he was getting on, what I thought of him as a teacher and his potential and I was delighted to hear she was interested in what we had to say because we would obviously see him an awful lot more than she had.

(interview 4, phase 5)

Overall, there was a general consensus that CTs wanted to develop relationships with UTs and wanted their efforts in helping the PSTs to succeed to be recognised. Steven summarised why he thinks his relationship with the UT flourished;

I think it is one where mutual respect is the standard and that an opinion is taken at face value...I think it worked that the tutor kept an open mind and actually having that trust in what the cooperating teacher was saying, that was absolutely needed.

(final interview, phase 5)

#### **8.6.4 The absence of a CT – PST community**

A complete breakdown in relations occurred between Daniel and his PST. This can be attributed to the lack of evidence of the development of any form of mutual engagement or joint enterprise, nor the establishment of a shared repertoire. Daniel's perception of a successful relationship is reflected in the following comment;

I would say he is somewhat on the outside at the moment but that's down to the individual, like we had an excellent student last year and sure like he had lunch with us every day and we had a night out, he really immersed himself in it. I don't see [PST] at lunchtimes, I don't see him at break-times and there really isn't any interaction.

(interview 2, phase 5)

It seemed that Daniel based his previous relationships with PSTs on social interaction and only then did he feel in a position to deliver feedback. Daniel had a limited perception of what an effective supervisory relationship entailed, although he believed that he was providing support at the beginning of the placement, the characteristics of a community were not present. He admitted to offering the PST some tips and providing feedback after his first lesson. However, he admitted to providing no further feedback when he saw no improvement in the PST;

I gave him feedback after the first one, the second one I watched I didn't see much of a change so I didn't really give him much feedback and the third one I watched from upstairs through the window.

(interview 3, phase 5)

Being social and active defines joint enterprise to a certain extent but Daniel's interaction with the PST was limited. The relationship also lacked instances of mutual engagement or the development of a shared repertoire. Daniel felt that it was up to the UT to identify issues and deliver feedback and then he, as a CT, would reinforce this with the PST following the visits. This was the reason he gave for not picking up on a number of issues he believed the PST had with his teaching in the first few weeks. However, the PST produced a very effective class on the day of the UT visit, leading to the CT becoming even more disillusioned with the process. At no point did Daniel voice his concerns about the PST's teaching with the UT as no relationship had been established. Daniel's attitude following the visit was clear;

He needs to be helped by us, but I am not helping him if he doesn't come looking for it. I can offer opinions all I want but he thinks he is doing very well, that's just been reinforced by a tutor's visit who told him he is a 'A' student, how do I come back and say 'Buddy you have no classroom management at all.

(interview 2, phase 5)

When probed on his role as a CT, he admitted to not being 'hands on enough' and that he should probably be more involved. Daniel's approach was such that he let the PST know that he was there for him but he was not going to initiate the development of a relationship;

I won't give a guy feedback unless he wants it, I won't, no way, it's not my position to, I'm not being paid to do it. I am not going to make a fella feel like he is doing things wrong when he hasn't asked me for help. I am not here to lecture a fella.

(interview 3, phase 5)

There was no interaction in the final few weeks with no observations or feedback sessions occurring. The CT alluded to the lack of recognition of the CT role and over the years had become increasingly disillusioned with the process. He equated the lack of payment for such a role as a sign of the teacher education institution not acknowledging the importance of the CT involvement. Daniel was the only CT in phase four and five not to have attended the CT workshop at the teacher education institution and this may account for some of the breakdown in the relations and the lack of interactions. There were no benefits for either the CT or the PST in Daniel's case and a negative school placement can be very destructive for a PST. This finding further highlights the urgency to educate and train CTs in the supervisory process. CTs undergoing negative supervisory experiences in communities can lead to a lack of learning. In this situation, the quality or absence of relationships was likely to have had a significant bearing on the development of learning opportunities.

### **8.6.5 The absence of a CT – UT community**

In many cases, communities between CTs and UTs were absent due to a number of factors. These included the lack of interaction and the absence of formal relationships between the CT and the UT, inconsistencies in grading and expectations, lack of initial contact and not taking CTs' opinions into account. All CTs commented on the fact that there was no formal relationship between themselves and the UT and this form of marginal participation resulted in many feeling redundant in the process. Furthermore, many CTs were not provided with opportunities to observe experienced UTs in their role and their opinions were often disregarded or ignored or, more importantly, their opinions were not sought;

The relationship first of all, I don't meet them until they come out for their visits and it's very in and out. A few tutors would ask how they are getting on, that's great because we have a feeling that we know them better... we are working hand in hand with them. Others have been distant, they are taking on the role themselves and not interacting with us.

(John, pre-SP, phase 2)

There seems to have been significant diversity in the experience the CTs were having with UTs when they visited to observe a PST. While some were having positive experiences, eleven of the eighteen CTs felt that they were not involved in the process; "Formally I suppose we don't really have a role at all, informally some tutors will come and ask you your opinion. Some tutors are very good...and some tutors basically don't really want to know" (Greg, pre-SP, phase 2). Jane reiterated the lack of a formal link between the CT and the UT when asked about their relationship; "Not too much I suppose, other than when they come into the school and you would have a quick chat, very quick chat sometimes. At the moment...there is no link really" (pre-SP, phase 2).

The general consensus amongst the CTs was that UTs should attempt to make contact prior to the placement to make initial introductions and then make contact throughout the placement to see how the PST was getting on as this would initiate the development of a working relationship, in essence, a learning community. This procedure would open the channel of communication between the two stakeholders, establish a mutual identity and help develop a culture of support. Daniel extends this to suggest that UTs meet with the CT before the placement begins to discuss effective supervisory behaviours and to explain their expectations. The CTs seemed to be in favour of developing some form of learning community with the UTs while they were supervising PSTs on school placements. However, this can be restricted by unhelpful UTs and poor communication. This often leads to CTs working autonomously and can adversely affect their learning trajectories.

## **8.7 Stages of development for communities of practice**

Wenger (1998b), as discussed previously in chapter 4, describes five stages in the development of a community: the potential stage, the coalescing stage, the active stage, the dispersed stage and the memorable stage. The data revealed that the most influential and prominent stages in the development of a supervision community were the potential, coalescing and active stages. Some relationships experienced just the potential stage whereas the most successful communities progressed and remained in the active stage.

### **8.7.1 The potential stage**

The potential stage was experienced by all CTs in that the capacity to establish relationships existed by the very fact that a PST was carrying out a placement at their school. It is acknowledged that there is no formalised supervision structure in place in an Irish context and many CTs are untrained and unprepared to host PSTs at their schools (Belton et al., 2010, Moody, 2009). Due to this, many communities do not progress past the potential stage as some CTs lack the confidence and knowledge to find commonalities to develop effective relationships with PSTs. For

example, the community between Daniel and his PST did not progress past the potential stage as they failed to find a common ground in their approach to the school placement. When questioned about what he had done as a CT to engage with the PST, he stated;

Not a whole pile, I suppose I'm there for him if he needs me, I put that out there and he hasn't really taken me up on it so I am not going to force a fella to take my help. I have offered so I'm here if he needs me or if he wants to bounce anything off me.

(Daniel, interview 2, phase 5)

Further evidence that Daniel and his PST did not progress past the potential stage emerged in the final interview when questioned about his relationship with the PST;

Grand relationship, like he sits at the table with us at lunch and we would have a chat with him but it wouldn't have developed because there was no basis for it, you know what I mean, he was just another guy sitting there.

(Daniel, interview 4, phase 5)

Daniel attributed the absence of a relationship to not only his lack of interaction, but also the lack of interest from the PST and the absence of support from the university. Similarly, Vicky did not progress past the potential stage, but this lack of progress was attributed to different reasons. Acknowledging that she did not feel fully confident in the role of CT, she effectively abandoned active supervision. Vicky cited her perceived lack of knowledge and confidence in her supervisory capabilities and a lack of supervisory training as the reasons to why she was unable to sustain a supervisory relationship. This finding supports previous research that stated that although teachers had experience acting in the role of CT, none had previously received training for this role (Belton et al., 2010). What is interesting is that Vicky, although invited to the CT workshop, did not attend or avail of the CPD opportunity.

### 8.7.2 The coalescing stage

Thirteen of the communities between CTs and PSTs progressed into the coalescing stage. This stage is dominated by the establishment of a joint enterprise and creating a supportive environment in which a community can develop. During this stage, the stakeholders negotiate how they will structure the supervision process and determine future practice. CTs were aware that, for the possibility of a community developing, they had to set the tone of the relationship. To set the right tone and establish an effective working relationship, Jennifer strove to develop a collegial atmosphere where the emphasis was on her as a CT being interested in the PST's development and avoid situations that would intimidate the PST. Vicky and Anna shared that the aim was to treat PSTs like teachers, almost colleagues, to enable barriers to be broken down. Anna described how she adopted this approach;

I suppose it's my manner with them, I say 'Look this works for me, I have tried this and it works', I suppose I am just facilitating learning for them, I am not dictating to them how to teach a class or how they should go about doing something.

(interview 2, phase 5)

Caroline's previous negative school placement experiences meant that she had not progressed past the potential stage of a community. As a result, she approached this placement with a more professional and supportive approach towards supervision with the aim to create an effective community. This involved Caroline giving the PST a document with expectations and protocols for lessons at the beginning of the placement, establishing a mutual, shared and agreed enterprise with the PST. Previously she had assumed that PSTs would understand routines such as entering a class, roll taking and health and safety checks. She set aside time on the PST's first day to go through the document. By adding this form of reification, she felt more organised for this placement and the protocol gave the PST more direction. She felt it sent out a clear message to the PST that she had expectations but also that she was involved and interested in the PST's development. Caroline, providing this structure at the beginning of the placement, enabled an opening, a way of gaining access to a

relationship with the PST. What resulted was the emergence of a reciprocated supportive and professional relationship.

In this stage, Caroline also established the development of a community by setting aside time each week to meet with the PST. With this particular PST, she felt a lot more organised and believed the weekly meeting formed the structure of their collaborative relationship;

He [PST] actually said he found the meeting very structured and helpful because it was a good time to bring up stuff that he was concerned about or to discuss classes. I was just afraid that maybe as a student it might be a bit intimidating in that he had to meet with me every Friday morning but he actually said he found it very helpful and he knew that it was a forum to bring stuff up.

(final interview, Phase 5)

For thirteen of the eighteen CTs, the establishment of a set time to meet with the PSTs each week cemented the coalescing stage, as it was in this time that they maintained and developed their joint enterprise. The CTs commented that they found the meetings to be a positive experience and enabled them to extend their relationships with the PST. The CTs felt that the PSTs valued their input which in turn acted as a form of intrinsic motivation to carry out the supervision role. As there is no formal, recognised role for CTs, intrinsic motivation is essential to enable CTs to continue carrying out the role. In discussing weekly meetings, Greg commented;

I actually don't mind like I have had really good students and sometimes actually enjoy meeting them Friday after school, we will just spend 20 minutes sitting down chatting and I really enjoy working with them because I feel like I'm helping someone who cares.

(pre SP, phase 2)

For other CTs, the notion of a weekly meeting occurred in different formats but was just as effective in developing a joint enterprise. Interaction was occurring on a daily

basis and the notion of a weekly meeting was being met through these regular discussions. Steven elaborated on the formalisation of weekly meetings;

Formally no, formally we didn't. The amount of times we [two CTs and PST] were in here just talking about what we had seen during the week, what he had seen and again he would ask questions 'What do you do?', 'Where do you find this information?' It turned into sharing stories really. Formally, I would say no but we achieved the whole notion of a weekly meeting, definitely.

(Steven, post SP, phase 2)

Caroline stated that some of the characteristics the PST displayed enabled the community to progress into the coalescing stage and strengthen their relationship. These characteristics included agreeing targets, the ability to admit when a class did not go well, asking for and more importantly taking on board advice, and a willingness to help out with classes and activities for which the PST was not timetabled. This conveyed to Caroline that the PST was just as interested in developing a relationship as she was, strengthening their joint enterprise. This was reinforced by Steven who found that it was the PST who began to instigate meetings as the placement developed. This demonstrated to Steven that the PST was comfortable in approaching him and that a two-way relationship was developing.

### **8.7.3 The active stage**

The process of sharing resources and information facilitated the progression of communities into the active stage and served to reinforce the relationship, with most CTs acknowledging that they can benefit from the PST's knowledge. Topical issues such as the junior cycle and senior cycle curriculum, curriculum and instructional models (in particular Sport Education), and assessment were discussed. There was an understanding and commitment to the task of supervision and a realisation that both stakeholders (CTs and PSTs) had strengths which could enhance each other's learning. Caroline highlighted some of the benefits she got from developing a shared repertoire;

With regards the Friday meeting we used to get on to what was happening in the college, what was being taught, planning, it was great because he [PST] is at the coal face in learning stuff and even with senior cycle just finding out what they are teaching in college and that type of thing.

(final interview, phase 5)

It became evident, for some communities in the active stage, that the PSTs brought new skills and enthusiasm to the placement and as a result the CT's own knowledge and teaching skills were enhanced. Caroline's level of interaction improved with her PST due to both stakeholders buying into the process, establishing practice and being motivated to learn. As a result of this, Caroline became aware that she could learn from the PST and created an open and honest environment for this to occur;

I would say that he has turned into a colleague, almost now I could nearly see myself working with him. As much as I was expecting more of a teacher role but I think he is very good and he has great ideas himself so I am learning from him just as much as he is from me.

(Caroline, interview 2, phase 5)

Engaging in activities, another characteristic of the active stage, was experienced by Steven who found that it was the PST who began to instigate meetings as the relationship developed. The PST also observed and helped out in a range of classes and widened the scope of the developing relationship. This demonstrated to Steven that the PST was comfortable in approaching him and that a collaborative relationship was evolving. Anna found that her PST's level of confidence had improved significantly as the community progressed;

I think her confidence has come on in these two weeks and she is very open with me, she will come to me about the class, asking for suggestions about where she should go next, so we are developing a good relationship, she is doing well.

(interview 2, Phase 5)

#### **8.7.4 The dispersed and memorable stages**

Elements of the dispersed and memorable stages occurred within some of the variations of communities created. The strongest communities, those consisting of the dyad of a CT and PST, progressed to the active stage and remained there. However, communities consisting of larger numbers struggled to maintain the intensity of the interaction and collaboration for the duration of the placement. Examples included restricted time spent as a community and less structured feedback sessions with all members. Busy day to day routines were cited as reasons for the breakdown of communities and, as there is no formalised structure, some members lacked motivation to sustain interaction. The concept of a community remained but the intensity lessened as the placement progressed.

#### **8.7.5 The significance of the phases**

The communities were initiated and led by the CTs who, in some respects, became leaders within the communities. The majority did this through facilitating feedback, arranging weekly meetings and establishing a climate of knowledge exchange and resource sharing. However, the success of a community was also dependent on the level of interaction from the PST. If they were motivated in working towards a shared purpose then the community progressed. For a community to continue functioning, the experiences and the stakeholders efforts must be deemed worthwhile (O'Sullivan, 2007), reinforcing the importance of the stakeholder's joint enterprise. Many of the CT-PST relationships arrived at the active stage and remained there until the end of the placement with the dispersed stage naturally occurring with the cessation of the placement. Aspects of the memorable stage, such as the role of a supervisor becoming part of a teacher's identity, may impact future experiences. The extent to which CTs engage in the three dimensions of a community (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire) impacted the CTs' learning and affected the development of learning communities. If CTs are prepared and supported in their supervision role there is the potential for effective communities to develop. The data revealed that there is potential to develop effective communities by CTs and PSTs engaging in the first three stages of development. The aim is for communities to be established and negotiated in the

potential and coalescing stages, and then maintained at the active stage for learning to occur.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

The data highlight the benefits of establishing and sustaining learning communities through school placements. By facilitating collaborative relationships, a CT's learning trajectory can be positively enhanced and a PST is provided with a scaffolded entry into the teaching profession. As the relationships in the study had various degrees of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, it allowed the on-going interactions between various stakeholders to be labelled communities. The contact CTs had, with PSTs in particular, satisfied the connotations of what a community resembles in that they interacted and collaborated on a daily basis. Where CTs had regular contact with UTs, they also had elements of the three dimensions which determine the presence of a community. Supporting the research of Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), the approaches of the CTs in developing communities were either enabled or constrained by other members in the school placement process. This reinforces Lave and Wenger's (1991) claim that learning is social and relational.

Where communities were successful, typically between the CT and the PST, the following processes were evident: evolving forms of mutual engagement, understanding and negotiating an enterprise, and developing and inventing a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). These processes enabled CTs to change their behaviours to engage effectively in practice and develop an identity within the school placement process. In many instances, the emergence of communities was part planned and part serendipitously created, as stakeholders progressively learnt each other's characteristics, strengths and weaknesses and realised the extent to which communities could be developed.

Communities consisting of a CT and a PST were the strongest and resulted in an enhanced level of learning. However, the study shows that functioning learning communities, which involve CTs and UTs, do not entirely exist. The school placement process lacks an infrastructure which supports change, exchange of knowledge and few opportunities for the CT and UT to work together. While the study revealed some interaction between the CT and the UT, it demonstrated the potential for the development of various forms of relationships/communities between the CT and the UT where learning can take place. The next chapter presents the learning trajectories of CTs when supported or hindered in their role as legitimate peripheral participants in various structures of communities.

# Chapter 9: The Learning Trajectories of Cooperating Teachers

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## 9.1 Introduction

Close working relationships between teacher education institutions and schools can lead to the development of learning communities where collaboration can be extended to the CT. Traditionally, in an Irish context, the focus has been on the relationship between the UT and the PST, and the CT has been relatively invisible in the process. In Ireland, schools provide placements to PSTs on a voluntary basis and assessment is solely undertaken by the teacher education institution. This is in contrast to many countries where evaluation is carried out by the school, with some input from UTs (Moody, 2009). A number of government reports in Ireland (Byrne and Kellaghan Reports, 2002) recommended closer school-university partnerships and the development of the role of the school in initial teacher education, and Coolahan (2003) stressed the need for “more overt forms of partnership between schools and the teacher education institutions” (p. 31). It is acknowledged that teachers’ formal involvement in the supervisory process can expand their learning and impact them professionally. Sivan and Chan (2003) support this by acknowledging that the partnership between the teacher education institution and the school can facilitate and enhance a teacher’s professional development. They also stress the importance of having a school-based mentor by stating “it would be useful to strengthen and enhance this partnership by appointing a school-based supervisor who would attend to the trainee’s learning needs on the one hand and would also collaborate with the university tutor on the other hand” (p. 193). Traditionally, in an Irish context, CTs work autonomously in their supervision role and, in many cases, base their role on their previous experiences as a PST. It is hoped that supervision can evolve to address not only the needs of the PST but also the professional development of the CT. CTs’ experiences as legitimate peripheral participants and their interactions with PSTs, UTs and the teacher education institution can help

inform what support and training is necessary for them to become confident in the supervisory role and how to develop professional learning communities.

Research has shown that teachers can derive substantial benefits from the role of CT and many experienced teachers have made positive changes to their teaching as a result, often engaging as co-learners (Ganser, 2002, Patton et al., 2005). With this in mind, it is the aim of this chapter to examine the learning trajectories of CTs in their efforts to become effective supervisors and the extent to which learning opportunities are provided and supported in the school placement. The data were analysed in relation to the following research question;

**Research question three: To what extent is a cooperating teacher's learning facilitated and supported in their role as supervisor?**

To answer the research question, three sub-questions were identified;

- To what extent do physical education cooperating teachers' motivations encourage them to become legitimate peripheral participants in learning communities?
- To what extent does legitimacy contribute to a physical education cooperating teachers' learning trajectory?
- To what extent does peripherality contribute to a physical education cooperating teachers' learning trajectory?

The chapter begins by discussing key findings in relation to the construct of legitimate peripheral participation, and proceeds with five vignettes on CTs experiences as legitimate peripheral participants in a variety of community structures.

## **9.2 Legitimate peripheral participation**

Lave and Wenger (1991) propose legitimate peripheral participation as a way of understanding learning and characterises the shifts in learning engagement in communities of practice, therefore providing a context through which learning can take place. The aim of this study was to illustrate how a CT's trajectory of learning

could be linked to their positioning as legitimate peripheral participants in evolving communities through school placements. The process of legitimate peripheral participation in communities can facilitate the development of confident supervisors in that “acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners make learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the apprentice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 110).

The role of CTs, as a legitimate peripheral participants, must be supported and recognised to enhance their potential learning trajectories as competent, confident supervisors. For this to be made possible, Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight three tenets that underpin the successful application of legitimate peripheral participation. Firstly, learners in a community must be engaged in legitimate, authentic practice. Secondly, learners are accepted as legitimate participants by members of a community. Thirdly, and most significantly, learners are initially situated on the periphery of practice and gradually experience a centripetal trajectory to the core of the communities practice. The data shows that while legitimacy is mostly enabled through the relationships developed with PSTs and UTs, the opportunity for CTs to learn the skills of supervision do not occur on the periphery of a community. Each of the constructs of participation, legitimacy and peripherality are addressed in this chapter to challenge Lave and Wenger’s (1991) statement that legitimacy and peripherality are two modifications required to make actual participation in a community possible.

### **9.2.1 Participation**

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe legitimate peripheral participation as a gradual process where newcomers move toward full participation in a community. Full participation for a CT in the school placement process, in an Irish context, is difficult to define as there is no structured supervision role currently in place. The data in this chapter convey that most CTs participate in various forms in the supervision process but the extent of their participation is dependent on a number of factors, including the motivations and personality of the CT, the school environment

and the level of support received from each of the stakeholders involved in the school placement. High levels of intrinsic motivation are required for participation to develop in a community. CTs' participation can also be viewed as being individually driven and to a certain extent based on the relationships enabled within a community. This is supported by Fuller (2005) who stated that the nature and scope of what a full participant constitutes and means will vary according to the structure of relationships within a community. Evidence from the data showed that positive relationships between most CTs and PSTs were encouraged by a higher degree of participation and reification, whereas a lack of CT-UT interaction had the potential to discourage participation. It can be argued that CTs' positioning as legitimate peripheral participants is partly dependent on the actions of both PSTs and UTs and has the capacity to impact CT's learning trajectory. However, Lave and Wenger (1991) state that membership and participation are essential conditions for learning. Therefore, there must be 'buy in' from CTs and they must want to engage in the process to learn. In the current situation in Ireland, how much a CT initiates interaction with PSTs and UTs is solely dependent on the individual, as there is no formal structure in place to 'police' that a CT must actively supervise a PST on a school placement.

Participation and reification were made possible for most of the CTs by being exposed to the three dimensions of a community of practice: mutual engagement, the negotiation of a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. Full participation, for the purpose of this study, was determined by the extent to which each of the CTs engaged with these dimensions and is discussed in the case studies provided in this chapter. Also, full participants were defined as those who had the motivation, professional knowledge and social skills to establish and maintain their positioning in a community. To enable participation on a more formal basis, the CTs were asked to formally structure and reify their supervision of PSTs. This involved requesting that the CT formally observe their PST a minimum of twice a week, deliver both written and verbal feedback, and carry out a weekly target setting meeting.

As previously mentioned in chapter four, Davies (2003) describes three types of membership possible in communities: full, peripheral and marginal participation. Each type of membership is evident to some extent in the data and will be discussed in each of the case studies. Significantly, the data revealed that most CTs are participating in the process of supervision to varying degrees. This can provide an avenue for learning to take place and potential communities to be established.

### **9.2.2 Legitimacy**

For learning trajectories to begin, legitimacy must be granted to have access to the activity of supervision. This is supported by Lambson (2010) who stated that “newcomers must be given enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members of a new community” (p. 1661). As previously discussed, CTs may have experience supervising PSTs, but for the purpose of this study, they are viewed as newcomers to their role as potential legitimate peripheral participants in communities of practice. In an Irish context, the amount of legitimacy afforded to CTs is potentially huge due to the lack of enforcement or monitoring from teacher education institutions. CTs are often treated as potential members and granted legitimacy, regardless of their abilities.

To experience legitimacy, CTs need to be supported and valued by other stakeholders in the school placement process, particularly the PST and the UT. The process of the PST and UT enabling legitimacy, through the development of relationships in communities, was reinforced by Lave and Wenger (1991) who stress that a set of relationships can be developed over time and that, once participation is facilitated, skills and knowledge can be acquired. Relationships, as evidenced in chapter eight, were built around the supervision process allowing participants to experience joint enterprise and evolving identities. The development of relationships between some CTs and PSTs led to the role of the CT evolving throughout the placements. When relationships were facilitated by PSTs, CTs were able to construct identities and participate fully in the various forms of communities created, with the CT-PST dyad being the most prominent. For example, Steven

stated that as his relationship grew with the PST he became more of a facilitator rather than a tutor, taking on much more of an advisory role. He reinforced this in phase five where he described his evolving role as one based on trust and respect that led to “a resource role, mentor role, that whole facilitator role” (interview 1, phase 5). By Steven’s PST acknowledging his supervisory behaviours, it granted him legitimacy and the process of observation and the delivery of feedback served to become opportunities for learning.

Acknowledging that CTs’ legitimacy is partly reliant on the actions of the PST and the UT, it is important to state that CTs must be prepared and supported by the teacher education institution to properly engage legitimacy. To effectively learn the practices of a community, CTs must be provided with what Cuenca (2011) refers to as “tools of the trade” (p. 121). Each CT was provided with a school placement booklet at the beginning of the practicum, which outlined the roles and responsibilities of each of the school placement stakeholders, an overview of the programme, observation and feedback proformas, and the institution’s assessment criteria. The provision of booklets to enhance the school placement experience is widely supported in the literature (Coulon, 1991, Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Moody, 2009, Tannehill and Zakrajsek, 1988, Tercanlioglu, 2004, Tjeerdsma, 1998). With the provision of the booklet, the CTs felt valued by the teacher education institution, it legitimised their positioning in the community and gave them direction when working with the PSTs. Sarah stressed the importance of having communication with the teacher education institution;

It has been really helpful having information from the university, it has clarified our jobs and we now have an idea what the university’s expectations are, this type of communication should be the norm.

(post-SP, phase 2)

By acknowledging the importance of the role of a supervisor and providing the CTs with a template to follow, it can legitimise the CTs’ position in the development of

a community. The legitimate structure encouraged some CTs to readdress their previous supervisory behaviours;

I have been way more hands on than I would usually be. I suppose you are so busy in the job that you go and look in on the lesson for ten minutes and think they [PST] are fine and you head off and do something else, I suppose it made me stay.

(Mark, post-SP, phase 2)

The role of the UT in granting legitimacy was prominent in the data. Seven of the UTs established the CTs as legitimate members of the learning community by allowing them a voice and encouraging them to participate in the evaluation process, thus validating their position. In terms of the evaluation of PSTs, the CTs believed that, as they who saw the PSTs teach on a daily basis, their opinions needed to be respected. Steven elaborated by stating;

I think it is important that the teachers are involved because that background information is important, anybody could have an off day and on the other side anyone can prepare one class and teach it very well. When you are only seen twice it's easy to do a con job on it if the cooperating teacher isn't involved.

(final interview, phase 3)

Caroline's position as a legitimate participant in the supervisory process was cemented by the UT taking on board her comments about the PST's teaching. On the day of the UT visit, the PST's lesson did not go as planned and was in stark contrast to the quality teaching the CT had witnessed during the placement. The UT accepted the CT's opinions and took them into account in his grading of the PST. This level of trust was also evident with Steven, in phase five, resulting in his learning trajectory intensifying. The legitimate participation of the CT established and enhanced the relationship with the UT, leading to the development of a community. This process of the UT engaging with the CT is in line with Thomas (2006) who states that UTs can "establish the novices as legitimate members of the group by allowing them a voice and encouraging them to participate, thus validating their place at the table" (p. 1666).

However, the CTs felt that the grading process did not contribute to their legitimacy due to CTs not having any formal role in the evaluation of a PST. Unlike in other international systems, where the CT has input or control of the grading process, CTs in an Irish context are completely removed from the situation (Moody, 2009, Simpson et al., 2007). The UT takes full responsibility for the grading of the PST on a school placement. The positioning of CTs in the evaluation process was prominent in the data. More often than not, the views and opinions of the CT were not sought regarding the progress of a PST, resulting in the CTs not becoming legitimate members of a CT-UT community. Anna stressed that CTs should have some input in the evaluation process. She suggested that to make the CTs' position legitimate, the UTs should read and acknowledge their observations in the PSTs' files. The fact that the CTs were interacting with the PSTs on a daily basis, observing their classes, seeing changes and improvements and providing regular feedback led Steven to be more critical, pointing to the fact that they have a responsibility to be involved in the PST's evaluation;

If you look at it I will be looking at them teaching four times per week, which would be for a six week teaching practice, that's twenty four lessons whereas the tutor sees them two, do the maths. We are looking for the same things so why not give the CT more input. I would be willing to be involved in the grading process. I think we have to, I think we have a responsibility.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Non-participation in the evaluation process restricted learning opportunities and negatively impacted many of the CTs' learning trajectories. Peter acknowledged that formal CT involvement in the evaluation of a PST would only be successful if CTs had dedicated time to carry out the role and were trained by the teacher education institution to do so effectively. Following their participation in the study, all of the CTs agreed that there should be a degree of assistance and assessment in the supervision of PSTs.

The data highlighted a number of instances where CTs' legitimacy was denied. This mostly occurred where the PST or the UT restricted the development of a relationship or did not acknowledge the role the CTs were attempting to carry out. PSTs not recognising the role of the CT was a source of frustration for six of the CTs and made them question why they carried out the role. In attempting to engage with the PSTs and formally structure the delivery of feedback, Helen and Vicky found their PSTs disinterested;

Interest from the PSTs was lacking. Like you would tell them something, they wouldn't take it on board. I felt like a parrot, saying things over and over again. Interest was the biggest problem that I had with them. It made me feel like my role as a cooperating teacher was redundant at times.

(Helen, interview 3, phase 3)

I just felt that they were dismissive, even in their reactions in receiving the critiques, they weren't taking it on board.

(Vicky, interview 3, phase 3)

This highlights the need for teacher education institutions to prepare PSTs to work effectively with CTs and understand the benefit of establishing learning communities.

For sixteen of the CTs, initial contact with the UTs occurred on the day of the visit. The CTs viewed this as unacceptable and there was a perceived attitude that the UTs only came to the school to meet the PST, assess and leave. The fact that a card was sent in the post to notify the school of the week the UT intended to visit only seemed to strengthen the CTs' opinion that their position was not valued or respected. The role of the teacher education institution was also highlighted as a restrictive element in the CTs attempt to feel legitimate. Although the booklet went some way to establish the role of the CT, the lack of a formal partnership between the school and the institution became a source of frustration;

In trying to make contact with the university we had no way, we had to wait until the next visit and then accost them in the corridor because the tutor still isn't here to speak to us really. It would be great if there was a proper mechanism set up for contact with the university.

(Helen, interview 1, phase 3)

### **9.2.3 Peripherality**

Much of the legitimate peripheral participation literature suggests that members must initially be engaged on the periphery of a community to effectively learn the practices of a community (Chambers and Armour, 2011, Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011, Fuller et al., 2005, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Lambson, 2010, Wenger, 1998). Chambers and Armour (2011) explain the notion of legitimate peripheral participation as the “movement of newcomers from the periphery of the community of practice to become full participants at its amorphous core” (p. 530). This study used Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of learning to analyse PSTs’ positioning as legitimate peripheral participants and how supervision was constructed to allow movement from the periphery of a teaching community to its core. Acknowledging that the notion of legitimate peripheral participation can be applied to learning trajectories of PSTs entering a school on a practicum, it is more difficult to analyse the positioning of a CT in the school placement process. None of the work carried out on legitimate peripheral participation is related to CTs. Where legitimacy and participation have been analysed in relation to the role of the CT above, it is more difficult to apply the notion of peripherality.

The process of legitimate peripheral participation assumes that novices, in this case CTs, begin their learning trajectory by observing community practices from the periphery. Peripherality, for all of the CTs, did not necessarily occur as they were subsumed in the relationship from the moment the PST arrived at the school. CTs are not provided with opportunities to observe from the periphery to gradually increase degrees of responsibility, as the relationship between the CT and the PST starts the day the PST arrives in the school. Although each of the teachers were full

participants in the sphere of teaching physical education and many had previous CT experience, they were very much novices in the role of a supervisor in a learning community. These novices (CTs) participated in the supervisory process, but not from the periphery. Due to the lack of structured support for CTs in an Irish context, their participation became central to the school placement process from the very beginning. As discussed in the previous section, CT's level of participation was based on their intrinsic motivation and their identity within a community. This is supported by Warhurst (2006) who found that two thirds of the lecturers in his study did not experience a gradual trajectory from the periphery to the core of practice; instead they were immediately immersed in intense practice. Warhurst (2006) stressed that sudden immersion may negatively impact learning.

Ideally, CTs should initially acquire peripheral participation in order to learn the skills necessary to supervise a PST, resulting in full participation where the CT can develop and maintain effective relationships with both the PST and the UT. However, the data revealed that while legitimacy and participation were evident, the opportunity to learn on the periphery did not exist. The process of learning became 'all-or-nothing' in supervision; the CTs' participation did not start on the periphery, eventually becoming more centralised as the placement progressed.

Where peripherality existed, in some cases it became disempowering. The CT has no official role in the evaluation of the PST in an Irish context with the UT fully responsible for the grading of a PST on school placement (Chambers and Armour, 2012, Moody, 2009, Wright, 2000). CTs remain on the periphery and, more often than not, their views and opinions on the PST's progress are not sought, inevitably leading to the CT feeling redundant in the process. CTs who are not involved in tutor visits find their role as peripheral participants disempowering, restricting their involvement in learning communities;

We had two students who were very poor and basically tried to explain [to the UT] that they were poor to the point of simple organisation...they ended up getting really good grades...but we had students who were better...who may have been bad on a given day...you end up feeling it's not really fair but that's the way it works.

(Greg, pre-SP, phase 2)

The fact that CTs are central in the supervision process but on the periphery in terms of evaluation frustrated twelve of the eighteen CTs;

I suppose the fact that I have seen her 16 times teaching and the tutor has only seen her twice. I have seen her have a bad class and then fix it for the following week whereas the tutor doesn't see that. I suppose then that the CT should have more input into the process, we should have a role.

(Mark, post-SP, phase 2)

The lack of structure and support to enable CTs to learn the skills of supervision on the periphery was highlighted by the OECD/LDS (2007) report on leadership in Irish schools reporting that “there are no formal structures, arrangements or requirements in relation to teacher observation, coaching or mentoring” (p. 43). The lack of peripherality in this light can emphasise the limits to a CT's learning. Due to CTs not experiencing gradual learning on the periphery, many may revert to previous supervisory experience, as either CT or PST. There is a lack of a supportive, formal structure to encourage CT learning (Bullough and Draper, 2004, Chambers and Armour, 2011, Ganser, 2002, Murphy, 2010).

#### **9.2.4 Legitimate peripherality**

Acknowledging the importance of affording CTs the opportunity to legitimately learn the skills of supervision on the periphery of a community, a collaborative and scaffolded approach to learning was provided in phase four of the study. Throughout the study, fifteen of the eighteen CTs noted that their reluctance to get involved fully in the school placement process was due to a lack of confidence in their supervisory

behaviours and restricted knowledge in the delivery of effective feedback. This was reinforced by a study carried out by Lambson (2010) who identified that giving newcomers the opportunity to participate on the periphery provided them with a safe place to observe, listen to and learn from others, while growing in their experience and understanding of the practices of the community. The process of legitimate peripherality gave them time to gain confidence and participate fully in a community. The role of the facilitator, in Lambson's (2010) study, can be equated to the role of the UTs in phase four in that they "provided specific measures for mediating and scaffolding the learning and participation of the newcomers" (p. 1666).

### **9.2.5 Structuring phase four**

The question of legitimacy was highlighted by the absence of a structured approach to the role of the CT during the tutor visit. Twelve of the CTs felt devalued by the fact that they had no role to play and their opinions were not sought from UTs. It was agreed by most CTs that if they were participating fully in the placement they should be involved in the evaluation process. This was based on the argument that the CTs observed the PSTs teach on a daily basis, observed their failures and successes, and witnessed progression and variety in their teaching. It should be highlighted that five of the eighteen CTs chose to remain on the periphery on the day of the UT visit for a number of reasons. Firstly, some CTs were lacking in confidence in their supervisory techniques and their role in the delivery of effective feedback;

I personally would feel uncomfortable sitting in the debrief for the simple reason that I suppose in the past when I have addressed an issue about the student with the tutor I have done it in confidence. I wouldn't feel comfortable with the student listening.

(Caroline, interview 1, phase 5)

Secondly, four of the CTs worried that their presence in the tutor visit and the comments they made might negatively impact the PST's grade. The CTs were

reluctant to reveal too much information as they did not want to feel responsible for the allocation of a PST's grade;

I am just not sure what my role is as a cooperating teacher, I am not part of the process as such, really, officially do I mention this guy's problems to his tutor and run the risk of him getting a lower grade, I don't know if it is my position.

(Daniel, interview 2, phase 5)

The absence of the CT in the tutor visit was repeatedly highlighted in the first two focus group interviews in phase three. As a result, it was agreed that the CT would sit in the observed lesson with the UT, complete an observation sheet and remain in the post-lesson debrief. Observing on the periphery would then act as a form of standardisation and training for the CT. Redesigning the environment (having the CT observe the UT) allowed the CTs, as newcomers, to legitimately and peripherally participate in authentic situations and 'steal' the knowledge they require to effectively supervise a PST. Helen and Vicky, who had doubts about their delivery of feedback, found the experience to be very beneficial. Vicky and the UT sat down after the lesson and compared critiques and realised that they were picking up on similar points. Vicky acknowledged that this improved her confidence greatly. This backs previous research by Tercanlioglu (2004) who found that initiating the CT into tasks of observation, feedback and assessment alongside UTs led to a greater level of confidence when dealing with PSTs. The success of this collaboration led to the development of CTs being afforded a structured opportunity to learn the skills of supervision from the periphery of a community.

The structure of phase four involved the UT working closely with the CT during four visits over a six week placement. The CT observed the UT carry out post-lesson debriefs in the two official tutor visits, the UT then observed the CT carry out two debriefs and gave feedback to the CT. The process facilitated discussions on the type and level of feedback required and the similarities and differences they encountered. The CT undertook the role of an observer, remaining on the periphery to learn the

process of delivering effective feedback. The four CTs appreciated that they had the opportunity to remain in the class and complete an observation form and then observe how the UT structured a debrief. This form of legitimate peripherality enabled the CTs to remain on the outskirts of a learning community to learn the skills necessary to supervise a PST. The CTs then had the opportunity to lead the lesson observation and debrief in the two unofficial visits, with support from the UTs. This allowed the CTs to gain in confidence resulting in an acceleration of their learning trajectory. Jennifer articulated the benefit she got from working with the UT; “I am learning from your feedback, especially when you were listening to me giving feedback, it helped me concentrate” (Jennifer, interview 2, phase 4). By working closely with the UT, the CTs were given the opportunity to learn the “culture of practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95) and, by extending collaboration with UTs, CTs were provided with an opportunity to make the culture of practice theirs by becoming confident in their role as supervisors.

The process of UTs providing access and accepting the CTs in the routine of delivering feedback provided the feeling of legitimacy. When roles were clarified, as in phase three and four, the CTs became more confident in their supervisory behaviours and welcomed the improved interaction with both the PSTs and the UTs. It was agreed that the interaction with the UTs was very beneficial and a positive learning experience for the CTs, one which would ultimately enhance the PSTs experience on placement. Moody (2009), in her study on key elements in a positive practicum, suggested that for the positive development of a PST’s learning, a culture of mutual observation must be fostered. She stated that “the pre-service teacher needs to see experienced teachers at work and needs to learn how to gain the most from this observation” (p. 168). In the case of this study, the CTs’ potential for learning was improved through engaging in mutual observation with the UT and showed the potential benefits that can be derived experiencing legitimate peripherality.

### **9.3 CTs' learning trajectories**

Each of the teachers experienced various forms of legitimate peripheral participation within the school placement process and, as a result, the CTs' learning trajectories were diverse. CTs' learning did not always follow a positive trajectory, often meeting obstacles, resulting in the participants experiencing both highs and lows during the supervision process. This supports Wenger's (1998) statement that legitimate peripheral participation is not a simple, linear, centripetal process. The following are five vignettes of the CTs' experience of legitimate peripheral participation in the communities they established during a school placement practicum. Each will detail the CTs' learning trajectory, highlighting factors that either supported or hindered them in attempting to learn or improve their supervision skills. The data revealed that each of the five CTs experienced a diverse range of learning experiences.

#### **9.3.1 Daniel: A negative experience**

Daniel teaches in an all boy's urban school in the mid-west region with 600 pupils. He is a full-time physical education teacher with seven years teaching experience. He has supervised PSTs every year since he qualified as a teacher and views himself as being a competent and effective CT. There are three physical education teachers in the department and each play a role in the supervision of PSTs. A year 4 PST was hosted at the school for a period of ten weeks.

Daniel described his approach to supervision as 'hands on' in the first interview. He stated that in the past he had excellent PSTs who came to him for advice throughout the placement. He believed that when they looked for help and he responded it allowed relationships to be established. When asked about his previous role, he commented; "You become very much involved, giving them ideas and giving feedback and I would watch a couple of lessons and give them feedback and take that kind of approach" (interview 1, phase 5). However, in discussing his role further, he also stated;

You can't bombard a guy in his first few weeks of teaching practice, you just have to let them go with it and give them tips here and there, organisational things, things I might have done, but again it's his own teaching practice and he has to learn his way so I can't, I wouldn't like to interfere too much.

(interview 1, phase 5)

It is unclear as to what Daniel understood to be a professional learning community. He stated that the physical education department in the school brought PSTs into their group "because we have a good old laugh together" (interview 1, phase 5). There was no mention of providing a supportive environment for the PST, sharing resources and information or exploiting opportunities for learning. When probed about the possibility of having a role in the evaluation process, Daniel remarked;

Should they observe and give feedback and for it to be counted towards their grade, if so then no problem but you will have to pay me for it. I would think I would have a far better impression of the students than anyone coming out to assess them. At the end of the day a tutor comes two times, classes are prepared twice, they are staged, they are the ultimate classes. I found, especially with a weaker student, the second visit, I made her class for her. Did she get a grade over and above what she was, no doubt. I'm always going to try and look after the student.

(interview 1, phase 5)

In previous supervisory experiences, full participation for Daniel meant providing support, but only when asked. He was clear that he would not give feedback to a PST who did not look for it. Relationships were dependent on the PST's confidence in asking for support. This is in contrast to the reason he gave for becoming a CT. Daniel felt he had a responsibility to help PSTs reach their potential due to having a bad experience on a school placement in the second year of his degree. He had an ineffective CT who was negative in all his feedback and, as a result, he stated that he would "never do that to a student teacher because at the end of the day they are trying, so you got to be positive" (interview 1, phase 5). When asked what made him feel valued and legitimate in his role as a CT, he mentioned the fact that past

students had bought him gifts. The provision of the school placement booklet was not a contributory factor in legitimising his positioning in the supervision process, acknowledging that the booklet had been sent but pointed out that “it was kind of useful but at the end of the day that is me doing work for the lecturer, that’s of no benefit to me” (interview 1, phase 5).

Whilst Daniel believed that UTs should ask and take into account CT’s opinions, he thought that a CT’s role in the evaluation process should be on the periphery. The reasons he gave included the fact that CTs were not trained to effectively grade PSTs and they were not paid to carry out the role. Interestingly, he was also cognisant of the effect it may have on the relationship with the PST following the visits. Daniel stated it was easier for UTs to “come in and lay down the law and walk away” (interview 1, phase 5). However, when questioned about his confidence in becoming involved in the grading process, he acknowledged that he would require training but believed that;

I mean if I’m honest I’m probably more qualified than 70 to 80% of the tutors in [name of institution] to grade teaching practice because there are an awful lot of tutors who haven’t taught. So from a teaching point of view, am I qualified to grade them? I am way more qualified than most.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Daniel stated that previous interactions with UTs had mainly been positive and he was appreciative that they had taken the time to seek his opinion on the PSTs’ progress. Conversely, he noted that the lack of communication with the teacher education institution restricted his role. The interaction between Daniel and the UT was described as “the tutors just come out, assess and leave” (interview 1, phase 5), thus curtailing any possibility for meaningful learning to occur. In discussing his approach to supervising the current PST, he stated that while he would be willing to interact with the PST during the two timetabled double classes, he was limited in his time to offer any additional help due to other teaching and coaching commitments.

By week three of the placement, Daniel had spent limited time with the PST due to the PST only teaching two of his classes. He mentioned that he was not always present in the class, but would be “floating in and out and watching from the balcony” (interview 2, phase 5). Feedback up to this point had been verbal, with no written accounts of the PST’s teaching. When questioned about the development of a relationship, Daniel remarked that he offered help on a number of occasions but PST did not take him up on his offers. The PST not instigating a relationship with Daniel negatively impacted his participation in the school placement process. Daniel did not feel legitimate in the process unless the PST sought his assistance and, as a result, Daniel remained very much on the periphery in the first three weeks. Daniel felt that he was approachable as a CT but the PST seemed to be “going it alone” (interview 2, phase 5) in the learning process. When asked whether he could initiate the development of a relationship to open up learning opportunities for both stakeholders, Daniel replied;

No, I am not in a position to force myself upon him, do you know what I mean? It’s his teaching practice, if he does well it’s on his back, if he doesn’t and decides to go it alone, then fair enough.

(interview 2, phase 5)

Daniel highlighted that the PST was struggling with classroom management issues, especially discipline, but rather than discuss these issues with the PST, he was hoping the UT would bring it up in the first visit. He was hoping that the issues would come up in the post lesson appraisal but the PST taught a very good lesson and the classroom management issues Daniel had noticed were not ‘flagged’. Daniel did not feel in a position to bring this up with the UT as he felt that he was not officially part of the process. This seemed to be the reason as to why Daniel chose to remain on the periphery as he did not feel legitimate in the school placement process. Daniel equated legitimacy with acknowledgement and payment from the teacher training institution.

Daniel discussed, at length, some of the problems he saw in the PST's lessons. He remarked that if a relationship had developed he would have felt in more of a position to help the PST, admitting that, "he needs to be helped by us, but I am not helping him if he doesn't come looking for it" (interview 2, phase 5). Daniel conceded that he should make a more concerted effort to support the PST and stated that he would observe his next lesson and give "proper feedback" (interview 2, phase 5).

Discussing Daniel's interaction with the PST in week seven of a ten week placement, he admitted to only observing him three times in the previous four weeks. The reasons for his increased distance and peripherality were that the PST did not, at any stage, ask for help and his attempts at giving advice (although limited) went largely unimplemented. The issue of legitimacy was brought up again in relation to discussing the PST's teaching with the UT. Daniel stated that it was not his place to "prevent him from getting an A grade" (interview 3, phase 5) as he had no official role as a CT. In week seven, the absence of a community was attributed to the PST's lack of engagement;

I wouldn't even say it was personality, he just doesn't put himself out there. At break-time he goes down to set up a class, we just never see him. I don't think he is socially comfortable around us either, being honest, we can be an intimidating group of lads.

(interview 3, phase 5)

When questioned if there was anything they could do as a department to make the PST feel like part of the department and establish a community, Daniel commented;

Sure, I mean we sat here with him yesterday having the craic, you know what I mean, like we can't do more than that. We are all busy so we sit down and have a laugh, ask how things are going.

(interview 3, phase 5)

When questioned post school placement about his role as a CT, Daniel remarked;

I didn't do a lot to be honest, initially I watched his classes and offered feedback, feedback wasn't really taken on board, and then I left him to his own devices because it was obvious he didn't overly want me in the room.

(final interview, phase 5)

He explained that this was in contrast to the previous year where he felt he had contributed to the PST's development. Daniel attributed the lack of a relationship to the fact that the PST "just wasn't open" (final interview, phase 5). He felt that the PST was given support in the beginning but did not seem to appreciate it. There was also absence of a relationship with the UT, again restricting the development of a professional community. There was no communication or interaction on the day of the UT visits and his opinion was not sought at any stage. Daniel strongly believed that a CT should have a voice but at no time did he attempt to interact with the UT to air his comments. In discussing opportunities for learning, Daniel stated that they were restricted due to "a combination of the fact that the student wasn't interested in getting feedback and a tutor who wasn't interested in communicating with us" (final interview, phase 5).

Daniel did not experience any form of learning throughout the supervision process. The fact that neither the PST nor the CT valued or engaged in developing a working relationship hindered each of the stakeholders' opportunity to learn. A supportive and nurturing environment was not created to allow for legitimate participation and, as such, each of the stakeholders remained on the periphery throughout the ten week placement. Legitimacy, and learning to some extent, did not occur due to Daniel's involvement in the practices of a community not being deemed meaningful to him as an individual.

### **9.3.2 Vicky: Lack of confidence and restricted learning opportunities**

Vicky was a novice to the school placement process in that she had not hosted a PST prior to the study. She was the only physical education teacher in a mixed rural school of 250, in the mid-west region of Ireland. Vicky's reason for participating in the study was to avail of continuous professional development opportunities. She had been teaching for twenty years and felt like she had become 'stuck in a rut' in terms of her teaching and felt very isolated in her role. Two year 2 PSTs completed their school placement at Vicky's school over a six week period.

When asked about her understanding of the role of the CT, Vicky commented that CTs should highlight any problems the PSTs may be having, encourage them and help them with any discipline problems. She also stated that a CT should be in the PSTs' classes at all times. Vicky had no communication with the teacher education institution prior to the placement apart from a letter sent to the principal stating that the school would be hosting two year 2 PSTs. However, the PSTs had contacted the school before the letter arrived at the school which was not appreciated by the principal. Vicky was frustrated with the lack of communication as she was new to the role of supervision and felt like she was being 'thrown in at the deep end' with no support. She found the institution at fault for sending PSTs to a school without any knowledge of the CT's experience. Vicky's unease with the institution was heightened by the PSTs' lack of clarity on the school placement, especially in terms of how many classes they should be teaching. Vicky stated that to make the beginning of the placement more successful and to enable a CT to learn, the institution must provide more clarity in terms of structure and roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Vicky experienced an initial peak in her learning trajectory due to positive interaction with her PSTs. She began observing two classes each week and attempted to timetable a weekly meeting. She found that the PSTs were very responsive to her feedback and implemented suggestions in their classes. However, in terms of feedback, Vicky felt that she was being very critical. Her inexperience in

supervision led to a lack of confidence in her ability to give effective and relevant feedback;

I have enjoyed it but at times I feel very critical, writing the observation form and speaking it through with them, I felt I was being too critical, I thought I was picking on little things.

(interview 2, phase 3)

After the first two weeks, Vicky felt that the PSTs became dismissive of her role and that they stopped implementing her advice. The critical stance Vicky took with her feedback may have been a contributory factor for the PSTs 'pulling away'. Vicky found herself repeating feedback on numerous occasions and felt that she was highlighting the same issues 'week in, week out', issues such as roll taking, pupils taking off shoes and socks for gymnastics and dance, and the need for pupils to remove jewellery. The lack of clarity on the role of the CT led Vicky to feel that she was not in a position to enforce expectations. For example, the PSTs were not staying on the school premises for the entire day but she did not feel like she was in position to tell them to stay. This ambivalence was also hindered by Vicky's own lack of confidence in her supervisory capabilities. In discussing her attempt to deliver feedback and establish a community, Vicky stated; "I initiate it [feedback] all the time, I don't know if they want it. I think if I didn't initiate it they wouldn't be looking for feedback at all" (interview 2, phase 3). Vicky felt like she was just going through the motions of delivering feedback and highlighted her frustration again by commenting;

I felt that week two onwards that they felt like the critiques was something which had to be done but they were like 'just give them to us'. When I went through them, they weren't taking the advice on board.

(interview 3, phase 3)

Vicky's legitimacy in the supervision process was hindered by the lack of access granted by the PSTs. Vicky highlighted that the reason her learning trajectory faltered was due to the fact that "we don't have the relationship to keep it going"

(interview 2, phase 3). Vicky also found that the reluctance of the PSTs in seeking advice on lesson-planning or content knowledge deemed her role invaluable, thus de-motivating her further. As a result, Vicky's observations became less structured and less frequent due to the extent of the PSTs' disengagement with the process. Vicky described the PSTs' attitudes;

I just felt there was no value in what I was doing. It was fine up to week two and once the first visit was over and the heads dropped, their attitude changed and they were dismissive of my critiques after that. I felt they were taking on board what I was saying for the first two weeks, in the end they didn't appreciate the effort I was putting in.

(interview 3, phase 3)

Vicky's inability to establish a community with the PSTs resulted in peripherality. Although she attempted to participate centrally in the supervision process, the PSTs' disregard of her role resulted in a lack of learning opportunities. However, it is also important to note that Vicky's own lack of confidence restricted the development of a community and hindered her own learning. Evidence of her lack of confidence was reflected in the comment; "it frightens me sometimes because I question my own teaching" (Vicky, interview 2, phase 3).

The UT attempted to develop a relationship with Vicky and offered opportunities for learning. The UT invited Vicky to observe the class together and be present in the post-lesson debrief. However, Vicky decided to leave the UT to her own devices during the visits. In the first UT visit, Vicky described her interaction;

I met our tutor and we walked to the hall together, then she went in and I was in and out of the hall. I just left her to it, I didn't want to be talking to her and stopping her from observing. We met at the end but only for a few minutes because I had a class straight afterwards.

(interview 2, phase 3)

The reason for her decision to remain on the periphery was because she commented that she believed the UT was on a different level to her and she would not have been able to notice what she saw as important. In hindsight, Vicky stated that she should have contributed more and suggested that she may get more involved in the second visit. During the second visit, Vicky found herself interacting more with the UT. The UT questioned her about the PSTs' progress and Vicky felt that she took on board her comments; "The tutor involved me as much as she could and she valued what I had to say in terms of what I found over the weeks, which I thought was important" (interview 3, phase 3). Vicky appreciated that the UT had looked through the PSTs' files and read the feedback that she had provided. Providing similar feedback to that of the UT gave Vicky a certain amount of confidence in her ability as a supervisor. Vicky's attitude to involvement in the evaluation process changed significantly during the study to the point that she believed that CTs should have a role in the process, as they saw the day-to-day intricacies of the PSTs' teaching. This change in attitude was largely due to the fact that she would have felt disappointed if the PSTs had received inflated grades based on their teaching of two classes, when they behaved so poorly for the rest of the placement. In describing her supervisory experience Vicky stated;

It was a positive experience for the first two weeks and after that it got more negative, and it got more negative with time as well. Maybe it was a personality clash, I don't know what it was. I enjoyed being involved in it, but negative in terms of their attitudes really, they didn't respect my position enough to take on board what I was saying.

(interview 3, phase 3)

Following a brief positive trajectory at the beginning of the placement, Vicky's experience resulted in a lack of learning. Learning was dependent on the stakeholders being open to learning and granting access to a community. Vicky was motivated to learn but was surprised by the reaction of the PSTs. The PSTs' disengagement led to a breakdown in communication and relationships were not developed. As a result Vicky moved further out on the periphery of the placement and did not play a central role in the supervision of the PSTs. The UT made some

effort to involve Vicky in the process but Vicky's lack of confidence resulted in restricted learning opportunities. Although Vicky had a negative supervisory experience, she did state that she would participate again.

### **9.3.3 Anna: Learning trajectory of peaks (and one trough)**

Anna, who has twenty three years teaching experience, teaches in an all-girls school in the mid-west of Ireland. There are 600 girls in the school and Anna is the only physical education teacher. When asked about supervisory experience, Anna stated that they would always have accommodated PSTs, but it was only three years ago that she started adopting an active role. This included observing the PSTs and delivering both verbal and written feedback. Anna entered the study with a positive attitude and hoped to get support to enhance her learning. She was very open to developing her supervisory skills and welcomed any form of continuous professional development. Anna participated in phases three and five of the study and supervised a year 2 teaching pair and a year 4 and Professional Diploma PST respectively.

Anna's previous experience with PSTs had been very positive which had resulted in her motivated approach to supervision. The reasons she gave for participating fully were the benefits she received in terms of 'stealing knowledge' from the PSTs and that she gets the opportunity to interact and collaborate with physical education colleagues. The interaction was an important aspect for Anna as she was the only physical education teacher in her school. Anna was also motivated by negative school placements she experienced as a student. She was largely left on her own and had to learn from her own mistakes, something she did not want PSTs to experience. Anna strives to create supportive environments with PSTs by establishing effective working relationships. When questioned on how she established these relationships, Anna stated;

I just say to them that I am learning all the time, I'm trying to up skill all the time so I think if they know that we are also trying to develop ourselves all the time that it makes it easier for them to see that I don't think I am a big know all in every area because I am not. Like the student coming in now, she is a gymnastics coach so I mean I am going to be stealing ideas from her and I'm going to be really trying to learn from her so we can all help each other, it's a sharing process.

(interview 1, Phase 5)

Anna's previous interactions with UTs have also been positive. Most UTs made contact with Anna at the beginning of placements with a phone number and email address. The UTs invited Anna to contact them if she had any concerns with the PSTs prior to the first visit. This made Anna feel involved and respected. During UT visits, Anna was provided with opportunities to learn by being invited to stay in both the observed lesson and the post-lesson appraisal. Anna described her previous relationships with UTs;

It's very good, I mean the last few times the tutors have come in we have actually sat in opposite corners and both written up our critiques and compared them after the lesson with the student, so it has actually been very positive.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Anna was very clear that participating in supervision was a learning process for her as a teacher as well as a CT. She commented that she felt fully supported and valued by the teacher education institution in her role as CT. This was cemented by Anna attending a CT information evening at her local education centre, run by members of the physical education department in the institution, prior to phase three of the study and participating in a CT workshop at the institution, also run by the physical education department, prior to phase five of the study. Both initiatives encouraged Anna to participate fully in the supervision process and allowed her to develop a professional identity as a supervisor.

Anna's experiences supervising year 2 PSTs in phase three was very successful. The PSTs' eagerness to develop a relationship provided legitimacy and positively impacted Anna's learning trajectory. Anna found that establishing a community was easily facilitated because "the girls were very open and willing to take what I said on board" (interview 3, phase 3). Anna's role was reinforced through feedback from her PSTs;

My students said they were talking to other students who never saw a PE teacher from the day they went into the school. They were saying how helpful it was to have somebody who is there to give you advice.

(interview 3, phase 3)

Anna highlighted the importance of the development of a community, "I'm the only PE teacher so it has been nice having somebody else to bounce ideas off, to share the tension with" (interview 2, phase 3). Anna's openness with her PSTs and her acknowledgement that supervision can be a two-way learning process helped maintain a close school placement community. Anna's learning trajectory was positively enhanced by the UT during phase three. The UT was very open with Anna and asked her to complete an observation sheet and stay for the post-lesson appraisal;

I met the tutor both times and I sat in on the class with him and we both watched the class. Afterwards I would give him my opinion about different things and he did likewise. I really found it worthwhile listening to how he questioned them and liked the way his questions got them thinking. I think he took on board my advice and really listened to me.

(interview 3, phase 3)

Anna found that she was learning new techniques in the delivery of feedback and how to question the PSTs appropriately. She also valued the UT's insight on the PST's content and learned new progressions in drills and games. The benefit of interacting with the UT was reflected with Anna stating "you do learn from tutors, it is a great learning experience" (interview 3, phase 3). With respect to the evaluation

process, Anna appreciated that the UTs asked her opinions and valued her input but she would not feel comfortable in having a role in the grading process. Anna commented that this was because she was not confident in her knowledge of the teaching criteria and, as a result, found it acceptable to be on the periphery in that respect.

In phase five, Anna's learning trajectory had both peaks and troughs. The community she developed with the year 4 PST and the Professional Diploma PST allowed her to further enhance both her supervisory and teaching skills. However, a negative experience with the UT restricted opportunities for learning and led to Anna feeling disheartened about the whole process. In terms of the CT-PST community, Anna facilitated the PST's learning through providing a supportive environment, observing lessons, giving detailed feedback and meeting on a regular basis to discuss their progress. In return, the PSTs valued her support, actively sought advice and information and shared resources. This led to the process becoming legitimate and multi-directional learning was enabled. Anna's interaction with the PSTs benefited her learning;

I think I gain an awful lot from it, there are lots of new ideas coming out from the college, new ways of teaching, things like Sport Education, I wouldn't have been familiar with. I think I am up-skilling as I am being involved as a cooperating teacher. It has definitely benefited my teaching.

(final interview, phase 5)

Unfortunately, Anna's interactions with the UT in phase five resulted in her becoming disillusioned with the process and led her to question her role. Anna was away at a school match for the first UT visit so did not have the opportunity to meet the UT. In previous years, the UT had initiated contact with an email address or phone number. As there was no form of communication Anna was unable to let the UT know that she would not be available on the day of the visit. On the day of the second UT visit, Anna suggested that she remain in the class and complete an

observation form but this was not acknowledged by the UT. Anna highlighted her frustration by stating;

I suppose I expected the tutor to be aware of the role that I play and I don't think she was because at the end of the lesson she more or less shook my hand, said thank you very much and it was like, that's it I won't see you again and walked off with [name of PST].

(interview 4, phase 5).

Although Anna had been a full participant in the supervisory process, the actions of the UT pushed her to the periphery and denied her legitimacy. In previous years, Anna worked with UTs who respected the role she carried out with the PSTs. One UT provided feedback on the appraisals she was giving the PSTs, thus positively impacting her learning trajectory. This was what Anna expected with this UT but instead she felt "pushed aside" (final interview, phase 5) and made her question the whole point of her role. Anna was adamant that UTs recognise the role that some CTs are carrying out for two reasons: firstly, it benefits the PSTs in that CTs can provide insight into their teaching and their progress, and secondly, it aids the CT's learning and can provide an avenue to CPD.

Anna's role as a legitimate peripheral participant was not a simple linear process. Due to Anna's motivation and disposition, she entered the process as a full participant, displaying confidence in her ability to establish and maintain school placement communities. The quality of relationships developed within the community had a significant bearing on Anna's quality of learning. Her learning trajectory was largely positive due to the close working relationships she initiated with PSTs, whereas the negative interaction with the UT in phase five led to a distinct lack of engagement in the supervisory progress and, by association, learning.

### **9.3.4 Caroline: A growth in confidence**

Caroline is a full-time physical education teacher with twenty three years teaching experience. She teaches in a mixed community school in the west of Ireland with 400 pupils. Caroline's supervisory experience has been inconsistent in the past. She supervised a number of PSTs in a different school over ten years ago. Since then she has only had two PSTs complete a placement at her school, the most recent being the year prior to the study. For the placement in question, Caroline supervised a year 4 PST for a ten week placement.

Generally, Caroline had positive experiences with PSTs where she found many appreciative of the support she gave them. However, the year prior to the study she had a negative supervisory experience with the PST. Instead of dwelling on the negative aspect of the previous relationship, Caroline used her previous experience to aid her learning and approach the study with renewed enthusiasm.

Caroline's previous role as a CT involved allocating the PST a timetable, being on the premises when the PST was teaching and giving advice, although she did allude that she did not observe PSTs on a regular basis or give structured feedback. When asked what she thought the role of an effective CT should entail, she responded by saying that the CT should help the PST in terms of the realities of teaching. However, the examples she provided all related to organisation, changing room and equipment issues and how to deal with pupils who forgot 'gear' (physical education kit). While these are important to the PST, Caroline neglected to mention anything to do with the actual process of teaching and learning. When asked about the process of providing feedback to the PST, Caroline stated;

I am a little uncomfortable with the whole observing thing because I find it very hard to be critical to an adult. I suppose my approach would be to give one bit of bad news and three bits of good news to compensate so I don't know if I do that very well. I tend to tell them all they did very well and I am very slow

to tell them what they did badly. At the same time I would observe them but as I said maybe I know myself that I probably should be a little more critical. I prefer to be the friend and confidante, that role sits better with me but I see that the other one is necessary and needed as well.

(interview 1, phase 5)

This resulted in Caroline remaining on the periphery of a school placement. At the beginning of the study, Caroline recognised that she had not experienced many opportunities to learn the role of an effective supervisor and, as a result, agreed to approach this placement in a more structured fashion. She agreed to formally observe and deliver feedback to the PST a minimum of twice a week and timetable a weekly meeting. Caroline commented that she wished she had used the concept of a weekly meeting the previous year as “more things might have got said” (interview 1, phase 5). The previous year she found herself giving quick and ineffective feedback as a class was finishing and she was rushing off to another class, or delivering feedback in the staffroom which she admitted was not the ideal environment to discuss issues. The fact that Caroline agreed to participate more centrally in the supervision process initiated the positive incline on her learning trajectory.

Caroline was motivated to provide a very supportive environment for her PST. She acknowledged that some teachers in her school timetabled PSTs first class on a Monday morning and last class on a Friday to give themselves time off. The fact that this practice occurred worked to motivate her to lay the foundations of a positive placement;

You know that is one of the reasons I am involved because I would never do that to a student and I'd never give them a very tough class because I have been there myself and I know what it is like.

(interview 1, phase 5)

An openness to learn also motivated Caroline in her role as a CT;

If I get somebody good I can learn an awful lot, as I said I am out of college twenty years so it's from a selfish point of view. I think it's vital to go to in-services but I think it's great to know what the new students have coming out, what the theory is because sometimes I think I am teaching the same way I was teaching 20 years ago.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Initial legitimacy in the school placement was as a result of attending a CT workshop offered by the teacher education institution. It clarified her role as a CT, enabled her to learn how to deliver feedback effectively and gave her an opportunity to interact with other like-minded teachers. This was part of the impetus to reinvigorate her approach to supervision and participate more centrally in the process;

Going down to [name of institution] this time last year, maybe if all that hadn't happened I'd have a different attitude but I feel certainly like I touched base, I felt I knew what was expected. I definitely feel that with [name of institution], probably because of the workshop we are being kept in the loop. I definitely feel like you have touched base with the cooperating teachers and spoke to us about what was expected and I felt I knew more about the process.

(interview 1, phase 5)

In questioning Caroline about her previous interactions with UTs, she commented that collaborative relationships did not exist, therefore, restricting potential learning opportunities;

I suppose there isn't one [relationship] really except the day they come. Last year the tutor did come and did sit down with me for 10-15 minutes and had a chat. The previous time which was 5 years before that it was more sit down and have a cup of tea, we didn't really discuss the student or his ability.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Previously, Caroline never stayed in an observed lesson with a UT or delivered feedback with the PST present. She admitted that it was not because of the presence of any hierarchies in the CT-UT relationship but due to the fact that she felt uncomfortable and lacked confidence in her ability to provide relevant feedback. Caroline also stated that she did not know what her expected role was on the day of the UT visit and she was reluctant to give negative feedback in case it impacted the PST's grade;

I think in the past I didn't do it for fear of the student failing and I think once I get over that and maybe realise that it is the best thing for them. I think I am getting over that and I am getting a little bit tougher. But it is very hard having someone's career in your hands. I think in the past I have had issues with students and I haven't addressed them with tutors but I think in the future I would. I think I am realising now that it is the right thing to do.

(interview 1, phase 5)

During previous school placements, Caroline made the decision to remain on the periphery in many respects. The most obvious was in relation to the evaluation process and the development of relationships with UTs. When asked what would encourage her to get more involved in engaging with the UT, Caroline suggested that if the UT made contact early on in the placement it would open up possibilities for interaction. She noted that if a relationship was there, she would be more inclined to get involved in the visit and give her opinion of the PST's progress.

Requesting that Caroline formalise her approach to supervising a PST provided a form of legitimacy and opened up avenues to establish a community. The provision of a weekly meeting on the timetable enabled Caroline and her PST to establish a joint enterprise, and increased interaction resulted in the development of mutual engagement. The level of interaction between Caroline and the PST was highlighted in the following comment;

The timetabled meeting once a week is working very well. It focuses both of us and because it is on a Friday it is the ideal day to reflect on the week past and to look ahead to what is planned in each class the following week. I don't know why I never did this in the past.

(interview 2, phase 5)

By week four of the placement, Caroline and her PST had developed a close working community based on respect and a mutual desire for learning. The PST was open to creating a relationship, enabling Caroline to feel legitimate in her role. This was reflected in the PST seeking advice, asking Caroline's opinions on lesson plans and valuing the school placement. Caroline attributed the close relationship to the fact they had compatible personalities and each encouraged interaction on a daily basis. Caroline also stated that the information she received at the workshop facilitated the establishment of a relationship;

Doing the co-operating teacher workshop has enhanced my understanding of my role to a great extent. Prior to this I would not have understood the importance of the role of the co-operating teacher and I feel I have more confidence now in giving feedback or recommending the student observes me. Offers in the past have now become recommendations and/or expectations of the co-operating teacher.

(interview 2, phase 5)

This reflected Caroline's growing confidence in her ability to be an effective supervisor, positively impacting her learning trajectory. This growth in confidence also led to Caroline commenting that she would like to speak to the UT when he visited as she felt she could give him a greater insight into the PST's progress. Her enhanced belief in her ability was facilitated by both her renewed approach to the placement and the PST granting her access to a community.

The degree of legitimacy granted to Caroline was evident in the flourishing relationship with her PST. Caroline, no longer on the periphery of the supervision

process, was playing a central role in the community. Her full participation facilitated learning for both stakeholders and multi-directional learning became evident;

I would say that he has turned into a colleague, almost now I could nearly see myself working with him. As much as I was expecting more of a teacher role but I think he is very good and he has great ideas himself so I am learning from him just as much as he is from me. He is very open to accepting any sort of advice.

(interview 3, phase 5)

The process of the PST accepting advice from Caroline made her feel valued in the community and motivated her further to develop the relationship. The multi-directional learning became a focus of the relationship and was enabled by the fact that both were open to learning from each other. Caroline gave an example of the exchange of information where the PST introduced her to the Sport Education curriculum and instructional model and Caroline provided a variety of ways to teach health related fitness. Again, this transfer of knowledge and an openness to share positively impacted her learning trajectory. A further example of Caroline's motivation to provide a supportive environment extended to supplying her PST with a protocol when he arrived at the school. Caroline wanted the PST to feel welcome in the school community and show that she was interested in establishing a community;

Another thing I did this year which I hadn't done last year was I typed up a sheet on protocol for classes and what our expectations are and again last year I hadn't done that so I just gave it to [the PST] when he came out on his visit. I had 'this is what we do at the start of class, this is how much time they get to change, this is where they leave their jewellery', things you assume they know because you have been doing them forever, you assume everyone else knows them.

(interview 3, phase 5)

Caroline's positive learning trajectory was reflected in her interactions with the PST. In previous years, Caroline had admitted to doing a lot of the disciplining of pupils,

taking control of the register at the beginning of class and supervising pupils with no gear. However, this year she took a step back to allow the PST to develop his own way of doing things and experience the reality of teaching. Caroline admitted that it was difficult to let go of that power but appreciated that the PST needed space to develop his own teaching style. As a result, she felt that the PST benefitted greatly from the learning opportunities provided and led to her role becoming more about guiding than directing.

In terms of peripherality, Caroline acknowledged that she remained on the fringe with regards to the evaluation process and recognised that there was a lack of interaction with the UT on both visits;

I know there is something I haven't done which is when the tutor came, you asked me before do I sit in and when the tutor came this time, he came and he was leaving very soon afterwards, he had limited time with [the PST] and I felt a little bit uncomfortable sitting in so I didn't. That is one area that I would find difficult is when the tutor is there, I would more or less let him at it. I feel comfortable sitting with the tutor one-on-one but I would find it very hard to go in and sit and watch the lesson and then give feedback as well, I didn't do that on this visit.

(interview 3, phase 5)

Caroline went on to explain that being on the periphery in the evaluation process is not disempowering as a CT. She believed that a UT should seek the CT's opinion of the PST but did not feel qualified to play a central role in the process. Caroline, in this situation, chose to remain on the periphery due to a lack of confidence and the fact that there is no official role for the CT in the evaluation process.

An important factor which impacted upon Caroline's learning trajectory and cemented her legitimacy was the response from other members of staff in the school. She had discussed her renewed approach to supervision in the staffroom on a

number of occasions and as a result other teachers began structuring their supervision of the PSTs;

I have mentioned to some of the other teachers what I am doing with [PST] and having the meeting and observing his teaching and giving him feedback and other teachers have now taken that on where it wouldn't be expected from other institutions, one maths teacher has taken on a mentoring role and I know the Home Economics department are getting somebody in and they said to me that it was a great idea, you know sitting down with them once week and they are going to try it this year. Like I actually find that it is nearly spreading and I was saying how I sit in on his classes and they ask 'Are you really sitting in on his classes?' and I say 'Yeah' and they asked whether he minded and I said because the expectation is there, a lot of teachers have said it is a great idea.

(interview 3, phase 5)

Legitimacy was also granted by Caroline's principal in that he acknowledged and supported her role, again making her feel valued and respected. The principal publically welcomed the PST at the beginning of the placement, met with him to discuss his progress and regularly discussed the PST's teaching with Caroline. The principal also thanked the PST and Caroline in the staffroom at the end of the ten weeks. This not only legitimised the work Caroline was doing with the PST but also granted the PST access to the school community. The acknowledgement from both the principal and the staff encouraged Caroline in her role and gave her the drive to further improve the PST experience at her school;

I think it is all about expectations at the beginning and setting your stall. This year I had the protocol for classes typed out ready and that was a big thing and next year I think when they come out on their preliminary visit I will tell them what I expect in terms of me observing and them observing me.

(interview 3, interview 5)

Caroline's motivation to improve and learn the skills of an effective supervisor culminated in producing a questionnaire at the end of the placement for the PST to

complete. The questions centred on what the PST thought the role of the CT should be and what he thought of the role Caroline carried out. She wanted his perspective on the process with the aim to use the PST's suggestions to impact future practice. This act reflected a peak in her learning, emphasising the strides she had made in developing her confidence. Additional evidence of her learning was the success of the community she developed with the PST. Caroline acknowledged this by commenting that whereas she gave him a lot of tips and advice, she would not necessarily have done so in the past. The relationship was very dependent on the openness and professionalism of the PST;

I was saying to you the last time that we were developing more of a, just because of the student, it was becoming more like a colleague as opposed to student/advisor role but I think that is hugely unusual when every member of staff and even the principal has said he is the best we have got across the board in the last year from every college, he has been way out there.

(final interview, phase 5)

Reflecting on her involvement with the UT, Caroline remarked that the UT did not provide learning opportunities in that she was not invited to remain in the observed lesson or debrief in either of the visits. She did, however, show some progress in that she attempted to interact with the UT during the second visit;

In previous years I have been slow to say things in case they end up failing. Even in the very brief time I met the tutor this year I had a very good chat with him and felt I could say how good [the PST] was getting on and I think that is important.

(final interview, phase 5)

However, during the same interview she stated that “a lot of the time he was looking at our facilities, commenting on them, that kind of thing” (final interview, phase 5). This highlights the need for the teacher education institution to properly prepare UTs to interact effectively with CTs to provide opportunities for learning.

The difference in the role Caroline previously carried out as a CT was in contrast to her current role. She progressed from providing a timetable and some help to developing a solid, constructive community with the PST which led to significant learning for both stakeholders. Caroline admitted that having a good PST who enabled legitimacy led to an improvement in her learning. She noted that if she had a disengaged PST she would find it much more challenging. Caroline's dispositions and motivations enabled her to gain as much as possible from the supervisory experience; as a result, her full participation resulted in a positive learning trajectory.

### **9.3.5 Steven: An empowering experience**

Steven participated in three phases of the study and as a result, rich data were collected and analysed. Steven works in an all-boys school in the mid-west of Ireland. The school has 430 students and two full-time physical education teachers. Steven has twenty years teaching experience and has been a CT for the past nine years. Across the three phases, Steven supervised both year 2 and year 4 PSTs.

His experience with PSTs has mainly been positive and he is very motivated to provide an educational and supportive environment during school placements. As a result of previous successful experiences with PSTs, Steven viewed himself as competent in the role of supervisor. In his interactions with PSTs he developed an identity as a facilitator and his learning trajectory was mainly consistent. He experienced a number of peaks when he was afforded access to communities provided by PSTs and UTs, thus enabling him to become a more effective supervisor.

Steven was motivated in his role for a number of reasons. He received help and support when he was a PST and as a result he wanted to provide similar positive experiences for PSTs. He also stated that it was an important role and should be incumbent to the teaching profession. Steven maintained throughout the three phases

that whilst he was motivated to influence a PST's learning, he also enjoyed the feeling of being valued;

It's gratifying in lots of ways, it is, and there are all sorts of things. It is a nice feeling helping someone, it is great to see them improve, when they come and ask you for advice, that's gratifying. If you see what you are giving, the information you are imparting used then it is even better. I enjoy it.

(final interview, phase 5)

Steven's approach to the school placement in each of the phases enabled the development of a number of communities. Steven's strength was in his professional, yet caring, manner with the PSTs. He made it clear that he was there to support them and that he was open to developing a strong working relationship to enhance the school placement experience. He articulated his opinion of relationships as;

there is a relationship, if that ends up being friends, so be it but it has to be a professional relationship where if I were to come to you and say that was absolutely superb and sit down over a cup of coffee and say that was brilliant that should be done. But there is also the case where you have to say 'you aren't dressed appropriately, or 'your language wasn't acceptable, or 'the way you dealt with that situation wasn't acceptable'. There has to be both ways, it's a hard one, my role is as a mentor, facilitator they are good words.

(interview 1, phase 3)

Previous to this study, his approach did not always work and some PSTs did not engage or interact. However, Steven's attempt to establish a community in each of the phases was successful and led to each of the PSTs engaging in the relationship, thus legitimising the process. The relationships reflected some of the characteristics required for a community to be established and maintained. These included the PSTs observing Steven's classes, team-teaching, and working together to solve problems and the constant exchange of information. The increased level of interaction between both stakeholders was new to Steven in phase two;

It definitely wasn't the same as every other time, this time there was more interaction between the student and I and the student and John [other physical education teacher] because there was that notion that the interaction was working, that the interaction was being sought after, he wanted to learn, he wanted to find out how can I do this better, can I do this better, different methods of doing something. He sought information from us and we gladly gave it to him and if we didn't know we would try and find out.

(post-SP, phase 2)

This level of mutual engagement served to enhance Steven's learning trajectory in that he looked for new ways to improve PST's supervisory experiences. Both Steven and the other physical education teacher in the school became central to the PST's development, with the PST readily interacting and granting them increased access to an evolving community. This learning was reinforced when Steven witnessed the PST progressing as a result of his input and this, consequently, strengthened his legitimacy in the process;

When you see something working that you're actually trying to get someone to do, it's a little surreal when it works so well from one teacher to another and you see that being passed on 3rd hand. Problems no, benefits, it was very pleasing to see how the student progressed with our help and with his own hard work.

(post-SP, phase 2)

At no point did Steven view himself on the periphery of a community. He ensured he was very much part of the process and central to the PST's development. This was mainly due to his confidence in his ability as a supervisor, although he had never received any form of training prior to this study. As part of the study, he was asked to formally structure his approach to supervision to aid both his and the PST's learning. However, as he was already carrying out a substantial supervisory role, his learning trajectory, in particular, did not alter significantly. When Steven's learning trajectory did experience peaks, it was when he developed a shared repertoire with the PST and multi-directional learning occurred. Steven emphasised the benefit to his learning as;

We see new things, every now and then you see something, that's what I love about it, you might get somebody in from a different sporting background, and you might get somebody in who is trying something new and sit back and say I haven't seen that before, fantastic.

(pre-SP, phase 2)

Furthermore, Steven explained the benefit of the sharing of expertise on the development of a community, which was extended to include the other physical education teacher in the department;

The amount of times [name of other PE teacher], the student and I were in here just talking about what we had seen during the week, what he had seen and again he would ask the questions 'What do you do?', 'Where do you find this information?', 'Where did you get that idea from?'. I suppose like old timers we would be telling him I saw this some place, or I thought about this or I saw somebody in Gaelic football do this and I thought it would work for basketball. It turned into sharing stories really.

(post-SP, phase 2)

The extent of the legitimacy granted by the PST, to enable learning to take place, was at its strongest in phase five; "I find that [name of PST] now instead of me instigating meetings, that [name of PST] will come and talk about a particular issue, which is great" (interview 3, phase 5) and "that is why it is so gratifying for [name of other PE teacher] and I, we see things that we are suggesting being used and working" (interview 4, phase 5). Steven's PST in phase five was an accomplished basketball player and coach and the PST's acknowledgement of what Steven was doing in his classes was the greatest source of legitimacy; "It's funny, some of the exercises that I was doing for basketball, he actually put into his lesson, basketball wouldn't be one of my strong things, so that was interesting" (interview 2, phase 5).

Steven's previous experience of the evaluation process with a year 4 PST had been negative as he felt he was very much left on the periphery;

I was very annoyed recently, we had a student and just not at the standard we would hope after four years yet he qualified and off he went. At that point I was ignored, I was mad, both John and I were angry. It wasn't right, our student went backwards when he was here. We found ourselves nearly commandeering lessons. Whatever about being poor, he was border-line unsafe.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Steven stated that being on the periphery, in terms of the evaluation process, was a barrier to learning. In the past he often got frustrated when his opinion was not sought or, when offered, ignored. Steven highlighted the fact that he saw the PST progress, improve and learn over a six or ten week placement whereas a UT only observes the PST twice. As a result, in each of the phases, Steven attempted to involve himself more in the evaluation process and lessen the divide between the periphery and the core. He did this to enhance his own knowledge and present a clearer picture of the PST's development. In phase two, the UT did not invite him to stay in the observed lesson, but his opinion was sought. However, in phase three, he stayed and observed the lesson with the UT and had an opportunity to compare feedback following the lesson. Steven stated that their feedback was quite similar, reinforcing his ability as a supervisor and giving him an impetus to continue. The fact that the UT took the time to invite him to stay in the lesson and go through feedback at the end made Steven feel valued and resulted in the UT enabling legitimacy. This was reinforced by the UT in phase five who interacted with Steven and encouraged him to get involved in the evaluation; "I thought she was real, realistic, I thought she was very supportive of the student, very interested in what I had to say, I thought she was great. It was a very open relationship" (final interview, phase 5). In this case, through shared observations and post lesson debriefs, the UT made Steven's learning experience an empowering one by opening up access to the evaluation process. Steven felt that he had developed a joint enterprise with the UT as they were working towards the same goal of supporting the PST. He emphasised his role in the UT visit again by stating;

I seem to be included in everything. I will sit down and discuss, first of all how things have gone so far and give some insights. I stay for the class and make a few observations, share some comments. Generally I have been asked for my opinion and I have been asked to sit in on the post lesson appraisal which is great. I have a voice in that conversation, encouraged by the tutor.

(interview 1, phase 5)

Although Steven felt involved in the UT's visits, and learning opportunities were provided through interaction, he was aware that the ultimate grading decision rests with the UT. This form of peripherality frustrated Steven and he acknowledged that this form of peripherality will continue as long there is no formal structure in place for CTs in the supervision process. Another point of frustration emerged when he emphasised the issue of time and logistics for the development of a community to include the CT, the PST and the UT to enhance each other's learning;

To get the cooperating teacher working with the pre-service teacher and the university tutor is going to take time that isn't there, the system is flawed. Where are we going to create a situation where three people are going to be able to sit down and discuss, I don't know how that is going to happen because it won't happen in school time, and not outside school because the chance of all three being free are slim.

(final interview, phase 5)

Steven was very proactive in his role as a CT and took time to support and nurture PSTs on placement at his school. Steven was a full participant, as referred to above, in that he had the motivation, the professional teaching skills and social skills to establish and maintain his positioning in the communities created. Whilst his learning trajectory remained mainly consistent, he experienced a number of peaks due to the opening of practices by PSTs and UTs. This access to resources made Steven's practices legitimate and allowed him to learn new skills to add to his repertoire. Although Steven participated at the core of the school placement process

in many respects, he realised that peripherality in the evaluation process could restrict learning opportunities for CTs.

## **9.4 Conclusion**

Within this cohort of Irish physical education CTs, the data revealed two important influences on their decision to become active supervisors to PSTs on a school placement. Firstly, the experience enabled the CTs to become “agents of change” as their ability to deliver effective feedback positively impacted on their PSTs’ development. Secondly, they acknowledged the potential impact participation could have on their own professional development, as both physical education teachers and supervisors. Significantly, there are CTs who are willing to support PSTs on placement and develop effective and sustainable relationships to benefit both their professional learning. The data revealed that the CTs’ motivations were not driven by financial or extrinsic rewards but that they found the role both professionally and personally fulfilling with the potential to have a positive impact on their learning.

The aim of this chapter was to examine the extent of CTs’ learning trajectories as they attempted to structure their approach in the supervision of PSTs. The possibility of CTs experiencing legitimate peripheral participation to support their learning was also addressed. The data revealed that full participation in a community does not necessarily require peripherality as suggested in the literature (Fuller et al., 2005, Lambson, 2010, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998). Legitimacy was required to grant CTs access to a community to enable them to carry out their role effectively. Learning on the periphery was difficult due to the absence of a structured, supportive role for the development of competent CTs. Learning was enabled by a number of factors including the positive motivations and dispositions of the majority of the CTs, past supervisory experiences and the level of support received from PSTs and UTs. Many relationships facilitated learning through the CT being open to learning from PSTs and acknowledging the benefit of multi-directional learning. The main factors which inhibited CTs’ progress were the absence of communication with the teacher education institution, the lack of collaboration with UTs, no formal

involvement in the evaluation process and disengaged PSTs and CTs' perceived lack of confidence in their supervisory capabilities. When these were experienced, CTs' learning trajectories were negatively affected.

The learning experienced by many of the CTs in this study was mainly as a direct result of their high levels of intrinsic motivation to become effective supervisors and full members of a community. However, the possibility of CTs becoming legitimate peripheral participants in professional learning communities will continue to be restricted by the lack of communication between the university and the school, the absence of clarity in each of the stakeholder's roles and the fact that CTs are not acknowledged for the role they play in the supervision of PSTs. The next chapter outlines recommendations based on the findings presented in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 in light of the aim of the study.

# Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations

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## 10.1 Introduction

Given the complexities of learning to teach, preparing cooperating teachers, not merely using them, seems like a worthwhile strategy to advance the quality of teacher education and the overall student experience.

(Cuenca, 2011, p. 126)

The above quotation illustrates one of the most critical issues in teacher education in Ireland, that is, the practice of ‘using’ CTs rather than preparing and supporting them in their quest to be effective supervisors to PSTs on school placements. Supportive of challenging this practice, the main aim of this study was to examine the learning trajectories of Irish CTs when supervising PSTs on school placements. How a CT learns to become an effective supervisor to improve the school-based experience of a PST is recognised as an under researched area in the literature (Graves, 2010, Gursoy and Damar, 2011, Russell and Russell, 2011, Wang and Ha, 2012). If the “relationship between the cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher is at the heart of every practicum” (Graves, 2010, p. 15), then it is time for teacher education institutions to recognise the importance and urgency in providing structured CPD opportunities to enable CTs to establish and nurture school placement relationships. In addressing the study’s aim, a number of research questions were formulated to investigate CTs’ learning trajectories, examine the involvement of relationships and communities, and identify what support and provision CTs require to develop into confident, competent supervisors in a school placement triad (i.e., PST, CT and UT). This chapter offers a brief synopsis of each of the research questions and provides an overview of recommendations, based on the outcomes of the study, for the future development of CTs in a supervisory role.

## 10.2 Thesis synopsis

In a bid to establish the effectiveness of the current supervisory system, a reflective journal was kept to gain information and insight into the triadic structure in Irish post-primary schools. Issues relating to the role of the CT were analysed by observing the relationships between CTs, PSTs and UTs during a ten-week year 4 school placement and a six week year 2 school placement. Observations informed subsequent phases of the study to address three research questions.

*Research question one: What are physical education cooperating teachers' perceptions and responses to the role of supervision?*

The data presented CTs' positive perceptions of their role in supervising PSTs on school placements and highlighted the extent to which some CTs attempt to provide educational and supportive environments. Many CTs acknowledged the importance of the supervisory role and were proactive in searching for ways to enhance their learning trajectories to become effective supervisors. The CTs described the professional benefits of being involved in the supervisory process as providing them with exposure to a diverse range of teaching styles, leading them to become more reflective about their own teaching and providing a form of CPD each year. In line with findings in the literature, CTs also highlighted the benefit of two-way learning in terms of sharing new activities, teaching strategies, curriculum and instructional models and schemes of work with the PST (Beck and Kosnik, 2000, Hynes-Dusal, 1999, Sinclair et al., 2006). A number of recommendations were made by the CTs to enhance and develop the role of the CT and the most prominent was the need for teacher education institutions to formally recognise the role of the CT. Significantly, the study recognised that most CTs were willing to engage in professional learning opportunities to enhance their role, with barriers such as time and location being seen as surmountable. Most CTs were willing to attend courses if they were valuable and if they were interested in interacting with other physical education teachers.

CTs referred to the lack of school-university partnership as one of the main restricting factors in their development as CTs, hindering the establishment of

productive, professional triadic relationships. Moody (2009) in her study on the key elements in a positive practicum, found that the supervising teacher was the main reason for the practicum being perceived as either a positive or negative experience. The findings reinforce the role of the CT as one that is complex and demanding and requires attention from teacher education institutions and more importantly the Teaching Council. The CTs in this study experienced a range of positive and negative interactions with PSTs and UTs. What is significant is that the data revealed the possibilities in developing effective collaborative relationships between CTs and PSTs. It is time for teacher education institutions to recognise the potential of school-based supervisors and the role they can play in the learning experiences of PSTs. Importantly, Moody (2009) proposes that “professional development will be required so that teachers can fulfil the complex role of the mentor, and move away from what is seen as their current relatively challenge-free role in their relationships with students” (p. 169).

*Research question two: What are physical education cooperating teachers’ intended and actual enactments of communities in school placements?*

Ganser (2002) recommends that “with support from educational leaders, schools as sites for student teaching and mentoring can be transformed into professional learning communities” (p. 385). The data revealed that the development of professional learning communities, or in the case of this study, ‘dyads’ (Murphy, 2010, Veal and Rikard, 1998) or ‘micro-communities’ (Patton et al., 2005), can be attained in an Irish context. There are CTs who are willing to support PSTs on placement and develop effective and sustainable relationships to benefit both their professional learning. Support from teacher education institutions and the Teaching Council can promote and facilitate the development of structured relationships. This study supports Ganser’s (2002) findings that CTs’ motivation is not necessarily driven by financial, extrinsic rewards but that they find the role of the CT professionally and personally fulfilling which, in turn, can have a positive effect on their teaching careers.

The CTs state that clear roles and responsibilities need to be disseminated to all members of the school placement process and that these roles need to be recognised and supported. The three main factors that inhibited the development of successful supervisory communities were unprepared PSTs, limited time to carry out the supervisory role and the lack of supervisory CPD. The CTs suggested that the role of a supervisor can be strengthened in a community by the provision of time, effective training and opportunities to interact with other CTs.

The data conveys that functioning learning communities which involve CTs and UTs do not exist. The school placement process lacks an infrastructure which supports change, exchange of knowledge and expertise and few opportunities for stakeholders to work together. However, certain practices undertaken in this research serve as a useful guide and reminder that CTs can gain the skills and knowledge to serve as change agents in the supervisory process. To do this effectively, CTs need to be supported and trained by the teacher education institution.

*Research question three: To what extent is a cooperating teacher's learning facilitated and supported in their role as supervisor?*

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation in various community structures was addressed in chapter nine to examine the learning trajectories of Irish CTs and the possibilities for learning provided. The mapping and development of CTs' learning was used to identify how their experiences as legitimate peripheral participants can inform what support and training is necessary for them to become effective, confident and competent CTs in functioning learning communities. The constructs of participation, legitimacy and peripherality were addressed to challenge Lave and Wenger's (1991) statement that legitimacy and peripherality are two modifications required to make actual participation in a community possible. The data conveyed that CTs can fashion their own definition of full participation because of the ambiguous nature of their role. The extent of CTs' participation was dependent on a number of factors including the motivations and personality of the

CT, the school environment and the level of support received from each of the stakeholders involved in the school placement. Participation was also made possible for most CTs by being exposed to the three dimensions of a community of practice, i.e., mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire.

Key findings conveyed that the amount of legitimacy afforded to Irish CTs is potentially significant due to the lack of enforcement or overseeing of supervision from teacher education institutions. The levels of legitimacy granted to CTs were dependent on how PSTs and UTs valued and supported them. CTs experienced positive learning trajectories when PSTs facilitated the development of relationships by affording the CT legitimacy. As a result, a number of CTs were able to construct identities and participate fully in various forms of communities created, with the CT-PST dyad being the most prominent. In these cases, the relationships were reciprocal and mutual for most participants, learning from, and with, each other. The data also highlighted a number of instances where CTs' legitimacy was denied, thus restricting their ability to learn to become effective supervisors. This highlights the need for teacher education institutions to prepare PSTs and UTs to work effectively with CTs and understand the benefit of establishing learning communities. The data highlighted that CTs were not initially engaged on the periphery of a community to learn the practices of a supervisor. This challenges much of the literature on legitimate peripheral participation which states that newcomers must start on the periphery of a community if they are to become full participants (Chambers and Armour, 2011, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Lambson, 2010). Most CTs participated in the supervisory process, but not from the periphery. Due to the lack of structured support for CTs in an Irish context, their participation became central to the school placement process from the very beginning.

Findings of this study suggest that CTs' learning trajectories were diverse with each of the CTs experiencing various forms of legitimate peripheral participation within the school placement process. Five mini case studies were presented highlighting factors that either supported or hindered CTs in attempting to learn or improve their supervision skills. The five examples included a spectrum of learning trajectories experienced by each of the CTs. Ultimately, there is evidence in the study that the

concept of legitimate peripheral participation can aid the development of a supervision model in an Irish context as school placements have the potential to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers.

### **10.3 Recommendations for future practice**

The aspiration of effective supervisors and genuine collaboration between the school and teacher education institution can only be achieved when all stakeholders are fully involved in its development. To support this Moody (2009) stated;

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the need for further communication between the university and schools, to clarify roles and expectations for all stakeholders and to make supervising teachers aware of the goals of the university programme.

(p. 166)

Traditionally, in an Irish context, CTs have been left to their own devices so the concept of communities and partnerships are difficult. The CTs in this study suggested a number of ways forward for the development of the role of the CT and the development of learning communities. The CTs suggested that the teacher education institution should attempt to use only *schools which have proven to provide positive experiences for PSTs*. To enhance a PST's school placement experience, CTs agreed that where possible an *official CT should be nominated* in each school to act as the main facilitator. This would streamline the process and allow the teacher education institution to establish direct links with the school. To strengthen the establishment of partnerships, Steven recommended *that CTs be utilised in the delivery of modules* at the teacher education institution, particularly applied practical areas.

John suggested that having *accreditation as an incentive* may attract more teachers to become trained as CTs. Some CTs mentioned the possibility of *having concessionary time* to carry out the role of the CT effectively, or similarly, by

attending courses, have time off in lieu. What was interesting was the fact that those teachers most reluctant to attend CPD were those who had the most teaching experience and seemed a little despondent towards attending any type of CPD. The younger teachers were more than willing to attend CPD and saw it as a way of enhancing both their role as a CT and as a teacher.

The CTs suggested that for a true collaboration to occur the teacher education institution must *acknowledge and recognise the work they are doing with the PSTs*. Conway *et al* (2011), in the 'Learning to Teach Study', found that there is insufficient recognition and support at system level for the role that teachers and schools play in initial teacher education. None of the CTs in the study had previously been acknowledged for the work they carried out with PSTs.

The ability of all stakeholders to establish communities was highlighted as an urgent area for development. There was agreement that there was a need to *educate PSTs on the potential benefits of forming relationships with CTs*. CTs found that many PSTs believed they did not need to be observed on a regular basis, believing that a CT's presence in a class could have a detrimental effect on pupils' application within a lesson. This suggests that the teacher education institution must engage with CTs and schools on how best to prepare PSTs for school placements. PSTs must be aware of the role of the CT, value their positioning, learn to accept feedback and, more importantly, act upon it. It is up to the teacher education institution to instil professional values in PSTs and educate them on how to initiate and sustain effective, professional relationships with CTs.

To further enhance the potential of developing relationships, the CTs recommended that more *opportunities are provided for interaction between the CT and the PST*. One suggestion included the PST visiting the school for one to *two days orientation* prior to the beginning of the placement. This would provide time for an initial meeting to communicate expectations, clarify the PST's timetable and explain school policies and procedures. The PST would have the opportunity to shadow the

CT and gain valuable orientation time in the wider school community. Another suggestion involved the possibility of the *CT and PST team-teaching* in the initial week of the placement, allowing the establishment of a community. CTs also recommended that the *PSTs observe a range of CTs on a regular basis* throughout the placement to view a range of teaching strategies and approaches. The CTs discussed the potential benefits of having the responsibility of creating PST's timetables, with the intention to remove some barriers which inhibit participation in a CT-PST community and create openings for communities to develop.

In determining the most effective way of enhancing a CT's learning trajectory, CT feedback suggested the *establishment of CT-UT communities*. A valuable relationship could provide cost-effective CPD opportunities for CTs to become confident supervisors by providing opportunities to observe and comment on teaching episodes during UT visits, become familiar with the institution's observation criteria and experience the structure of a post-lesson appraisal. The general consensus was that *UTs should attempt to make contact with the CT prior to the placement* to make initial introductions and maintain contact throughout the placement as this would initiate the development of a working relationship. This would open the channel of communication between the two stakeholders and help develop a culture of support.

#### **10.4 A way forward?**

It is important to acknowledge that increasing work is being carried out in Ireland, at both institution and national level, to enhance and improve approaches to supervision and mentoring in teacher education. Recent reports commissioned by the Teaching Council, in relation to initial teacher education, and the publication of an international review on the structure of initial teacher education in Ireland, signifies that those in power are cognisant of the need to address issues relating to the development of initial teacher education in Ireland. The International Review, led by Pasi Sahlberg and conducted on behalf of the DES, has recommended that six new institutes for education be established to replace the nineteen state funded

colleges currently delivering 40 programmes in primary and post-primary teaching. The review's vision is to transform initial teacher education with fewer colleges, a sharper research focus and more modern governance structures, and ultimately, "by 2030 Ireland will have a network of teacher education institutions based on a small number of internationally comparable institutes of teacher education" (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 24). Significantly, the review discusses the importance of school-university partnerships and the role of the CT in the delivery of effective teacher education. A specific recommendation states the need to develop close and systematic engagement with schools and goes on to acknowledge the important contribution experienced teachers make to the professional learning of new teachers. The review acknowledges initial advancements made by some teacher education institutions in the development of mentoring and supervision arrangements for PSTs. However, for further advancements to occur, the review states that for partnerships to be effective, they must involve shared responsibility between the school and the university in the assessment of PST competence (p. 22).

These recommendations are positive for the future of initial teacher education as the review, along with the Teaching Council documents, pave the way for teacher education institutions and schools to develop partnerships "extending beyond initial teacher education to continuous professional development and shared research agendas" (Sahlberg, 2012, p.23). The possibility of centralising initial teacher education into six institutions, with central governance structures, has the potential to streamline developments in the establishment of the role of the CT in the school placement process, particularly as the development of mentoring has been highlighted by the review process. The Teaching Council is in the process of drafting a school placement document which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders involved in the supervision of PSTs. The aim is to encourage schools to develop structured systems of supervision in collaboration with teacher education institutions, thus allowing schools to provide support in relation to the context in which they work.

However, as yet, there is no official framework in place for aspiring CTs to work to and, as such, many proactive CTs work autonomously from the teacher education institutions. A number of implications for future work on supervision are presented, informed by what CTs shared and requested.

1. There is a need for teacher education institutions to clearly define and communicate the roles and expectations of all stakeholders in the school placement triad. Many CTs strive to provide a positive school experience for PSTs but without the presence of clearly defined roles the experience may not always be an educational one. A number of the CTs in the study experienced negative practicums due to the lack of clear supervision guidelines from the institution and stakeholders having different expectations often leading to disagreement, or at times disengagement, from the process. In order for improvements to be made in supervision all stakeholders must be provided with protocols detailing a structured and systematic approach to the school placement process. The publication of the Teaching Council's School Placement document will help clarify stakeholder's roles and responsibilities.
2. In order to provide positive school placements and oversee the application of stakeholders' roles and expectations, teacher education institutions must establish effective working partnerships with schools. Commitment must be sought from participating schools to provide a supportive and educational environment with appropriate time to supervise PSTs. It should be expected that schools provide opportunities for PSTs to observe professional practice and structure timetables to allow for increased interaction between CTs and PSTs.
3. In addressing the need for increased communication and interaction, stakeholders must be supported and prepared to establish relationships that promote professional growth and learning. A number of communities were identified within the data, the most successful being the relationship developed

between the CT and PST. However, the data also conveyed that communication was minimal between some triadic stakeholders, the CT and UT in particular. In light of the data, opportunities for increased dialogue in communities are required. For this to occur, stakeholders must be afforded the opportunity to establish creative communities that meet the needs of those involved. Often this is dependent on the school environment, time pressures, stakeholders' commitments and motivations. Six of the eighteen CTs in the study chose to utilise innovative approaches to supervision without input from the teacher education institution. The institution and the Teaching Council, in addressing supervision, must acknowledge individual contexts and space for innovative approaches, 'one size does not fit all'. With improved functioning communities, learning can become a multi-directional process where the PST is benefitting from regular feedback and support but also enabling the CT to learn new ways of effective supervision.

4. In addressing ways to enhance CTs' learning trajectories, research states that a structured approach to CPD must be provided. Professional training for CTs can be provided and funded in the CTs' locality by utilising the Education Centres. This is in line with Cuenca (2011) who states that "CTs need opportunities to observe and to discuss effective supervision. They also need workshops and CPD where they participate as learners" (Cuenca, 2011, p. 126). However, it must also be recognised that one day workshops are not necessarily sufficient to train teachers to become effective, long-term supervisors (Armour and Yelling, 2004). A long term solution is required, as "without high quality training, CTs and mentors ability to enhance student teachers professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions may be minimised" (Ganser, 2002, p. 384). Until provision for this training is provided, proactive CTs will continue to work autonomously and many teachers will remain absent from the process. This study attempted to establish a framework for cost-efficient, effective CPD in situating a CT's learning. This involved the UT working with the CT during visits to enhance their observation and feedback knowledge and skills.

## **10.5 Conclusion**

Having had the opportunity to experience all three positions within the supervisory triad (PST, CT and UT), the results of this study, and work carried out by the Teaching Council, the DES and the HEA, reinforce my initial belief that the role of the CT is crucial and needs to be addressed for the school placement process to progress. Both national and international research state that steps must be taken to recognise, support and acknowledge the role of the CT, if not the process of developing the teachers of the future will continue to be 'hit or miss'. The potential success, or otherwise, of the supervisory process is very much dependent on the extent to which CTs continue to be engaged in supporting PSTs and actively search for ways to enhance their professional development. The conclusions contribute to a growing body of research in the area of mentoring in Ireland, specifically in examining the role of the CT in the supervisory triad structure. The challenge remains in addressing how those in power (e.g. DES, The Teaching Council, the HEA, teacher education institutions) can most effectively encourage and educate CTs to invest in supervisory communities that allow them to contribute to the education, growth and sustainability of such a community.

Ultimately, for the formalisation of the role of the CT and structured school-university partnerships, a systematic change is required and must be initiated by the Teaching Council as it will not be sustainable at an individual teacher education institution level. To achieve sustainability, the financial, traditional and historical barriers that exist must be overcome. Undoubtedly, with the work being carried out on a national level, the timing is favourable for change. Many teachers want to be involved in the process of supervision but do not necessarily know how. While this study has supported the role of the CT, the emphasis now needs to be on the next step forward in formalising the role and establishing effective school placement communities.

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# Appendices

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- Appendix A: Study Information Sheets
- Appendix B: Cooperating Teacher Workshop Programme
- Appendix C: Consent Forms
- Appendix D: School Placement Expectations of Cooperating Teacher and Pre-service Teacher
- Appendix E: Five phase analysis table

## Appendix A: Study Information Sheets

### Phase 2



## UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

### **‘Defining Possibilities for Learning: The Learning Trajectories of Irish Physical Education Cooperating Teachers’**

#### **Project Information Sheet - Cooperating Teacher (Phase 2)**

**Please read the information below thoroughly before deciding whether or not to participate in this study.**

#### **Introduction**

You have been invited to participate in a study investigating the effectiveness of the relationship between the cooperating teacher, the pre-service teacher and the university tutor. The study is being carried out by Ann-Marie Young (PhD Research Student) and Dr. Ann MacPhail (University of Limerick).

#### **Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to develop and extend the role of the cooperating teacher in Irish post primary schools and identify a cohort of cooperating teachers in schools to build formal partnerships. The study will also provide cooperating teachers with continued professional development opportunities to extend their role in assisting pre-service teachers.

#### **Procedure**

You will be asked to participate in an interview with Ann-Marie Young. This will be carried out at a location agreed by the cooperating teacher and the duration of the interview would be approximately 45 minutes. This discussion will be recorded and transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcript to check that you are

happy with what has been transcribed. During the interview you will be asked questions about your role as a cooperating teacher and what problems or challenges you face in your role. A follow up interview may take place to further explore issues that have arisen from the initial interview. This process is separate from the PSTs experience in your school and will not impact on the pre-service teacher's teaching practice grade.

### **Benefits**

Your participation in the study will further our understanding of the expectations and requirements of cooperating teachers and the factors which may hinder involvement in the teaching practice process.

### **Confidentiality**

This study has been approved by the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Research Ethics Committee (PESSREC 77/08). All information gathered in this study will remain completely anonymous and strictly confidential. Interviews will be identified using a code number and your name will not be recorded or used in any part of this study. In the event data are used for publication anonymity of schools and individuals will be upheld. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office.

### **Withdrawing from the study**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

### **If you would like to participate in this study or if you require further information please contact:**

Ann-Marie Young  
PESS Department  
University of Limerick  
Tel: 085 2890533  
Email: [annmarie.young@ul.ie](mailto:annmarie.young@ul.ie)

Dr. Ann MacPhail  
PESS Department  
University of Limerick  
Tel: 061 234155  
Email: [ann.macphail@ul.ie](mailto:ann.macphail@ul.ie)

### **If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:**

*The Chairman of the University of Limerick Research Ethics Committee  
C/o Registrar & Corporate Secretary's Office  
University of Limerick  
Tel: (061) 202022*

## **Phase 3**



# **UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK**

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

## **‘Defining Possibilities for Learning: The Learning Trajectories of Irish Physical Education Cooperating Teachers’**

### **Project Information Sheet - Cooperating Teacher (Phase 3)**

**Please read the information below thoroughly before deciding whether or not to participate in this study.**

#### **Introduction**

You have been invited to participate in a study investigating the effectiveness of the relationship between the cooperating teacher, the pre-service teacher and the university tutor. The study is being carried out by Ann-Marie Young (PhD Research Student) and Dr. Ann MacPhail (University of Limerick).

#### **Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to develop and extend the role of the physical education cooperating teacher in Irish post primary schools and identify a cohort of cooperating teachers in schools to build formal partnerships. The study will also provide cooperating teachers with continued professional development opportunities to extend their role in assisting pre-service teachers.

#### **Procedure**

You will be asked to participate in a focus group interview (a group discussion involving 6-8 people). This will be carried out at an organised community of practice meeting and the duration of the focus group would be approximately 60 minutes. This discussion will be recorded and transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcript to check that you are happy with what has been transcribed.

During the focus group you will be asked questions about your role as a cooperating teacher and what problems or challenges you face in your role. You will be asked to participate in two peer meetings during the teaching practice period. A follow up focus group interview will take place to further explore issues that have arisen from the experience. This process is separate from the PSTs experience in your school and will not impact on the pre-service teacher's teaching practice grade.

### **Benefits**

Your participation in the study will further our understanding of the expectations and requirements of cooperating teachers and the factors which may hinder involvement in the teaching practice process.

### **Confidentiality**

This study has been approved by the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Research Ethics Committee (PESSREC 77/08). All information gathered in this study will remain completely anonymous and strictly confidential. Interviews will be identified using a code number and your name will not be recorded or used in any part of this study. In the event data are used for publication anonymity of schools and individuals will be upheld. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office.

### **Withdrawing from the study**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

### **If you would like to participate in this study or if you require further information please contact:**

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University of Limerick  
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## **Phase 4**



# **UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK**

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

## **‘Defining Possibilities for Learning: The Learning Trajectories of Irish Physical Education Cooperating Teachers’**

### **Project Information Sheet - Cooperating Teacher (Phase 4)**

**Please read the information below thoroughly before deciding whether or not to participate in this study.**

#### **Introduction**

You have been invited to participate in a study investigating the learning experiences of cooperating teachers in their supervision of pre-service teachers. The study is being carried out by Ann-Marie Young (PhD Research Student) and Dr. Ann MacPhail (University of Limerick).

#### **Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to investigate the learning trajectories of Irish physical education cooperating teachers in becoming confident and competent supervisors to pre-service teachers. This will inform the development and extension of the role of the cooperating teacher in Irish post primary schools and identify a cohort of cooperating teachers in schools to build formal partnerships. The study will also provide cooperating teachers with continued professional development opportunities to extend their role in assisting pre-service teachers.

#### **Procedure**

The project will involve the university tutor visiting with the cooperating teacher prior to the first and second official graded lessons. The visits will involve both the university tutor and the cooperating teacher observing the pre-service teacher teach a lesson, providing an opportunity to discuss the type and level of feedback required.

A joint debrief with the pre-service teacher will then follow. It is hoped that this will address a number of challenges faced by cooperating teachers in the delivery of effective feedback. This process will act as a form of standardisation and provide the opportunity for cooperating teachers to share their knowledge of the pre-service teacher and develop school-university relationships. This process is separate from the pre-service teacher's experience in your school and will not impact on the pre-service teacher's teaching practice grade.

### **Benefits**

Your participation in the study will further our understanding of the expectations and requirements of cooperating teachers and the factors which may hinder involvement in the teaching practice process.

### **Confidentiality**

This study has been approved by the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHSREC10-31). All information gathered in this study will remain completely anonymous and strictly confidential. Interviews will be identified using a code number and your name will not be recorded or used in any part of this study. In the event data are used for publication anonymity of schools and individuals will be upheld. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office.

### **Withdrawing from the study**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

### **If you would like to participate in this study or if you require further information please contact:**

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University of Limerick  
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Tel: (061) 202022*

## **Phase 5**



# **UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK**

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

## **‘Defining Possibilities for Learning: The Learning Trajectories of Irish Physical Education Cooperating Teachers’**

### **Project Information Sheet - Cooperating Teacher (Phase 5)**

**Please read the information below thoroughly before deciding whether or not to participate in this study.**

#### **Introduction**

You have been invited to participate in a study investigating the learning experiences of cooperating teachers in their supervision of pre-service teachers. The study is being carried out by Ann-Marie Young (PhD Research Student) and Dr. Ann MacPhail (University of Limerick).

#### **Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to investigate the learning trajectories of Irish physical education cooperating teachers in becoming confident and competent supervisors to pre-service teachers. This will inform the development and extension of the role of the cooperating teacher in Irish post primary schools and identify a cohort of cooperating teachers in schools to build formal partnerships. The study will also provide cooperating teachers with continued professional development opportunities to extend their role in assisting pre-service teachers.

#### **Procedure**

You will be asked to participate in two individual interviews (pre and post teaching practice). These will be carried out at a location agreed by the cooperating teacher and the duration of the interviews would be approximately 45 minutes. These discussions will be recorded and transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcript to check that you are happy with what has been transcribed. During the

interviews you will be asked questions about your role as a cooperating teacher and what problems or challenges you face in your role. You will also be asked to participate in four debrief sessions (lasting approximately 20 minutes) during the teaching practice period. This process is separate from the pre-service teacher's experience in your school and will not impact on the pre-service teacher's teaching practice grade.

### **Benefits**

Your participation in the study will further our understanding of the expectations and requirements of cooperating teachers and the factors which may hinder involvement in the teaching practice process.

### **Confidentiality**

This study has been approved by the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHSREC10-31). All information gathered in this study will remain completely anonymous and strictly confidential. Interviews will be identified using a code number and your name will not be recorded or used in any part of this study. In the event data are used for publication anonymity of schools and individuals will be upheld. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office.

### **Withdrawing from the study**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

### **If you would like to participate in this study or if you require further information please contact:**

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## Appendix B: Cooperating Teacher Workshop Programme



### UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

*Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010*

#### **Format of the day:**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 9.45:        | Welcome by the Dean of Education   |
| 10.00-11.00: | 'Experiences of being a cooperating teacher', led by two experienced physical education cooperating teachers     |
| 11.00-12.30: | 'Effective Feedback' – The stages of delivering effective feedback   |
| 12.30-1.30:  | Lunch  |
| 1.30-3.00:   | Continuation of 'Effective Feedback'   |
| 3.00-4.00:   | Outline of the physical education programme at UL and ways forward in encouraging school-university partnership. |

**All Phases**



**UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK**

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**Participant Consent Form**

**Phase 4: Cooperating Teacher Consent Form**

**‘Defining Possibilities for Learning: The Learning Trajectories of Irish  
Physical Education Cooperating Teachers’**

Name:

- I have read and fully understand the subject information sheet.
- I understand what the project is about and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of all procedures involving myself and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.

I the undersigned have been fully informed of and understand the nature of this study. I am aware of the risks involved and agree to be a participant in this project.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D: Cooperating Teacher and Pre-service Teacher School Placement Expectations**

### **The Role of the Cooperating Teacher on School Placement** **A School-University Approach**

*These guidelines have been devised in collaboration with a sample of Irish Physical Education Co-operating Teachers and the three Physical Education Teacher Education Institutions in Ireland.*

As a co-operating teacher you can potentially have the greatest influence on the development of the student teacher as a new professional in physical education. This responsibility is a highly significant one and we appreciate your involvement in this school-university partnership. Providing a climate for open and honest discussion of questions and concerns will help to create the growth environment and support system the student teacher needs.

The role of the co-operating teacher can be divided into three main duties;

- (1) **Guiding** the pre-service teacher throughout the teaching experience,
- (2) **Observing** the pre-service teacher and providing feedback and ideas,
- (3) **Encouraging, supporting** and socialising the pre-service teacher into the school environment.

Co-operating teachers duties occur in two main phases:

- (A) Prior to Teaching Practice
- (B) During Teaching Practice

#### **(A) Prior to Teaching Practice**

##### Organisation of Pre-service Teacher Timetable:

- In consultation with school management organise a timetable for the student teacher. This timetable should include a period for a progress meeting between co-operating teacher and pre-service teacher
- The timetable requirement equates to: 2<sup>nd</sup> Year - minimum 5 double PE equivalent over 6 weeks, 4<sup>th</sup> Year - minimum 5 double PE equivalent over 10 weeks
- Provide information on:
  - Classes they will be teaching (year, size, ability, activity and venue, class teacher, Year Head)
  - Pupils with particular needs (e.g. medical, behavioural, special educational needs, minority populations) and strategies to deal with them.

- Alert opportunities for pre-service teachers to get involved in extra-curricular and whole school activities.

#### During Initial Meeting with Pre-service Teacher:

1. Finalise pre-service teachers' timetable in consultation with pre-service Teacher.
2. Discuss professional expectations of pre-service teacher during teaching practice with pre-service teacher.
3. Introduce the pre-service teacher to principal, deputy principal, PE department staff and other relevant staff (e.g. guidance counsellor, school caretaker)
4. Familiarise the pre-service teacher with whole school ethos, school procedures (e.g. staff absence) and policies, school calendar, health and safety regulations, behaviour management, pastoral care and school-community links.
5. Alert the pre-service teacher to subject specific issues; facilities, equipment, resources, dress code and first aid procedures.

### **(B) During Teaching Practice**

#### Supervisory Role:

The co-operating teacher provides the pre-service teacher with an opportunity to learn how to teach their pupils in a safe environment. These pupils remain the responsibility of the co-operating teacher throughout teaching practice. Therefore, co-operating teachers should be present when pre-service teachers are teaching.

1. In the interest of safety, ensure that pre-service teachers observe a PE lesson taught by a co-operating teacher before any practical lessons are taught while on placement.
2. Encourage pre-service teachers to observe as many PE lessons as possible.
3. It is an expectation that cooperating teachers provide the following on a weekly basis:
  - A minimum of two structured observations of pre-service teacher's teaching
  - Daily written or oral feedback to pre-service teacher.
  - A formal meeting/tutorial on pre-service teacher progress to be conducted at least once a week between pre-service teacher and the cooperating teacher.

4. Provide pre-service teachers with information on planning, additional content ideas, subject knowledge, assessment and resources when possible.
5. Encourage the pre-service teacher to use a range of teaching strategies while incorporating established rules and routines of the class groups being taught.
6. It would be of great assistance if the co-operating teacher were available during tutor visits to observe and discuss the pre-service teachers' progress.
7. Liaise with University tutors on pre-service teacher progress throughout teaching practice.

*In general, it cannot be stressed too strongly that pre-service teachers vary a great deal in their progress in the development of fundamental teaching skills, and that consequently pre-service teachers' needs in guidance during teaching rounds are diverse. It is hoped that cooperating teachers will define the nature of such guidance according to the needs of the individual pre-service teacher.*

## *Pre-service teacher*

### **Pre-teaching Practice:**

1. Once notified of placement school, contact the school to plan a visit.
2. When visiting the school ask to meet with the principal and your cooperating teacher.
3. Note the facilities, equipment and resources to which you will have access.
4. Agree on a physical education timetable with your cooperating teacher and the school.
5. Get adequate details on your **preliminary visit** to your school concerning all the previous experiences of each class you will teach, what they have covered, and exactly what the physical education teacher wishes you to cover.
6. Submitted timetables to your tutor must clearly indicate the activity for each physical education class. 2<sup>nd</sup> Year: When preparing schemes of work it is expected that within a pairing there is evidence of solo and team planning and teaching.
7. An initial meeting with your tutor should be arranged to discuss the timetable and schemes of work. Completed schemes of work will be checked by your tutor and you will be informed whether you are cleared to begin teaching practice on the designated date. In the event that you are not deemed to be ready, you will begin teaching practice at a later date.
8. Where possible, experience should be gained in all of the areas of study within the JCPE curriculum.
9. A pre-service teacher who is injured must provide medical clearance to their tutor to indicate that it is safe for them to go out on teaching practice, to teach, or continue to teach.

### **During Teaching Placement:**

1. Ensure your behaviour, attitude and appearance are appropriate for an individual entering the teaching profession.
2. Wear PE/sport clothing that is clean, tidy and appropriate to the activity; remember that you are a role model.

3. Remain in school during normal school hours and engage in purposeful self-study, planning and observation when not actually teaching. You are encouraged to get involved in other school activities.
4. You are expected to teach every physical education class that is noted on your timetable and for each of these you must have a scheme of work and lesson plan.
5. At all times ensure the safety of your students (working area, groups, equipment, activities, progression, individual differences).
6. Any absence from school must be reported to the principal, cooperating physical education teacher and tutors prior to the start of the day. Arrangements must be made to make up any days missed.
7. In the case of high level sports participation approval must be gained in advance from the university and school staff. Arrangements must be made to make up any days missed.
8. Requirements for reflective writing must be met throughout the placement and emailed at an agreed time to your university tutor.
9. Keep a comprehensive and up-to-date teaching practice file with all schemes of work, lesson plans, evidence of student learning (if available) and reflective writing.
10. You are encouraged to approach your cooperating teacher and ask him/her to observe your lessons and at least once a week ask them to observe for a specific focus. It is also recommended that you observe your cooperating teacher(s) with their consent.

**For 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Pre-service Teachers:**

1. You are expected to formally observe your partner teach at least once a week (during a solo class) using a selection of the observation tools from PY4064. Completed observations should be copied and kept in your partner's and your own teaching practice folder.

**Post Teaching Placement:**

1. Complete a final observation at the end of the teaching practice placement.

2. It would be appropriate that all pre-service teachers, on completion of their placement, write a letter to the principal and the cooperating teacher thanking them for the opportunity and assistance received.
3. On completion of your school placement, you are required to arrange a suitable day and time to meet with your tutor for a post-school placement tutorial. You are expected to bring your completed school placement file with you and discuss and reflect on your experience.

Phase 1  
Setting the Scene  
Reflective Journal  
Sept - Dec 2008: 8 Year 4 PSTs  
March - April 2009: 9 Year 2 PSTs

- **1. Effective CT as a Supervisor**
  - Benefit of CT presence in class
  - Actual CT presence in class
  - Positive attributes of PST
  - Positive CT/PST Relationship
  - Proactive CT
  - CT use of SP Booklet
  - Role of the CT in the grading process
- **2. School-University Partnership**
  - CT interaction with UT
  - Lack of confidence in grading process
  - Lack of correspondence between university and school
  - Lack of guidelines from university
  - Positive contact with principal
  - Unclear roles
  - CT use of SP Booklet
- **3. SP/CT Concerns**
  - Lack of CT presence in class
  - CT reluctance to be involved
  - Culture of protection
  - Inconsistencies
  - Lack of confidence in grading
  - Lack of CT confidence
  - Lack of feedback to PST
  - Lack of CT presence
  - Lack of expectations of CT involvement
  - Lack of principal involvement
  - Reluctance of CTs to voice opinions /concerns
  - Lack of structured support
  - Lack of CT structure in school

Phase 2  
Sept - Dec 2009 (Year 4)  
8 CTs/6 Schools  
Pre and Post SP Interviews

- **1. Developing the Role of the CT**
  - Benefit of a formalised structure
  - CT confidence in debrief
  - CT involvement in evaluation
  - CT involvement in tutor visits
  - Disaffected CTs
  - Frequency of feedback
  - Frequency of observations
  - Importance of the CT role
  - Improved CT confidence
  - Inadvertently becoming a CT
  - Issues with CT involvement in evaluation process
  - Lack of CT confidence in feedback
  - Lack of formal roles for CT
  - Negative of being a CT
  - Perceived role of the CT
  - Reasons for being a CT
  - Reasons why CT should have a say in grading process
  - Structuring the role of the CT
  - The issue of time
  - The need for CT CPD
  - The role of the CT
- **2. Interaction between CT and PST**
  - Creating a professional relationship
  - CT Facilitating PST development
  - CT presence in class
  - CT/PST interaction recommendation
  - Developing a community
  - Development of weekly meeting
  - Frequency of feedback
  - Frequency of observations
  - Negative CT/PST interaction
  - Positive CT/PST interaction
- **3. Interaction between the CT and UT**
  - CT involvement in evaluation
  - Lack of CT/UT interaction
  - Negative CT/UT interaction
  - Positive CT/UT interaction
  - Tutor inconsistencies
- **4. Evaluation Process**
  - CT involvement in evaluation
  - Issues with CT involvement in evaluation process
  - Principals role in the evaluation process
- **5. School-University Partnership**
  - Lack of school-university communication
  - Principal involvement
  - Principals role in the evaluation process
  - School-uni partnership recommendation
- **6. CT Learning**
  - CT use of the SP Booklet
  - The need for CT CPD
  - CT involvement in UT visit
  - Two-way learning process
  - Benefit of a formalised structure

Phase 3  
February -May 2010 (Year 2)  
5 CTs/15 PSTs  
Pre, Mid and Post SP Focus Group Interviews

- **1. Developing the Role of the CT**
  - CT issues in delivering feedback
  - CT learning from the UT
  - CT presence in class
  - Development of weekly meetings
  - Frequency of feedback
  - Frequency of observation
  - Issues with CT involvement in evaluation
  - Lack of time to be an effective CT
  - Negative of being a CT
  - Perceived role of the CT
  - Previous CT role
  - Reasons for being a CT
  - Reasons why CT should have say in evaluation
  - The role of the CT
- **2. Interaction between CT and PST**
  - Creating a professional relationship
  - CT facilitating PST development
  - CT/PST recommendation
  - Developing a community
  - Development of weekly meetings
  - Frequency of feedback
  - Frequency of observation
  - Negative CT/PST interaction
  - Positive CT/PST relationship
- **3. Interaction between the CT and UT**
  - CT involvement in tutor visit
  - Lack of CT/UT interaction
  - Positive CT/UT interaction
- **4. Evaluation Process**
  - Issues with CT involvement in evaluation
  - Reasons why CT should have say in evaluation
- **5. School-University Partnership**
  - Lack of guidelines from university
  - Lack of school-university communication
  - Positive school-university communication
  - Principal involvement
  - School-university partnership recommendation
- **6. CT Learning**
  - CT learning from the UT
  - Two-way learning experience
  - Lack of CT confidence in delivering feedback
  - Benefit of a formalised structure
  - CT involvement in UT visit

Phase 4  
February - May 2011 (Year 2 & GD)  
4 CTs  
4 CT/UT Visits and Interviews

- **1. Developing the role of the CT**
  - CT concern
  - CT confidence in debrief
  - CT confidence in delivering feedback
  - CT learning
  - CT learning from UT
  - CTs role in evaluation
  - Difficulty in delivering feedback
  - Lack of CT confidence in supervision
  - Lack of time to be effective CT
  - Lack of time to deliver feedback
  - Reasons for being a CT
  - Role of the CT
  - The need for CT CPD
- **2. Interaction between CT and PST**
  - CT Concern
  - CT facilitating PST learning
  - CT presence in class
  - Developing a community
  - Development of weekly meetings
  - Positive attribute of PST
  - Positive CT/PST relationship
  - Proactive CT
  - Two-way learning process
  - Type of CT/PST relationship
- **3. Providing effective feedback**
  - Content of debrief
  - CT confidence in debrief
  - CT confidence in delivering feedback
  - CT perception of the debrief
  - Development of weekly meetings
  - Difficulty in delivering feedback
  - Lack of time to deliver feedback
  - Timing of feedback
- **4. School-University Partnerships**
  - Lack of school-university communication
  - Recommendation for partnership
  - Value of school-university partnerships
- **5. CT Learning**
  - CT learning from UT
  - CT use of SP Booklet
  - Introduction of guidelines
  - The need for CT CPD

Phase 5  
Sept - Dec 2011 (Year 4)  
4 CTs  
5 Individual Interviews

- **1. Developing the Role of the CT**
  - Frequency of Feedback
  - Frequency of Observation
  - Improved CT confidence
  - Lack of CT confidence in delivering feedback
  - Lack of time to be an effective CT
  - Lack of time to deliver feedback
  - Negative of being a CT
  - Previous experience as a CT
  - Reasons for being a CT
  - The role of a CT
- **2. Interaction between CT and PST**
  - Creating a professional relationship
  - CT facilitating PST development
  - Developing a community
  - Developing a CT/PST relationship
  - Development of weekly meetings
  - Lack of CT/PST interaction
  - Positive CT/PST relationship
  - Proactive PST
  - Type of CT/PST relationship
- **3. Interaction between CT and UT**
  - Creating a professional relationship
  - CT involvement in tutor visit
  - Developing a community
  - Developing a CT/UT relationship
  - Lack of CT/UT relationship
  - Negative CT/UT relationship
  - Positive CT/UT interaction
  - The need to value CT opinion
- **4. Evaluation Process**
  - Issues with CT involvement in evaluation process
  - Problems with the evaluation process
  - Reasons why CT should have say in process
  - The need to value CT opinion
  - The role of the CT in the process
- **5. School-university partnerships**
  - Benefit of workshop CPD
  - Inadvertently becoming a CT
  - Lack of school-university communication
  - Lack of university support
  - Positive CT/university interaction
  - Principal involvement
  - Recommendation for future practice
  - The need for more teaching time
- **6. CT Learning**
  - Lack of CT guidelines
  - The need for CT CPD
  - CT involvement in UT visit
  - Two-way learning process
  - Formalising the role of the CT

