'An exploration into teachers' perceptions and experiences of dyslexia in the Further Education Sector'

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

AHEAD	Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
DAI	Dyslexia Association Ireland
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
ISB	Irish Statute Book
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
SEN	Special Education Needs
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SOLAS	Continuing Education Service and Skills
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

Abstract

This paper will explore the current perceptions of further education teachers with regards to dyslexia and how they can support their students in an inclusive environment. In recent years, the further education system has been further developed in the area of diversity and the implementation of inclusive education has advanced. However, it is evident throughout policy and legislation from the Department of Education that this area can be enhanced in terms of special education provision specifically in the further education sector. Current research outlines that there is a gap in Irish literature with regards to policy and provision of dyslexia in the further education system. It is also apparent that there is a necessity for additional support for both teachers and students in the further education system. Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) is the main area of discussion in this study with emphasis on dyslexia. It is evident throughout the literature that there is a limited amount of knowledge held by teachers in all areas of education with regards to dyslexia and how they can support their students in the classroom.

In order to fill this gap, the research adopted a qualitative approach as it was necessary to gather the relevant data to answer the research question. The research design adopted an exploratory design as it set out to investigate the perceptions and experiences of six further education teachers in Ireland, how they perceive dyslexia and how they can implement an inclusive environment for students. Semi structured interviews were conducted online via Zoom. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic and narrative analysis was adopted during the study as this allowed for an in depth analysis of the data gathered to produce the findings of the study. Analysing the current views and perceptions of these educators will provide valuable insights into the area of discussion and provide an effective way of authentically assessing how teachers implement an inclusive environment for their students.

The results presented four central themes and were as follows: 'Labels', 'Change over time', 'Teacher Perceptions and Attitudes' and 'Challenges and Areas for Improvement'. Following the broad title of themes, it was imminent to filter the data even further into subthemes. The findings suggested that teachers held a basic understanding of dyslexia and expressed a positive attitude towards students who possess a specific learning difficulty. It was argued that teachers need to be provided with correct materials and education to support these students. The participants also discussed the current further education system and what needed to be developed in order to contribute to an inclusive environment for students. The main areas of concern were teacher education and the current attitudes of educators. Other participants felt that teacher education was made available to teachers but their attitudes towards upskilling was negative. The findings are highlighted and discussed in terms of their significance and contribution to the area of special education. The limitations and challenges of the research are acknowledged and examined throughout the chapters as well as direction for future research in the area of SEN.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, teachers perceptions of dyslexia have majorly developed from an undiagnosed reading difficulty to one of the most common learning difficulties affecting approximately 10% of our society (Dyslexia Association Ireland, 2021). People with dyslexia find tasks such as written and reading material difficult to comprehend. These perceptions are miscued for multiple reasons such as age, experience, teaching style, level of education and attitudes (Rose et al., 2010). Major policy changes have been implemented to support these students in education by providing alternative assessments and supports from primary level education to higher education. However these policies have room for improvement through the aid of inclusion. The support for inclusion is mainly advocated by parents, schools and policy makers (Cooc,2019; McLeskey et al., 2019; Irish Educational Act of 2004). It is said that inclusion is based on two foundations; firstly the student has the same equal rights to that of a student who does not have a disability and secondly, that students that are taught in an inclusive environment have a more enjoyable education journey (Cooc, 2019). In order for inclusive education to be effective we first have to understand the current perceptions of teachers, dyslexia and what they are currently implementing into their classroom in order for inclusion to take place. Over the last number of years students who have learning difficulties have increased and this has developed barriers and challenges for educators (Ekins & Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson, 2009; Barton & Armstrong, 2007). Woolfson et al., (2007) argues that educators in various levels of education seem to have a negative outlook towards inclusive education, which therefore effects the outcomes of classroom interaction compared to that of teachers with special education qualifications. There are mixed results as to whether teachers have adequate training and knowledge to support these students in an inclusive environment which will be discussed further in the literature review chapter.

1.1 Personal Reflection and Background

I acknowledge that I am a large part of this research process and that my own personal world views are key to my research journey (Murphy, 2015). The initial concept for this research was supported by two ideas. Firstly, the researchers personal experience with dyslexia. Growing up as the youngest in a household of six surrounded by siblings and parents struggling with dyslexia, I have seen first-hand how difficult it was not only during their education but also in completing everyday activities. It was also backed up by an experience my sibling had in school

where their teacher did not believe in dyslexia, which was infuriating for everyone involved especially my sibling as they felt that they were not supported in the system from a very young age. However, their experiences ranged from both positive and negative through different levels of education. We moved when we were young so coming from a school that supported them to a school who did not believe in dyslexia was a shock. Therefore their experiences varied from school to school. From these experiences alone it outlined not only the challenges that students are faced with but also the barriers that teachers have when supporting students with dyslexia. Now that I am a qualified teacher, I found that it was important to firstly educate myself with the knowledge in order for these students to have an enjoyable learning experience in my own classroom and secondly, to hopefully impart knowledge from the data collected to educate others in the area of SEN. It was also during a class in my hdip that I started to realise how underdeveloped supports are in colleges due to the fact that teachers do not hold basic training in the area and this led to the second reason. From becoming a newly qualified further education teacher that works primarily in the student support area with no efficient training given in supporting these students, I began to query what knowledge do teachers actually possess with regards to dyslexia and other SpLDs. Some students were registered as having a SpLD and received support while others remained undiagnosed and unsupported. Funding has been given to Further Education colleges to provide supports such as assistive technologies, learning support and alternative assessments.

1.2 Research focus and Rationale

John Dewey stated that "education is not preparation for life; education is life itself". Harpur (2012) argues that people with disabilities have been exposed to unequal opportunities during their education and are often treated as lower class citizens. Equal access must be given in education regardless of religion, gender, disability, race and culture (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016). Pavlidis (2015) states that teaching and learning are fundamental to a person accomplishing independence. John Dewey (1997) argues that students learn through doing and their cognitive abilities can be developed and cultivated (Pavlidis 2015). It is evident that education is not only resourceful for everyday activities, but it is said to enhance the quality of life (Kennedy et al., 2012). In recent years policy shifts have seen Ireland move from a very much traditional and teacher centred approach to having their full focus on inclusive education (Shevlin et al., 2013). Over recent years international polices have now provided a safe environment for students to attend. These documents assure that every child has equitable

opportunities in education regardless as to whether they have a disability or not (Authority, 2021). This has now resulted in students availing of supports throughout the education system across Ireland. As a newly qualified teacher it was evident that there are challenges and barriers for teachers in the further education sector when supporting these students such as extra support for themselves. At the beginning of my own training, I thought there was not many opportunities made available for teacher education however from working in learning support it was evident that there are multiple opportunities but that teachers may not necessarily know that they are available. The study aims to provide clarity around this area and make teachers self-reflect on their own learning journey in order to implement inclusivity. However, it is evident throughout the literature that there is an ongoing challenge for educators and policy makers in supporting these students in an inclusive setting (McCoy et al., 2014). Considering that this is an issue across all levels of education it would be unrealistic to undertake a study exploring each of these levels. The specific focus of the study is within the further education sector.

Dyslexia Association Ireland (2021) defines dyslexia as a "specific learning difficulty affecting the acquisition of fluent and accurate reading and spelling skills". Dyslexia can be divided into three factors cognitive, biological, and behavioral (Frith, 2001). Dyslexics have trouble with reading, writing, spelling and memory (Dyslexia Association Ireland 2021). This can result in greater stress and frustration for the student. This research paper will focus on teachers perceptions of dyslexia, challenges and self-reflection from a Further Education perspective. This study will adopt a pragmatic conceptual framework that will focus on the 'what' and 'how' (Creswell, 2003). Dewey (1997) also argues that pragmatism encourages the idea of implementing experiences as a way to adjust in society. This will be demonstrated through semi structured interviews in gathering participants personal experience, beliefs and values. In order to understand the current perceptions of dyslexia, the research must understand dyslexia as a whole from both a professional diagnosis, a student's perspective through current literature and an educators view which will be examined through interviews. We first have to explore 'what is dyslexia?' 'what are the characteristics?' 'How does dyslexia affect a students' education?'. These are all questions that will be answered in the literature, as it provides a basis for our understanding and will give us a magnified outlook on the various perspectives.

Dyslexia in further education is becoming a topical and current area of research and dyslexia awareness is becoming more common and knowledgeable. A brief historical back ground will be given on dyslexia in order to understand the topic but the general focus will be on current issues and themes that have emerged from the data

collection phase. Frith & Morton (1995) discusses that in order to understand dyslexia we first have to look at it in three categories: biological, cognitive and behavioural. She highlights the importance of each level as well as the environmental factors when analysing the different perspectives of dyslexia. This research will be interwoven throughout my initial research as this theoretical framework will link these factors and will guide and support our understanding of dyslexia (Frith & Morton 1995). The paper will explore the background and history of dyslexia in Further Education, educators views, personal experiences, challenges teachers are faced with and self-reflection. Throughout the interviews the main area of discussion will be challenges, future improvements in the area of supports and current knowledge held about dyslexia.

1.3 Significance and Research Questions

The current study will contribute to the current knowledge surrounding the area of dyslexia with regards to challenges, attitudes and future developments that could be implemented into the further education sector. These developments include strategies as these skills and approaches are constantly adapting. Acknowledging these issues and conceptions around dyslexia will support the current gap in the literature in this area and will provide value to organisations and teachers.

To answer the research question 'An exploration into teachers' perceptions of dyslexia in the Further Education Sector', the question has been subdivided into multiple questions. Firstly we must understand what the working definition of dyslexia is. This will give a basis for our arguments and opinions made in the interviews. Secondly, interviews will be conducted to gather the current knowledge and understanding professional educators possess with regards to dyslexia. Thirdly, some of the challenges that teachers face when supporting these students in the classroom will be examined. Finally, self-reflection- what future improvements would the participants like to see implemented into the further education system with regards to their own practice?

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 Aims.

The aim of this research is to examine how teachers in the Further Education sector conceptualise dyslexia. This paper explores the participants individual experiences and what challenges they face in supporting these

students all the while self-reflecting. Frith & Mortons (1995) theoretical framework will support the opinions and arguments made in the interviews. The theoretical framework will also provide support and reference on the emerging themes that are gathered from the data.

1.4.2 Objectives.

In order to achieve these aims, firstly a review of current and past literature will be examined to form a basic underpinning of what current perceptions further education teachers possess with regards to dyslexia. It will also examine what challenges they face when supporting these students. Secondly, semi structured interviews will be conducted with six further education teachers in order to gather the primary data. During the interview process emerging themes will be noted and if areas of discussion which have not yet been acknowledged appear, they will be reviewed further in the literature review chapter. This approach to the study was deemed most feasible due to the time constraints and the availability of the participants.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter One: This chapter will introduce the research question being asked, "What is dyslexia? An exploration into teachers' perceptions of dyslexia and their experiences in the Further Educator sector". It explores the reasoning for choosing the topic and provides a background to the study itself.

Chapter Two: This chapter will examine the current and past literature that has been researched in the area. John Dewey's philosophy of a pragmatic approach will be interwoven throughout the research to gather a more in depth view of the research question. The Literature review will explore the origins and a brief history of dyslexia, definition of dyslexia, policy and legislation, inclusivity, concepts of dyslexia and the current challenges further education teachers are faced with when supporting students with dyslexia.

Chapter Three: The methodology chapter adopts a qualitative approach. This will be demonstrated through the use of semi structured interviews with six further education teachers with the aim of gathering the relevant data. It will also provide justification and an explanation on the methods and methodological framework that was undertaken

in conducting the research. The ontological and epistemological perspective will support the reasoning for this qualitative approach. Data collection and analysis will be outlined in this chapter alongside ethical considerations and limitations being acknowledged.

Chapter Four: This chapter will present the findings of the data gathered from the interviews conducted with six further education teachers and their perceptions of dyslexia. It will explore the data and provide critical discussion in key areas which will contextualise primary and secondary research conducted in the literature review chapter. It will also acknowledge the points stated in relation to the research questions.

Chapter Five: A conclusion will be constructed of the findings. Recommendations for future research will also be devised and the strengths and weaknesses of this study will be highlighted.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

According to Antonesa et al, (2006) there are two necessities when writing a dissertation. Firstly is to ensure that you relate the relevant theories back to the research questions. Secondly, is to relate those theories to the research process. The literature review chapter will analyse current and more traditional literature to form a framework of knowledge that will relate to the research question. The particular research that has been reviewed aims to determine what knowledge currently exists with regards to teachers perceptions of dyslexia. The research will also acknowledge inconsistencies and gaps in the literature. Therefore by identifying these gaps the primary research can explore these divisions within the methodology chapter. Winchester & Salji, (2016) states that conducting a literature review is fundamental as it allows exploration of the current literature in the area of research but will also inform and limit the scope of the research inquiry.

This qualitative study aims to examine what current teachers perceptions are with regards to dyslexia in the form of semi structured interviews in the Further Education sector. Thematic analysis of the data gathered from interviews will allow the study to identify the challenges and provide solutions for a more inclusive education for dyslexic students. In order to provide these recommendations; Firstly we must understand what is dyslexia? How do teachers perceive dyslexia, what challenges they face and how can students be supported.

A pragmatic approach will be implemented throughout the literature review chapter with an ontological and epistemological viewpoint based on John Dewey's pragmatic approach. Pragmatists want to improve through experimentation according to Dewey (1997). Therefore by conducting interviews with current educators in the further education sector, it will allow for personal experiences to emerge and be analysed. Given that dyslexia has many aspects to it, it would be naïve to think that you could answer each concept completely. Therefore, the main themes that will be discussed will be: inclusivity and dyslexia, policy and legislatives, supporting adult learners with dyslexia, previous research on teachers perceptions of dyslexia and the challenges that teachers are encountered with when supporting these students.

These areas of discussion will coincide with the research questions. In order to answer the research questions we first must research what dyslexia is, explore current knowledge of the subject and learn what are

teachers understandings of dyslexia and what skills do they require to effectively teach these students so they can learn to the best of their ability.

2.1 Origins and History of dyslexia in Further Education

In 1883, the term dyslexia was first coined by Rudolf Berlin, a German professor and ophthalmologist in Stuttgart (Howell, 2021). It was first observed in adults who had difficulty reading. He explored a range of issues that may relate to the difficulty. He ruled out vision which therefore led him to the neurological end of dyslexia (Howell, 2021). Berlin named the difficulty 'dyslexia'. Berlin's research was influenced by the findings of Adolph Kussmaul and his work on diabetic ketoacidosis (Howell, 2021). Kussmaul was the first to identify the difficulties that Berlin was researching in 1877 entitling them Wortblindheit (word-blindness) (Dougherty, 2021). Future researchers such as Hinshelwood, James Kerr, and William Pringle Morgan not only focused on this isolated characteristic for adults but also broadened them to include young children (Howell, 2021). This eventually weakened the hypothesis of brain injury as a dyslexic cause (Howell, 2021).

Samual T. Orton, a neuropathologist from Iowa expanded on the original works of Kussmaul, Morgan and Hinshelwood but drew on a different conclusion which resulted in cerebral dominance (Dougherty, 2021). Although this was proven to be incorrect, it highlighted the discussion around dyslexia and the theory of cognitive development (Dougherty, 2021). '*The Dyslexic Child'* published by Macdonald Critchley highlighted the importance of developmental dyslexia and the urgency that followed (Hodge, 2000). Britain then made the systematic comparison of dyslexic and non-dyslexic children, which remains instructive today. The opening of the Word Blind Centre in 1962 marked the start of modern research which led to the advocacy of the condition, which then resulted in legislation and policy being adapted such as the 2010 Equality Act. This also led to the misconceptions of dyslexia and it became known as a 'middle-class myth' (Dougherty, 2021). The factors that drove this 'myth' became known as the discrepancy diagnostic model. Someone could only be considered dyslexic if they had these characteristics. Up until recent years, dyslexia was often pushed aside and not believed as a learning difficulty. Specifically with the education department (Dougherty, 2021). The department told researcher Baroness Mary Warnock, that dyslexia is not seen as a problem, which therefore led to the lack of supports available for people with dyslexia (Hodge, 2000). In 2009 a final report published by the government acknowledged that recommendations were to be made on the supports made available for students with dyslexia. However, although these recommendations have been

made and new policies and acts have been implemented, the debate on dyslexia still continues, most recently in the 2014 book *The Dyslexia Debate* (Elliot & Grigorenko, 2014). This book does not question whether biologically based reading difficulties exist but rather how we as humans should best address them and how we can understand the underlying issues such as literacy problems (Elliot & Grigorenko, 2014). This issue should be examined across clinical, educational, occupational, and social policy contexts (Elliot & Grigorenko, 2014).

Throughout research dyslexia is interpreted in many ways through former and newer researchers. It is constantly changing in today's society on what constitutes as being dyslexic (Elliot & Grigorenko, 2014). Hinshelwood also stated in his findings that writers often use the word dyslexia 'loosely', which then leads to these misconceptions (Hodge, 2000). Hinshelwood decided that instead of correcting these writers that he would better define the term (Hodge, 2000). He argues that "those who use it have not always have a clear conception of what Kussmaul meant by it" (Hodge, 2000). Dyslexia is seen as a 'construct' according the book *The Dyslexia Debate*, 'the social, psychological, political and emotional needs of multiple stakeholders' (Elliot & Grigorenko, 2014). This has now shifted the emphasis towards how dyslexia has been defined through various disciplines. Overall it is useful to think of dyslexia as both a psychological diagnosis and a social construct (Frith, 2001). It is important to take into consideration the cultural meanings of dyslexia along with its history moving forward.

2.2 What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia was known as a rather dubious term (Frith, 1999) Fast forward to the last twenty years, it has blossomed into an alluring topic which has shed light and confidence for people suffering with SpLD. Dyslexia is made up of two groups, 'dye' meaning difficult and 'lexia' meaning reading or language. It stems from Greek roots and was developed from philosopher Adolf Kussmaul in the 1870s (Ball et al., 2011). Ireland has undertaken research in the SEN specifically in the area of dyslexia. It explores and examines how prevalent dyslexia across all education levels. Various studies from different countries indicate that approximately fifteen percent of people in today's society have dyslexia (DAI, 2021). However (Ball et al., 2011) believes that only approximately six to eight percent of the population are affected with the SpLD. Overall, dyslexia affects approximately fifty percent of third level students (Loftus, 2009). These statistics clearly highlight the barriers that the further education sector are faced with.

The first half of the nineteenth century coincided with the work of Tim Miles. The work of Miles gave the outline for dyslexia and his work with Elaine Miles has overturned some of the prejudices surrounding the topic. The work of Miles and Frith hold the solutions to a number of paradoxes that have been explored in the current research. The first paradox is concerned with the lack of agreement about the very definition of dyslexia (Miles, 1995). Miles insisted that dyslexia should not just be associated with the difficulty of reading and writing. It should be seen as a syndrome and not a difficulty but rather an underlying neurological basis (Miles, 1994), which also corresponds with the work of Shaywitz & Shaywitz, (2005). By categorising dyslexia into a neurological function it has had an impact on both theory and practice (Frith, 2001). From research conducted over the years, we can now say that dyslexia can come in many ways and forms. Throughout past decades, the perceptions of dyslexia were not of great concern and to this day some people still perceive it that way, even some educators. Majority of educationalists now agree that dyslexia is a major flaw in the education system, meaning that our skills, materials, supports and knowledge need to be enhanced. Although there are many mixed perceptions on the area it is agreed that nobody questions the existence of dyslexia (Ball et al, 2011). Milder cases affecting ten percent of the population and more severe cases around five percent (DAI, 2021). Dyslexia can be perceived and described in numerous ways. In order to exactly pinpoint the correct definition, we first must look at the correct terminology. Beginning with, specific learning difficulty (SpLD), people who suffer with dyslexia prefer the term specific reading difficulty according to a survey conducted by the European Dyslexia Association (2021). This concept proposes an equal and less indicative term. The general consensus when it comes to the definition of dyslexia is that people have a difficulty with reading, writing and memory (DAI, 2021). Dyslexia sufferers commonly have more difficulty with phonological awareness (speech sounds). In particular, mental arithmetic , involving certain subjects such as maths that include functioning and sequencing are proven very difficult for people with dyslexia (Nijakowska, 2018).These characteristics will affect written expressions, ideas and methods of learning and completing everyday tasks. Perceptions made by society can all agree on the most common characteristics dyslexia holds. These common characteristics are how we define dyslexia today.

The Task Force (2001) defines dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty that relates specifically to the basic skills of reading, writing and spelling. Society may assume that someone who has a difficulty in phonological processing such as memory, naming, organisation, sequencing and motor skills has to have dyslexia; However someone who holds one of these individual characteristics by themselves are not clear markers of dyslexia (Ramus,

2003). In order to understand dyslexia Frith & Morton (1995) developed a casual framework that aims to collect perceptions and further develop our understanding of dyslexia. By doing so, it combats misconceptions of the specific learning difficulty.

2.3 Social Model of Practice

In history, the practical social models in understanding dyslexia have always been the leading path for traditional teachers with regards to their approaches to provision. There are numerous models of disability which have been adapted over the years. For the purpose of this study the 'social' and 'medical' models of disability will be examined. The medical model focuses on diagnosing deficiencies and provide accommodations compared to the social model which embraces disability as a difference and is aimed at correcting systematic exclusions in organisations (Titchkosky, 2011). In recent years a third perspective has now emerged and is referred to as the 'cultural' model (Hamraie, 2016). This perspective reframes disability as a 'valuable form of human variation' (Hamraie, 2016). As mentioned for the purpose of this study, the social model will be focused on.

Over recent years most organisations have developed their own adaptation of the social model. These individualised models would solely focus on students that have SEN and have specific needs that need to be met. It was said in more traditional times that people with known physical or mental disabilities are categorised as having a medical problem and could only receive support in treatments and hospital environments (Lalor & Share, 2009). During more traditional times the education system was controlled by religious orders and this social model was evident in schools, therefore learning difficulties were not a concern. It is evident in more former literature that there was little to no government policy to support students with SEN (Flood, 2013). However according to Griffin and Shevlin (2007) research in the area of SEN has become more evident in recent years and the overall rise in special education provision in Ireland has now changed how education is viewed and how it can be adapted and developed. The 1970s the traditional social model was rejected and the patterns that we know today started to emerge (Doddy, 2015). The social model of disability has been developed throughout education for decades, the model that we know today states that a person that has a disability is set or viewed by the way society is organised rather than a person's actual impairment (AFI, 2021). The idea of the social model explores removing restrictive barriers with regards to life decisions for people with a disability. The social model was created through people with disabilities. Having them develop the model allowed for their experiences to be heard and provided knowledge

around the subject of inclusivity. The traditional method tends to make no distinction between people with disabilities, thus leading to a non-inclusive environment (Share & Lalor, 2009).

Recent changes in Ireland has now brought movement toward an inclusive environment for students with not just SpLDs but for all students (Irish Educational Act of 2004). The newer model recognizes that people with disabilities can be excluded from society and explores how society's reaction to the way people with disabilities are portrayed. The support was then implemented into the Irish education system as it allows for people with disabilities to be independent (Share & Lalor, 2009). This was then implemented into the education system. The American activists O'Brien & O'Brien, (2000) further developed an alternative practice model that allowed for inclusivity to be implemented in every level of education. O'Brien & O'Brien, (2000) believe that teachers should act as facilitators as opposed to shadowing students with disabilities. In order to adapt to this new model, educators first have to understand how to apply the social model in their classroom, it will eventually lead to positive outcomes for not only the students with disabilities but also the teachers as they have somehow in some way addressed those student's needs.

2.4 The legislative and policy context for supporting adult learners with dyslexia

Ireland have been known for being quite stagnant with regards to inclusive practice. Rose et al., (2010) has stated that Ireland aims to create a more equitable education system across the board by embracing diversity through marginalised groups. However over the last decade there has been considerable development with the introduction of new policies and legislatives within Ireland (Department of Education, 2007). Key policies have advanced leading to a further supportive system for both teachers and students with regards to dyslexia. It has also ensured the that the fundamental rights of people with disabilities have the same equal opportunities as students who have no disabilities (Department of Education, 2007). The main report that will be referenced throughout the study is the report on the Task force for dyslexia (2001).

Furthermore the Task Force for dyslexia was established in 2001 and explored current provisions for children and young adults from nursery school to further education. Task Force for dyslexia aims to recognise what training skills and opportunities for continued professional development are available for teachers to upskill within their field. Within this report it is argued that there needs to be consistency across the board in all schools and that

this model of provision will provide that (Department of Education, 2007). It also states that learning support should be made available to all students and should be made flexible to meet the needs of students, which has been a discussion point made throughout the interviews conducted. The DES recommend that all teachers should be supplied with courses for adequate training on different teaching styles and implementation for their classes on a continued professional development basis (Task force of Dyslexia, 2001). From my own view point it is necessary that teachers have these opportunities for teacher education as the Task Force of Dyslexia (2001) has mentioned above. However I would also argue that there is a lack of communication within the education sector. Cunnighams (2016) findings suggest that teachers are not aware that these courses are made available to them by their school/organisation. Therefore this may be a gap in the overall sector that must be examined.

The European Union's 2020 growth strategy aims to provide an inclusive economy in relation to productivity, social cohesion and employment (European Commission, 2010). Five targets were agreed upon by the European Union to achieve by 2020, these were as follows social inclusion, poverty reduction, employment and education (European Commission 2020). This strategy also falls in line with the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, that states a child that has SEN will be educated in an all-inclusive environment. In order for a person with SpLDs to be educated in an inclusive environment, educators must be trained adequality. The National Skills Strategy 2020 (Department of Education, 2020) outlines the need for teacher education. It identified that forty five percent of people should obtain a National Framework qualification level four or five and the following seven percent will have a qualification from levels one to three (AFI, 2021). Lynch & Grummell, (2018) states that orientated discourses refine the further education sector. This has resulted in problematic issues for the FE sector as it does not provide a progressive education which focuses on the needs and past experiences of students in order to form an inclusive environment.

The policies and legislations that have been outlined above state that students have the right to education and to be educated in an inclusive environment (AHEAD, 2017). It also states that provisions and changes must be made to the current education system in general in order to combat these problematic areas. However the current legislations and policies all relate to primary, secondary or higher education compared to the Task Force of Dyslexia were it only pertains to the Further Education sector. In my own opinion it is clear from the research in the literature review that there is a gap in policies, legislations and practices with regards to the further education sector. In order

to fill these gaps additional teacher education and further refinement on policies need to be created specifically to student education needs. According to the United Nations any limitation, preference or impairing of equality in education is seen as discrimination (UNESCO, 2016).

2.5 School Professionals' Attitudes towards dyslexia

According to Hastings and Logan, (2013) educators attitudes can influence students with regards to supports and structures made available in the college for students with SpLDs . This influence can affect the overall experiences of students from both a social and academic perspective. In order to produce an inclusive environment for all students and especially students with SpLDs it is vital that the subject teachers have a central role when having a student that requires support. It is argued that teachers need to take responsibility for SpLDs students' needs and see it as part of their role and not as extra work. From a survey conducted by (Hastings and Logan, 2013) fifty two per cent of teachers agreed that they had insufficient time to teach students with SpLD and referred them to the learning support tutor available. Taking this into consideration this can cause segregation among staff members (Pijl, 1997). During Forlin and Chambers (2011) study they found that teachers confidence levels in supporting these students increased, rather than decreased with age and experience. Interestingly through the interviews conducted in the current study, some participants stated older teachers lacked a positive attitude when it comes to upskilling in the area of SpLDs. However in line with Dewey's pragmatic approach, pragmatists want to improve through experimentation according to Dewey (1997). This means that on-the-job experience is key to forming an inclusive environment (Avramidis et al., 2000). Hastings and Logan, (2013) study concluded that eighty per cent of teachers agreed that students who have SpLDs benefit from learning in an inclusive environment. However from reading through literature and case studies this only seems to suit depending on the learning difficulty itself. Avramidis et al., (2000) argues that teachers are more positive towards students who have sensory difficulties or mild learning difficulties compared to that of more severe learning difficulties or emotional/behavioural problems. Hastings and Logan, (2013) conducted a survey and within this they asked teachers to rank the SpLDs that they found easiest to include in their day to day teaching, dyslexia was the most common specific learning difficulty.

Friths (1995) model is how we can overcome this barrier of knowledge to dyslexia. These perceptions embrace with the knowledge of inclusion. Current definitions of dyslexia proposed by multiple organisations such

as the British Psychological Society (2020), and Irish Dyslexia Association (2021) and the Irish Task Force on Dyslexia (2001) all agree that dyslexia may be visible in many forms and symptoms but more specifically in reading and writing. Dyslexia is not only related to reading and spelling, it can be related to various specific difficulties for students such as memory. The categorical notion of dyslexia has been dependant on a child's deficit notion of disability, multiple studies have argued this and it has been unsuccessful in validating this construct (Torgesen, 2002; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Although it is difficult to pinpoint a correct definition of dyslexia, multiple definitions published from organisations such as the British Psychological Society (2020) defining dyslexia as ''when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty''. Throughout time this definition has been omitted due to being educationally unsound (Pumfrey & Reason, 1991). It is now argued in policies that educators should be stepping away from using categorical models of dyslexia and should be exploring the link between assessment and teaching to enhance a student's learning journey.

2.6 Difficulty with labels

Kerins (2013) argues that someone who has a SpLD can have a positive way of promoting individuality, however, as mentioned above attitudes and others opinions can affect their own personal beliefs. Possessing a SpLD is said to be far more likely to be perceived as a negative phenomenon Kerins (2013). Beart et al., (2005) discussed that a person who possesses a SpLD is usually seen as having a 'dominant identifying label'. Kerins (2014) argues that being identified by label can also result leading to a lower value leading to unfair treatment. This unfair treatment is due to educators attitudes and can result in a reduction of learning opportunities for students (Woodcock, 2013). Educators' negative attitudes can influence a student's self-perception (Westwood, 2001), compared to that of a positive educator's attitude which can result in more learning opportunities for the student (Woodcock, 2013). According to Winter (2006) a teacher must possess a positive attitude towards SpLD students for inclusion to be successfully implemented. It is evident throughout research such as Griffin and Shevlin (2007) that putting labels on students that have SEN can lead to assumptions about the capabilities of that particular student and operate from the notion of their weaknesses as opposed to their strengths. This leads to defining students through a label rather than their characteristics and capabilities. It has been said through the research of Travers (2010) that strategies that have been implemented into classrooms in supporting these students with SpLD have had a positive impact on their education. It is also argued that having these supports available for students

with SpLD can provide a safe environment. However, this is not completely in line with the idea of full inclusion where every student should be supported not just those with SpLDs (Travers, 2010).

2.7 Barriers

Many education sectors are operated under many controlling conditions such as structure, discipline and adherence to the general teaching curriculum. It has also been stated by Travers, (2010) that there has been an over emphasis on academic results across all education levels in Ireland. This can also cause issues to inclusion for students moving from one level to the next in education (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). As mentioned above and throughout the literature that people with dyslexia often have difficulty with the technical aspects of learning particularly with literacy, writing, spelling and reading. These difficulties can lead to students falling behind and struggling with their work. Hastings and Logan (2013) found that a student's main barrier in education was the lack of resources made available. A survey conducted by Hastings and Logan (2013) suggested that time pressure was a barrier for the teachers. The findings resulted in 52 percent of teachers strongly agreed that they insufficient time to teach these students. A major barrier that was identified throughout the literature was a strong misconception of students with SpLD among subject teachers (Woodcock, 2013). Tait and Purdie (2000) state that teachers overall attitudes toward students with SpLDs was not always positively taken on board in the classroom. DeSimone and Parmar (2006) researched mathematics teachers and their attitudes towards students with SpLDs across nineteen states in America. The research resulted in teachers not seeing a distinction between SpLDs students and low performing students in their classes. Therefore, this meant that teachers were under the assumption that supports made available for low performing students were adequate for students with SpLDs. This portrays a lack of understanding among subject teachers. Siperstein and Goding (1985) also found that a teachers attitude toward a student with SpLD were based more on the label rather than observed behaviors' in the classroom.

2.8 Inclusivity

Dewey (1997) argues that 'old' and 'new' education is inadequate and how do we as educators question this? He believes that neither contemporary and traditional styles of teaching apply to a developed philosophical experience. Dewey (1997) urges educators to adapt their classrooms and should explore larger issues in education in terms of divisive 'ism' including inclusivism. Inclusive education is the focal point for students with SpLDs, it

supports the rights of students and explores how the education system as a whole can adopt and implement new approaches to support the diverse needs of students (Winter & O'Raw, 2010). This Inclusive education approach devises a plan to support both teachers and students when it comes to resources. It examines the barriers and provides recommendations to achieve learning to their full potential (Ainscow et al., 2006). The British Psychological Society, (2020) identifies inclusive education as further developing our structuring of policies and legislatives, our creativity when it comes to practice and setting our curriculum all within the college environment. Designing a curriculum that allows for inclusivity will allow for a more positive outcome for both students and teachers (Woodcock 2013). Hearne et al., (2020) study examines learners and their experience with dyslexia. Fourteen participants were interviewed with relevance to the newly restructured Further Education and Training sector. Within the interviews it was clear that students could benefit from having a more inclusive environment with fellow peers in the classroom. Hearne et al., (2020) recommends that changes will have to be made in order to form a more inclusive environment for students with SpLD. This study was constructed through a critical pragmatic research paradigm. Which also drew on the studies of John Dewey. Similar to this study, my research will adopt a qualitative approach, which will allow for a more in depth analysis of the data. Buchanan & Warwicks, (2020) study aimed to identify how the Further Education sector can support adults with mental health and SpLDs in the classroom. The study acknowledged that there is a gap in the literature between health, disabilities and education (Buchanan & Warwick, 2020). Buchanan and Warwick (2020) recommend that in order to bridge these together the tertiary sector need to offer extra resources through transformative learning. Similar to Buchanan, Warwick (2020), Hearne et al., (2020) and Heelan (2015) agrees that students suffer with regards to inclusion when it comes to dyslexia and that institutions are using retro fit models. Heelan (2015) states that in order to support these students we need to adapt this model for each student; However on the contrary, Felder and Brent (2005) state that "individualised instruction is impractical and one-size-fits-all is ineffective". They believe a more balanced approach is the best a teacher can do to ensure diverse needs are met (Felder & Brent 2005). To ensure that diversity needs are met Universal Design of Learning explores these needs within the context of the students learning environment such as placement and classroom. It will then design the module that will include tasks, materials and technology to ensure these diverse needs are met (AHEAD, 2017). This may not be realistic due to the class size especially within Further Education and Third Level as this may not be feasible. Again I would agree

with this idea of one size fits all approach is unrealistic and teachers may not be able to design a programme for each individual student (Felder and Brent, 2005).

In order to combat these misconceptions around dyslexia, firstly educators must learn how they can support learners further in their studies. They can do this by providing an inclusive environment. The Department of Education, (2007) supplied multiple strategies and methods that could enhance your teaching in order for students diverse needs to be met and to learn to their full potential. They encourage educators to implement various pedagogies and multi-sensory learning approaches which will apply to all students. This inclusive education approach encompasses the social model of disability that was mentioned above. The need for structural change across the board in all aspects of education are reiterated when inclusivity and the social model of disability combine. It reiterates the necessity for structural change for people with SEN to have equal opportunities and support in education (Fiesta, 2013). Felce (1997) views are that the individual does not have limitations but moreover associated with societies failure in providing the appropriate resources to support and guide that individual. The theme of inclusivity is a main theme throughout the research because the policies and legislations are very much the same views as I hold as a pragmatic researcher, this will lend to the structure of this chapter.

2.9 Continuous Professional Development

A study conducted by Drudy and Kinsella (2009) found that there was a need for an increased expertise on SEN among mainly mainstream school professionals but this can be expanded across all levels of education. It is argued in Drudy and Kinsella's (2009) study that there should be more opportunities available for teachers around effective educational strategies for supporting students with SpLDs. It is said that teachers currently in Ireland do not need to hold a professional qualification with regards to SEN nor do they have to undertake any additional courses (Travers et al., 2010). This is a growing concern among many teachers across all levels of education due to the growing number of students that require learning support. The Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024 was redeveloped in order to support teachers. The main focus of the strategy is constructed on three pillars of building skills, fostering inclusion and creating pathways and aims to address the economic and societal challenges faced over the coming years (SOLAS, 2020). The main area of focus for the current research is the point made on 'The pedagogy and technical skills for all teachers/trainers of adults will need to keep ahead of the curve' (SOLAS, 2020). This idea will support the research in forming my interview questions. It will open up discussion in

the area of training which will then lead into my thematic analysis of the data gathered in interviews. The basis of this paper is to provide an overview of what the plan for teacher education is in the further education sector. This document is what holds the future for these skills in Ireland. Farrell and O'Neill (2011) conducted interviews during their study and were worried with the high volume of participants that expressed concerns over the ability and attitudes of some subject teachers to support their students if they have SpLDs. It is argued in Farrell and O'Neill's (2011) interviews that CPD should be mandatory in order to improve competency levels among teachers to support students with SpLDs. From a previous study conducted by Winter (2006) a survey was conducted with 203 student teachers in Northern Ireland with regards to training and whether they felt confident supporting these students with their current education. The results showed that 89 per cent of the respondents felt that their initial professional training did not prepare to support these students. It has been proven through the research of Mungai & Thornburg, (2002) and Carroll et al., (2003) that teachers who lack training and CPD opportunities often have negative attitudes towards students with SpLD compared to that of teachers who have received professional training, who display a more positive attitude.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

The casual modelling framework was originally developed by Uta Frith (1999) and was revised in 2001 on how the original three factors can link with environmental factors. She developed this framework to better illustrate an understanding of dyslexia. This theoretical framework will be entwined throughout this study. The casual model will aim to provide a structure and balance that allows for the research to be thoroughly examined through the knowledge of dyslexia that pre-exists in research. If we want to construct and compare casual models we first must connect the various elements of the framework. Frith develops our understanding through three perspectives biological, cognitive and behavioural, in more recent years an environmental factor has come into light. Everyone can agree that the basic understanding of dyslexia holds that difficulties lie within reading and writing, which are characteristic features of dyslexia and can be linked with the behavioural perspective. With regards to the environmental factor, causes such as cultural attitudes, socio economic and provision of teaching all have to be taken into consideration (Frith, 1999). Frith (1999) also states that all three levels of the framework are of equal importance and should compliment each other. The decision to choose this framework above other theorists that may link in with SpLD such as John Dewey and Vygotsky is that Friths work has been evident throughout other

researchers work such as Shaywitz and Shaywitz, (2005) and Temple et al., (2003). With Friths work becoming more apparent in recent research it proves that the framework holds value and is useful when exploring the various causes and symptoms of dyslexia. An advantaged to adopting this framework in the study is how it can be developed for individual experiences. The model stems from the knowledge that already pre-exists from research. From these combines the various levels of explanations ultimately leads to a richer understanding of dyslexia which is what is used in today's understanding of dyslexia. The behavioural level provides a structure of the difficulties associated with dyslexia. The mental processes also known as the cognitive level are correlate with memory, perception and attention. These cognitive symptoms also link in with the behavioural level as Frith mention above that all levels should compliment each other. The biological level is associated with biochemical, genetic and neurophysiological explanations (Frith, 1999). These behavioural, cognitive and biological factors all coincide with the environmental factors. The environmental factor refers to the environment to which we have been exposed.

2.11 Conclusion

This literature review chapter has explored some of the main contemporary issues that exist with current educators' perspectives towards dyslexia and supporting these students. It has discussed some of the main issues such as inclusivity, continued professional development, policy and legislation. Even though in the literature it states that Ireland has been lagging behind in the area of inclusion. There has been significant development in the within the Irish education system across all levels in terms of policy and legislation in the right to involve all students with specific learning difficulties with an inclusive education (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). However, based on the current light in research it is evident that there are some gaps and hurdles that the system still needs to overcome in order to provide a fully inclusive environment for education. The main issue that has been acknowledged throughout former and current research is inclusivity. This is outlined through Dewey's theory of pragmatism, which is one of the main underpinnings of this research. Both students and teachers play a role in shaping a student's education journey, so it is important to understand multiple perceptions of dyslexia from both a teacher and students stance. Felder and Brent (2005) state that 'one size fits all' is unrealistic in the real world and the best educators can do is to adapt their approach according to the situation. Understanding what the characteristics of dyslexia are and the basics on how to approach a student seems to be a skill that most teachers do not acquire which again is in line with the work of Hastings and Logans (2013) study. The Social model was also acknowledged

which fed into the literature of inclusivity and policy. This newer model recognises that someone with a disability may become excluded by society so therefore policies and legislatives were implemented such as The Education Act 1998 (European Commission, 1998), The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Report on the Task Force for Dyslexia (2001). These policies allow students with SpLDs the equal opportunity as students who do not suffer with SpLDs. Even though these policies protect the students, it also gives educators the knowledge of what skills they should acquire therefore allowing teachers the opportunity for continued professional development. By gaining these insights, beliefs, views from the literature it will provide a detailed analysis of how inclusion and additional supports could be implemented into the sector for the discussion chapter. There is a limited understanding of dyslexia and how students can be supported in the classroom from industry professionals according to NCSE (2014). It is also stated by the NSCE (2014) that Ireland does not have a sufficient system in place for collecting data in an academic environment with regards to students with SpLDs. This further implies the importance of conducting research in the area in relation to dyslexia.

The overall literature review has implied that there is a gap in Irish literature with regards to SEN and inclusion. The research surrounding the topic of dyslexia and support suggests that there has been a significant development in the Irish Education system (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). However, it is quite clear from the literature that there is still obstacles that must be reviewed in order to move forward with a fully inclusive environment. It is clear from previous research papers that gaining insights, perceptions and experiences are an effective way of authentically assessing how these supports can be implemented into the Further Education sector.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will explore my philosophy through the lenses of an ontological and epistemological stance. I will provide justification and an explanation on the methods and methodology framework that was undertaken in conducting the research. I will then discuss the data collection and analysis process, paradigmatic foundations, research strategy/approach, sampling strategy and participants, ethical considerations, rigour of the study such as validity, reliability, credibility, the challenges I encountered and the limitations of the study. The research that was undertaken was a qualitative approach which allowed for a broader but deeper insight into the current teacher perceptions of dyslexia in Further Education. Semi structured interviews were conducted with six further education teachers who had various backgrounds in subjects, knowledge and experience. These participants were also fellow peers in my current place of employment. Para-relations was an ethical issue when designing the research. At this point I acknowledged that there were numerous ways I could conduct this research such as a triangulation approach including surveys and case studies. I deemed the qualitative approach more valuable and it also provided clarity to the research question at hand. I will further explain why I deemed this approach more suited to the research question along with the rationale for a qualitative approach initiated. The objectives of the study will also be justified in this chapter. The qualitative study will be conducted through the paradigm of a pragmatic approach, as stated above and will incorporate my ontological and epistemological stance. Rossman & Wilson (1985) argue that instead of putting emphasis on the methods, the emphasis should be placed on the research problem. Therefore choosing a qualitative approach deemed most necessary to extract the valuable data to answer the research question.

3.1 Pragmatic View

3.1.1 Ontological Stance

Dewey (1997) states that pragmatism encourages the idea of implementing experiences as a way to adjust in society. Pragmatism focuses on the future and what can be done to show development all the while connecting abstract issues on the epistemological and methodological levels (Arnon & Reichel, 2009). This pragmatic constructivist approach will be interwoven throughout the research with an ontological and epistemological stance.

Although there are implications to this theory such as individual differences (Limpao & Nabua, 2019). Felder and Brent (2005) argue that providing each student with specialised instruction is improbable and illogical. 'One- size-fits-all' is inadequate for most students. Pragmatists want to improve through experimentation. They prefer to experience first-hand instead of listening to others experiences and relating these to their problems. Although this study is based on listening to others experiences it will inform the readers of an in-depth analysis and should support and guide them through their own personal studies and experiences. It is clear that my socially constructed ontological perspective has influenced my decision in designing this research (Doddy, 2015). As stated in the beginning of this paper I chose to research teachers perceptions of dyslexia because I myself grew up in a family of six, my parents and three siblings all had dyslexia to different extents. I saw first-hand how difficult it was for my siblings in school but also for my parents in supporting them. I particularly chose to research teachers perceptions because as a recently qualified teacher, I work mostly within student learning support and began to query what knowledge do teachers currently have with regards to supporting students with dyslexia. It was also backed up by an experience my sibling had in school where their teacher did not believe in dyslexia, which was infuriating for everyone involved especially my brother as he felt he was not supported in the system from a very young age. We moved when we were young so coming from a school that supported him to a school who did not believe in dyslexia was a shock so his experiences varied from school to school. From these experiences alone it outlined the challenges that teachers have supporting students with dyslexia so now that I am a qualified teacher I found that it was important to firstly educate myself with the knowledge in order for these students to have an enjoyable learning experience and secondly to hopefully impart knowledge from the data collected to educate others. Being filtered through a 'personal lenses, the personal self, in turn, becomes the researcher-self' (Creswell, 2014). This allows for honesty in the research and that all inquiry is laden with values (Creswell, 2014).

Powell et al., (2001) states that pragmaticism is not to find the truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving. From personal experiences as an educator it is quite clear that dyslexia needs to be explored further to identify the challenges and provide solutions in order to provide a more inclusive environment which will benefit not only students with dyslexia but all students and teachers. I have witnessed first-hand how learning support can guide, motivate and empower students in order for them to reach their full potential.

3.1.2 Epistemological Stance/ Theory of Inquiry

As an educator and researcher I am exploring the area of dyslexia to find out what constitutes as valid knowledge. This will be evident through the research question 'what is dyslexia?' In order to define dyslexia Frith (1995) develops a theoretical framework as stated in the literature review, this will be the basis of the study which will underpin the opinions that arise in the interviews. Dewey states that our personal perceptions are influenced by our social experiences (Morgan, 2014). The pragmatic philosophy that was developed by Dewey has traditionally been known as 'epistemology'. However Dewey rejected this term and developed the term 'theory of inquiry'. He believed that this best suited the term (Dewey, 1999). Theory of inquiry is to help our understanding of the relationship between our actions and the consequences that those actions cause. This will therefore create knowledge to support control over our actions (Dewey, 1999). The major underpinning of this pragmatic approach is that the values and beliefs are socially constructed (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

3.2 Research Design

The specific objective of this research is that the semi structured interviews will explore the opinions of further education teachers with regards to dyslexia. The main topics that reoccurred within the interviews are the challenges and opportunities that teachers face when supporting these students. The experiences of these educators on training, supports and improvements that could be made to enhance the learning journey for both teacher and learner.

Newman et al., (1998) identifies that qualitative and quantitative research should not be seen as two complete opposites to one another but rather they should represent different ends on a continuum. According to Stake (2010) qualitative studies are successful when the research question itself is explained through the perception of a person's experience. It is also outlined by Creswell (2003), that in order to have a successful quantitative study the research question seeks to understand relationships between variables. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of dyslexia, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice. Narrative inquiry was undertaken within this qualitative research as the studies main focus is the stories themselves that are mentioned in the interviews, these stories are the raw data that will be analysed to form a conclusion. Cohen et al., (2007) states that descriptive research should only be used when the aim of the study is to provide an account of

the nature of prevailing conditions and phenomena. However, the current study adopted an exploratory research design. As stated by Stake (2010) the study at hand decided to explore what teachers' attitudes are towards dyslexia and the inclusion of dyslexics specifically, as opposed to focusing on their attitudes towards inclusion and younger children in general, as in previous research. This approach allows investigators to seek new insights and assess phenomena in a new light (Robson, 2002). Narrative inquiry is similar to grounded theory as they both are based in a qualitative way of moving from 'individual knowledge to collective knowledge' (Stake, 2010). Reflecting on the evolving narrative inquiry was essential in the research study as it was guiding and supporting changes made throughout the research process in the pilot test interview as it would lend to a more in-depth analysis on whether the questions originally asked answered the research question(s).

3.3 Qualitative Research

There was a great abundance of ideas and areas I could research in the area of dyslexia but narrowing down the research question to teachers perceptions of dyslexia was difficult. I found it difficult to choose from a teachers and a student's perspective because I am both an adult educator and a student. The next option would be conducting a mixed methods approach and according to Johnson et al., (2007) and Newman (2002) it is argued that mixed methods is conducted to obtain a more extensive analysis of the phenomenon and can answer the research question better that each can individually, however; Preskill & Russ-Eft, (2009) discusses that conducting a mixed method approach holds bias and weakness. Understanding the major advantages and disadvantages of each approach is likely to help you to select the most appropriate methodology for the task in hand (Bell 2014). Taken this previous research and the research question itself into consideration it was decided that a qualitative approach was deemed best suited to answer the question at hand (Bell 2005). According to Silverman (2017) students assume that qualitative research begins with hypotheses and operational definitions similar to quantitative research. It is argued that adequate qualitative research will start with the question 'What is going on here?' It will avoid assuming early hypotheses and definitions but instead it will seek to understand how the participants define the situation through experience (Silverman, 2017). Through the data gathered in the semi structured interviews the research will find unexpected answers which will deviate and change direction of the course of the research. This is evident through the interviews, literature and research questions that were initially asked in the research. Through the course of the interviews training was a subject that reoccurred and although this was not an area of research, it

was taken into account in the literature review. It is said that just because qualitative research seeks to unearth opinions and beliefs and avoids to set hypotheses early on in the research does not mean the study should be any less rigorous or critical to that of a mixed method approach (Silverman, 2017). Casebeer & Verhoef, (1998) states that a qualitative approach provides a non-numerical explanation and interpretation for the purpose of discovering underlining meaning and patterns of relationships. Considering this research is based on perceptions, beliefs and values of adult educators the data collected will be enriched and meaningful. With this in mind the research was designed to firstly, educate myself in the field of student support, educate fellow educators in the area on theories and new concepts they can implement into their classroom and secondly hopefully give guidance to students who have dyslexia on how they can communicate to their teachers. This approach deemed more suited for the research question as it allowed for opinions to be unearthed among thoughts, beliefs and values (Johnson et al., 2007) This will also provide a detailed analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2013) from the view of further education teachers to provide a greater sense of the practical, theoretical and policy issues which need to be addressed to ensure that an inclusive learning environment is accessible to all students in the Further Education system.

The qualitative data was gathered through semi structured interviews conducted with six teachers with various backgrounds in the further education sector. A pilot test was conducted first with an FE teacher. The pilot study had three aims (1) to gather data to provide guidance with instruments, (2) how effective is the research utilizing the data and (3) how effective is the theoretical framework for the study. It is argued that pilot studies are conducted to assess the efficacy of the study with regards to methodology, methods and design (Malmqvist et al., 2019). The argument that is based on the assumption that researchers conduct pilot tests for the hope that it will not only better inform and prepare them but it will also provide background to the limitations that may arise throughout the study (Malmqvist et al., 2019). It is said that researchers who conduct pilot tests have the potential to increase the quality of the research if managed and organised correctly (Bryman, 2016).

3.4 Participants

Participants were chosen through purposive sampling. Patton (2001) states that most sampling strategies in qualitative studies are generally chosen through purposive sampling as it provides richer information compared to that of a quantitative study. Creswell et al., (2011) described purposive sampling by identifying and selecting groups that have a knowledge and background in the phenomenon that is being researched. The participants

selected for the study stem from various backgrounds in subjects such as communications, music, computers, business and art. For the study it deemed most appropriate to have a diverse range of backgrounds with regards to the knowledge teachers possess with regards to dyslexia. The participants were also chosen based on availability, some on experience in the area of student support and some were chosen because they were newly qualified FE teachers (Bernard, 2002). One of the limitations that is associated with purposive sampling is that the study may be less generalizable due to the small sample size compared to probabilistic or random sampling were the generalizability of the study minimizes the potential of bias. Overall the decision for purposive sampling was that it was consistent with the aims and objectives of the study conducted by Palinkas et al., (2013). Participants were informed that their identity will remain anonymous but answers may be paraphrased and quoted directly in the findings and discussion. Participants were provided with an overall outline of the study, consent form and questions for the interview two weeks prior to the interview (See Appendix B) to allow time for questions. During this time they could ask any questions and this was also reiterated at the beginning of each interview to ensure the participant understood the research and the aims of the study. At the end of each interview the participant was given a week to retract any information that they wished to be null in void in the study. By signing the consent form participants were allowing for any findings to be used in the write up, this will also ensure ethics have been considered. A summary of each participants characteristics such as subject and teaching length and experiences can be found below. Participants have been assigned with the name of participant A,B,C,D,E and F as this will protect their identities covering ethical considerations.

Name	Role	Years Teaching
Participant A	Learning support and Subject teacher (Communications)	20+ Years
Participant B	Subject teacher (Music)	1 Year
Participant C	Subject teacher (Marketing)	10+ Years
Participant D	Subject teacher (Radio)	1 Year
Participant E	Subject teacher (Computers)	10+ Years
Participant F	Head of Learning Support	20+ Years

3.5 Interviews

Six semi structured interviews were conducted with six further education teachers. This style of method was influenced from a narrative inquiry based research. One of the main ethical issues that had to be taken into consideration was that the participants that took part worked in the same organisational body where the researcher works. This was a major ethical consideration that was taken into account during the research design process. In order to rule out any bias and ethics semi structured interviews will be constructed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. The interview questions will have discussion topics which will allow the participants to speak openly. Semi Structured interviews are used to gather insight into experiences, beliefs, values and assumptions (Creswell, 2009). Braun and Clarke, (2006) define these as 'realties' and argue that they add to the wider society experience. Conducting interviews on a smaller scale may allow for richer data to be extracted from the interviews compared to that of a larger scale study. The main aim of the research is to explore and seek to unearth opinions and assumptions on what challenges, supports, existing knowledge, experience and training teachers possess and are faced with in the further education system in supporting students with dyslexia. Initially teachers were chosen through purposive sampling but due to constraints some teachers were unavailable. These interviews could have been conducted through email, which according to Abbott & Snidal, (2000) is a more ethical and appropriate way of conducting primary research as it allows for the participant to take their time in answering the questions in a familiar environment. However this research is based on a narrative inquiry and it was important for the study to gather as much detailed information as possible, as it allows for clarification. Face to face interviews also allow for a much more in depth analysis of the data, body language can be clearly identified, the interviewer can ask for elaborations on answers if needs be compared to the disadvantages where it can be time consuming in the interview itself and the process of recruitment. It is also argued that face to face interviews can deliver biased responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The semi structured interviews were all open-ended questions so participants could speak freely and openly without any pressure. At the beginning of each interview the researcher stated what the study was about, whether the participants had any questions and that the consent form was signed and emailed back. The first question of the interview asked participants to describe dyslexia in their own words this gave the interviewer a chance to understand what knowledge and background the participants had in the area. Descriptive questions followed when interviewees mentioned an intriguing comment. This provided the study extra

data that provided more in-depth information (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews concluded with a self-reflective open-ended question.

Interviews were conducted through zoom and were recorded with the participants consent to analyse for findings and discussion. No interviews were conducted without confirming the written and verbal informed consent of the participants. Each participant interview took place in a single interview session ranging from fifteen to sixty minutes. Each recorded interview was kept on a secure password protected personal laptop in an encrypted folder. These interviews will be destroyed once the study has been completed and finalised. Approval from the college principle was sought and once approval was given the researcher emailed the participants using their college email. The college itself did not influence any questions or findings in this research. Although each interviewee were sent the transcriptions for review and were given the opportunity to redact any information, all participants were content with the process. Conducting a narrative inquiry research allows for the phenomenon to emerge from the data, during the interviews if a participant made an interesting point the interviewer could further ask about this point (Mills & Birks, 2011; Charmaz, 2006; Urquhart, 2013). The pilot test allowed for mistakes and for the refinement of methods and methodology to be developed in the research design process. The pilot interview raised some topics that were not initially researched such as teacher training. From here the researcher then added to the literature review by identifying these topics and gaps that emerged.

3.6 Saturation

Glaser and Strauss (1967) discuss the idea of saturation, where the research cannot reach anymore new emerging theories and themes through the interview process. It was possible that saturation could be reached during the interview process as Charmaz (2006) and Urquhart (2013) argue that once saturation has been reached, the theory or phenomenon is said to be grounded. During the interview design process notes were kept and reflected upon. Mills & Birks, (2011) argue that by keeping a comparative analysis reduces bias and allows objectivity throughout the study. These notes included concerns related to the study, papers, books, self-reflection on the research design process and emerging themes and theories from the interviews.

3.7 Data Collection

According to Nowell et al., (2017) there is a need for an update in resources to facilitate researchers in qualitative research. By conducting a qualitative study, data can be gathered through the use of recording and systematizing. By providing the methods of analysis with enough detail will enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Cote' & Turgeon, 2005; Ryan et al., 2007).

The decision to adopt both a narrative and thematic analysis approach was influenced by the similar features they held. Thematic analysis is useful for highlighting commonalities and differences (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and seen more as a method than a methodology (Braun & Clarke 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) argue that unlike other qualitative methodologies, thematic analysis is not linked directly to a epistemological or theoretical perspective, therefore it is seen as a flexible method for the study. While narrative analysis supports a more general context (Squire et al., 2008). However although both approaches are diverse they both hold limitations. Squire argues that the definition of 'narrative' is disputed. Through joint analysis the data gathered in the study exposed rich informative data. Braun & Clarke's (2006) six step framework will support this decision in the research. Although a thematic analysis approach is deemed most suited to the study it is also important to recognise the flaws it carries. Although this approach is quite simple to understand and implement into the research for new researchers it holds a lack of relevant literature. Throughout the primary research it was evident that there was a gap in the literature. The positives to implementing this approach to the study can also become the negatives. The flexibility can be attractive but it can also cause inconsistency and lack of coherence when developing themes and codes (Nowell et al., 2017). Rigorous thematic analysis can produce trustworthiness (Braun & Clarke's, 2006).

The idea of thematic analysis is that the information extracted from the data is understood as a whole rather than breaking it up into smaller abstracted sections similar to narrative. The overall process of thematic analysis is understanding the main themes in the set. It is said that a theme is broader than a category as it will weave through the study as a central idea. As the study is based on phenomenology, thematic analysis is most appropriate to for this style of analysis. Narrative analysis takes on the life story method, the participants express their opinions through storytelling similar to thematic analysis. A narrative analysis also follows a small sample size which holds the same idea as insider research.

The idea of narrative analysis is that it captures the voice of the participant to help us better understand the phenomenon being asked. This style of analysis allows the researcher to tell the story again within the framework. Similar to thematic, narrative highlights and links the ideas and themes that have emerged from the data. It also provides an in-depth level of analysis as it allows for the stories to be deconstructed to expose and explore the inconsistencies and contradictions made in the literature review. Implementing both a narrative and thematic analysis was important for the study as its function is to increase the understanding about the participants experiences and how they perceive dyslexia. Increasing this understanding through thematic and narrative allows the research question being asked to be answered in the most concise way. The thematic analysis provides 'themes' that are explained fully but often written in a narrative form, which is evident throughout the findings and discussion. It is argued that if a study wants to create theory for implementation of practice such as inclusivity, then the analysis requires a more in depth and breadth analysis that moves beyond just description and conceptual ordering. The reasoning for choosing both a narrative and thematic analysis is that they both fall under social constructionism, The thematic analysis asks the 'what' whereas narrative asks the 'how' and 'why' which follows Dewey's (1997) philosophy mentioned above. Both are seeking new levels of tentative. In order for both analysis to provide an in depth view of the question Braun and Clarkes (2006) six step framework is the first step in dissecting the data.

The study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) theory when demonstrating trustworthiness. This criteria was refined through the topics of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. To recognize credibility in a study Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest techniques that may address the issue such as observation, persistence, data collection and research triangulation. Tobin & Begley, (2004) define creditability as the fit between respondents views and the researchers representation of them. Transferability refers to the generalizability of the study. Taking this into account during the research design phase, it was clear this study would have less of a chance of generalizability due to the sample size. It can be argued that a smaller sample size in a qualitative study provides richer data and context due to the personal experiences and perceptions (Koch, 1994). Dependability ensures that the research process is logical, traceable and documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is associated with the researchers interpretations of the data and how these interpretations and conclusions have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that confirmability can only be established when credibility, transferability

and dependability are achieved. Koch, (1994) recommends that throughout the research stating the 'why', 'how' and 'if' for theoretical, methodological and analytical choices can provide guidance for readers.

Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phase framework will support the criteria for coding. First phase in developing the coding criteria is familiarizing and immersing yourself into the data in order to gain in depth observations initially (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Reading through the entire data set once is recommended as initial themes, theories and assumptions can be recorded (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By doing so it allows for honesty and vigilance from the researcher's perspective (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Phase two is generating the codes, this allows for the data to be constantly revisited and be reflected (Fallace, 2015). Braun and Clarke, (2006) state that working in a systematic way through the data set will define the foundation for the research topic and questions but also in how the data is analysed (Creswell, 2014). There is no recommendation as to how many themes or codes your study can have but it is advised that having too many codes can be counterproductive of attaining clarity in the study (King, 2004). King (2004) also outlines that creating a template when coding will support the justification of inclusion for each code. Phase three commences when all the data has been collected and codes have been set. Braun and Clarke, (2006) state that a theme is not necessarily a quantifiable measure, but it should capture an overall idea of the research even if it is not specifically related to the research question being asked. Phase four begins once set themes have been applied and now, they require further refinement in order to gather richer data to answer the research question. During this phase the validity of each theme will be considered and will determine whether the themes answer the research questions and are evident throughout both the literature and the current study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This phase also allows for themes to be added if the validity of the theme is deemed irrelevant. Themes may not have enough data to support them and may interrelate to other themes set. Throughout each phase it is important to note that themes that were initially set at the beginning were constantly refined into subthemes that best suited the data gathered. It was important that refining these themes were specific enough to be discrete but broad enough to capture the research question. Through refinement phase five is approached and this is where each theme captures the opinions and develops the 'why' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). King (2004) suggests that refining codes can be ongoing but learning when to stop is difficult, it is stated that themes should not be finalized until all data has been scrutinized at least twice. Leaving sufficient time for this step allowed the study to be more credible (Nowell et al., 2017). After these five phases have been completed producing the report leads us into the final sixth phase. Once all codes have been set, the final analysis and write up can start (Braun and

Clarke, 2006) incorporating the narrative analysis. During this phase the notes that were taken during the interviews provided guidance as conducting a thematic analysis will allow for a concise, coherent, logical and non-repetitive data to be reported (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As this study is based on perceptions it is important that during this final phase that the narrative approach illustrates the story in its complexity as this will provide validity for the reader (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To develop one way of trustworthiness, in the study will rely on how the data itself supports the literature (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). In this report it must be acknowledged the unexpected results as this allows the study to be credible (Coté & Turgeon, 2005).

Coding of transcripts were completed in the same week as when the interview took place, this was because of time constraints. As participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts, it was critical that these were completed in a timely manner in order to stay on schedule. During this process it allowed for self-reflection for not only the participant but also the researcher as theories and themes began to emerge. Coding was conducted as it allows for the study to unearth opinions, values and beliefs and to understand the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Codes were created during the research process, based on the data, for the purpose of analyzing the data (Urquhart, 2013). Coding was conducted manually as opposed to electronically as this gave the study a more in-depth personal approach and allowed for the researcher to self-reflect. Initial codes were generated deductively through a hierarchical coding frame. These deductive codes were based on the pilot study, prior research and the conceptual framework adopted during the study. These codes fit into a pre-existing coding framework which aimed to provide a detailed analysis of the data (Miles et al., 2019). By conducting a deductive approach, it can also lead to a higher level of bias and produce less rich description of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

In order for the study to remain ethical throughout, following the methods outlined in this chapter ensures the validity, reliability and credibility of the study. The consent form (Appendix B) and the research outline (Appendix A) was emailed to each participant and read at the beginning of each interview. All participants gave consent before participating in the study, were of legal age and did not hold any illnesses that effected their ability to participate in the study nor did the study affect them in anyway. All material from the study will be destroyed after twelve months following final approval given by the research committee, therefore confidentiality will be

minimised. One of the main ethical concerns of the study was insider research, as mentioned above. As the researcher is currently working as a student support teacher in the FE sector, this study will support and guide them in their career. They ensured consent was obtained in writing from the college principal and from all staff participating in the study. The college itself did not influence any questions or findings in this research. The researcher ensured that all participants will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. Recorded interviews will remain in a password protected and encrypted folder on the researchers personal laptop.

3.8.1 Insider Research

I acknowledge that I am a large part of this research process and that my own personal world views are central to my research journey (Murphy, 2015). Insider research is one of the main ethical implications that was taken into consideration during the research design phase due to para-relations within the interviews. It is often criticised and scrutinised. Insider research also mirrors the narrative inquiry that was undertaken in the study. The sample size of insider research is relatively small (Costley, 2010). Narrative enquiry relies on a smaller sample size similar to thematic analysis that can range from two to four hundred (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Insider research was appropriate as the research was quite specific as it was evaluating a particular practice with dyslexia such as inclusivity (Costley, 2010). Although it is argued that insider research is concerned with just a specialised practice it may not produce results that can transfer easily to another situation, this has been an ongoing debate in higher education practice (Costley, 2010). It is assumed that in insider research a one work situation cannot be the same as another but can be otherwise known as 'fuzzy generalizations' (Bassey, 1999). These generalizations can arise from a specific situation but Bassey's (1999) argument is that these can have some general application to the overall context of a situation. Although these generalizations may be a disadvantage to the study it has a usefulness to the community and the has the potential to generate theory (Costley, 2010). Conducting insider research has also allowed for self-reflection of my work. It is a learning process so self-reflection is crucial to the study in order for it to be valid.

It is important that the research design establishes 'trustworthiness'. Creswell (2013) states that trustworthiness links the idea of validity, reliability, and objectivity. Taking into consideration insider research, various strategies for recruitments was considered and resulted in purposive sampling. Although adopting insider

research can benefit the study as the interviewee may have a better rapport with participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Although this approach is considered high in bias, to reduce it the accuracy and creditability of the study will ensure the quality and rigor. For this to be achieved the research question(s) were refined through systematic and iterative review of the literature. This defined the foundation for the research topic and questions. Munn et al., (2018) discusses that reflexivity can influence decisions and actions throughout the study, it is argued that this is a critical aspect of rigour.

3.9 Challenges and Limitations Encountered

The main challenge during this process was the availability of the teachers. Out of the initial six teachers that were chosen through purposive sampling for the study, two were not available so new participants had to be chosen. The participants were also very busy with exams and assignments due to the impact of the pandemic. These constraints deviated from the timeframe of the study. Arranging times for interviews was also quite difficult due to participants schedules, this resulted in having an extra two weeks assigned to interviews and transcribing. The sample size of the study was small due to the approach of narrative analysis as well as thematic. Thematic analysis as stated above can range from two to four hundred participants. I would not consider the sample size an issue in the current study. However, if the study was to be conducted again I would consider setting the sample size and participants by January in order for data to be analysed and reported in a rigorous manner (Doddy, 2015). I would also solely conduct thematic analysis in future because, the study could take into account different organisations and student voices and as a result the data that may be produced would provide a much more valuable insight into the area of dyslexia based on a larger scale (Murphy, 2015).

3.10 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to outline the research methods, methodology, objectives, research questions, research design process and justification for these actions. A narrative and thematic analysis was implemented in the study to allow for a more in depth personal approach to teachers perceptions with regards to dyslexia. All participants contributed to this approach by allowing their personal assumptions, beliefs and values to be analysed in order to answer the research question. The philosophy of the study including the ontological and epistemological viewpoint were also explored. The ethical considerations, limitations and challenges have been highlighted and will

provide further recommendations for future research in the final chapter. The following chapter will explore the data and discuss the analysis while relating it back to the literature with the main emerging themes to answer the research question.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

Thematic analysis of the raw data conducted from the interviews produced the findings for this paper (Hegarty & Feeley, 2009). As mentioned in the methodology chapter Braun and Clarke, (2006) six step framework for thematic analysis was implemented. Once the initial five phases had been completed the last phase produced the report from the data gathered (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this phase the notes that were taken during the interviews provided guidance as conducting a thematic analysis allows for a concise, coherent, logical, and non-repetitive data to be reported (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There was four main themes that emerged from the semi structured interviews. These interviews allowed for perceptions and experiences to be uncovered to find a basis for the research problem. The themes that were identified are as follows 'Change over time', 'Differentiation', 'Labels', 'Challenges and areas for improvement' with the overall theme of 'Inclusion'. However as Braun and Clarke, (2006) state that a theme is not necessarily a dependent quantifiable measure on its own but it should rather capture an important area in relation to the overall study even if it captures something different then the research question being asked. Taking this into consideration these themes are quite broad in relation to the research questions so it was necessary to filter these themes even further into 'subthemes'. Filtering the themes allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Again this follows Braun and Clarkes (2006) framework explored in the methodology chapter. Further refinement of each theme is phase four of this framework as it validates each theme and relates it back to the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The perceptions and experiences of the participants were vital in the final phase of the framework as the narrative approach illustrates the story in its complexity as this provided validity for the reader (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The main themes are presented and discussed below along with the sub themes that were generated throughout the interviews. Quotations were included from the participants in order to provide a more detailed analysis of each theme and the research question being asked. Each theme begins with a quotation to summarize the main theme to highlight its importance. A summary of each participants characteristics such as subject and teaching length and experiences can be found in a table format in the methodology chapter. As stated in the methodology chapter participants have been assigned with the name of participant A,B,C,D,E and F as this will protect their identities covering ethical considerations.

4.1 Main Theme: Teacher perceptions and Attitudes

"you as a teacher, I suppose it depends on how you handle it and if you're supportive of it (Participant D)"

A major barrier that was identified throughout the literature was a strong misconception of students with SEN among subject teachers (Woodcock, 2013). It was evident throughout the interviews that teachers held a basic understanding of dyslexia but from self-reflection realised that their practice could be adapted and developed immensely in order to support these students in an inclusive environment. It was believed by most interviewees that the main concerns lie with literacy issues which is correct based on Uta Friths Framework (1995). Many of the participants used their own personal experiences from teaching to describe their understanding of dyslexia. Participant A "I kind of only came to my understanding of dyslexia when I started doing the learning support in the College". It was also said from Participant C that "as a teacher I was way more aware and way more concerned about it in secondary school". Thus leading to the lack of awareness that has been made a main concern from teachers in the further education sector. The attitudes of more traditional teachers was also concerning for teachers as it was said by participant C "you as a teacher, I suppose it depends on how you handle it and if you're supportive of it". The worry of the interviewees when it came to the attitudes of teachers was interesting as the lack of support from teachers stemmed from the experience and age of the educator themselves. Participant B mentioned

I think a lot of teachers come from a much more traditional way of teaching, and with all of these new waves coming in and new approaches, a lot of teachers don't want to get on board. They want to kind of stick to their way of teaching, which is not exactly inclusive to everybody (Participant B).

From this Participant F mentioned that "there is a huge effect on how I think some students are perceived and I do still think that dyslexia isn't taken as seriously as other learning difficulties". However this seems to contradict the findings of DeSimone and Parmar, (2006) research against mathematics teachers and their attitudes towards students with SpLDs across nineteen states in America. The research resulted in teachers not seeing a distinction between SpLDs students and low performing students in their classes. Therefore, this meant that teachers were under the assumption that supports made available for low performing students were adequate for students with SpLDs. This portrays a lack of understanding among subject teachers. This contradicts the findings in

this paper as the participants in the current study held a basic understanding of dyslexia and how the students should and could be supported. The findings of this study could be interpreted in two ways with regards to current perceptions towards dyslexia. Firstly, teachers could be seen as educated in learning difficulties and are fully aware what is expected of them when supporting a student with SpLDs. Or secondly the findings could be interpreted as idealistic and should be approached with caution purely because the area is specifically exploring teachers' perceptions rather than both student and teachers, therefore may not fully reflect the reality of the situation for both teachers and students.

The more experienced participants were A and F and they believed that the system for learning support had developed immensely but could still use some improvement with regards to the full inclusion of students who could avail of learning support. It was mentioned by all participants that if they had a student with SpLD that they would simply refer them to the learning support team. This could mean that even before an established learning support system was implemented into the college and teachers did not acquire the correct knowledge in the area of SpLD, teachers now should have the knowledge to support these students from the ongoing courses made available. Unfortunately, it is argued in the interviews that a current teachers attitude towards upskilling is negative which will therefore lead to a negative attitude toward students with SpLDs which is consistent with the findings of Woodcock (2013). From the literature Woodcock (2013) argued that educators that possess a negative attitude toward a student with SpLDs can result in unfair treatment which leads to a reduction in learning opportunities for students (Woodcock, 2013). It was discussed in the interviews that over recent years when the learning support was reintroduced into the college that the subject teachers have become more inclusive and involved towards these students and that resources implemented into the classroom are becoming more effectively utilized over time due to ongoing teacher education in the area of SpLDs. Participant F mentioned that

Usually, teachers would just refer the student to learning support and not do much with the student after because they didn't have time…but this year I have noticed, and I don't know whether it was down to the pandemic and being online but there seems to be more involvement from all faculty in the college with these students (Participant F).

Participant F also expressed some interesting views on the idea of labels and students with dyslexia

I actually find he's exceptionally bright and I find students I've worked with over the years very bright who suffer from dyslexia. I do think they have a different way of thinking. I do think they think slightly outside the box more than say a standard student. I think they have some very innovative thoughts (Participant F).

During the interviews participants also said that there has been a major shift in teachers attitudes towards these students as they argue that younger and newly qualified teachers have been educated in the area of SpLDs but also follows the view of Dewey (1997), he states that pragmatism encourages the idea of implementing experiences as a way to adjust in society. This is evident in one interview were participant A mentioned that "I've never done a hdip", which therefore supports the pragmatic view of John Dewey as they are learning through doing. As mentioned in the literature review and from the findings above that teacher attitudes are central to a student's social and academic education journey (Hastings and Logan, 2013).

4.1.1 Subtheme: Teacher Agency

Throughout the interviews self-reflection was imminent. It is said that teacher agency is often defined as 'teachers demonstrating a capacity to act to solve pedagogical problems and/or challenges' (Schon, 2018). This mirrors the findings of Bandura (2012) and (Biesta et al., 2015). They both agree that teacher agency is not something teachers have rather than something they must do (Bandura, 2012; Biesta et al., 2015). Self-efficacy implies a degree of autonomy, the teacher does not have sole input but the interests of the school community should have their input (Schon, 2018). Teacher agency was quite evident throughout one interview in particular. Participant D had mentioned that if you are not constantly reviewing your own work and focusing on students' needs then that industry is not for you. 'I'm sorry any other industry in the world and you'd be getting your cards and you'd be on your bike'. This argument is also noted in John Hattie's research. He argues that by focusing on a student's learning need will more than likely raise the level of achievement (Hattie, 2013). Hattie (2013) also argues that a teacher who does not show teacher agency will put their students at risk for not achieving acceleration.

However teacher agency was evident somewhat throughout the interviews. It was acknowledged that when asking the participants what future improvements could you do in your own practice with regards to supporting these students with SpLDs they were only starting to self-reflect at this stage. Participants reflected that maybe they could develop notes specifically for students with dyslexia and perhaps providing extra learning support with the teacher themselves as opposed to the student support team. From research and the interviews my understanding of teacher agency is a teachers ability to actively shape their own work in order to progress the

challenges they are confronted with. A teachers agency is developed through their own qualities and philosophy and environmental factors such as their school setting. Teacher agency is fundamental when addressing the pedagogical challenges.

4.1.2 Subtheme: Quantity of SpLD Students

Compared to the other sub themes with the subordinate theme 'Change over time' this sub theme was not a main concern with the perceptions and attitudes of teachers with regards to students with SpLDs. However; its focus remains on the quantity of SpLDs students now availing of the learning support in the college and those students who remain undiagnosed but need the additional support.

Then the non-funded students who you know are bigger in number generally were getting very little support because there wasn't enough hours given to learning support to give each student a weekly slot there were just too many undiagnosed students compared to the funded who were diagnosed (Participant F).

All participants mentioned that all classes they have there is at least one student if not more that has a SpLD. According to McConkey et al., (2015) over the past decade in Ireland the quantity of students that are now attending higher and further education has grown substantially. Noticeably in the interviews the participants mentioned that since the learning support had been reintroduced in the college there is more of an uptake. They are now starting to worry whether they would have the resources, teachers and facilities to cater for the rising numbers in students with SpLDs.

4.1.3 Subtheme: Differentiation

This subtheme was not a main area of discussion in the study but it provided some background as to how educators implement new pedagogies to their classroom and how they could improve their practice in supporting these students with dyslexia. From the data collected teachers in general offered some form of differentiation to students with dyslexia. This varied from class recordings to specialised note sheets and one on one time during assessments and assignments. Participant E offered a provoking insight by arguing that "it's your job to make sure everybody in your classroom space or your online platform has the same opportunity". It was also acknowledged by Participant C that since teaching in Further education they do not actually give students with dyslexia the same level of attention as they would when working in secondary level. "I know as a teacher I was way more aware and

concerned about it in secondary school, which is awful. I'm not aware of it in third level and in Further Ed which is not a good thing". Although this subtheme was not a main concern of the study it does relate to the challenges and areas for improvement that will be discussed in the next main theme.

"There's not a one size fits all sort of plan". This phrase was mentioned in nearly all interviews which led to an insight in the findings that developed the overall arching theme of 'Inclusivity'. A thought provoking comment made by Participant E

Just ignoring the fact that a student has for arguments sake dyslexia and just saying 'oh, that's grand, there's your assignment graded and I didn't penalize you for any of your spelling mistakes' to me that undervalues the students effort (Participant E)

Again this correlates with the above main theme students being identified through a label. It is argued in the literature that in order to teach effectively, you have to take into account how students learn in different ways. Felder and Brent (2005) argue that "individualised instruction is impractical and one-size fits all is ineffective, a more balanced approach that attempts to accommodate the diverse needs of the students in a class is the best an instructor can do". It can be difficult for teachers to accommodate each student in further education as class sizes may be larger and teachers may not have the time to offer students one on one. In order to accommodate students in a larger environment, educators can design a curriculum that can meet the diverse needs of these students with SpLDs while accommodating for those who do not have SpLDs aswell. By doing so it addresses the learner styles that are neglected in the traditional pedagogy (Felder and Brent, 2005). The teachers interviewed in the present study showed willingness and openness to implementing differentiation in their teaching curriculum. Participant E gave insight into this by stating "I designed my last assessment the way I did to allow a more equitable opportunity". This allows for an inclusive environment for the student and allows for equal opportunity during their learning journey. This comment also backs up the study mentioned in the literature review of Buchanan & Warwick, (2020) where they aimed to identify how the Further Education sector can support adults with mental health and SpLDs in the classroom. The study acknowledged that there is a gap in the literature between health, disabilities and education. Buchanan and Warwick (2020) recommend that in order to bridge these together the tertiary sector need to offer extra resources through transformative learning. By implementing this critical reflection process it allows for student centred learning to be developed within the learner. This was a positive finding as all participants

showed an active interest in promoting inclusivity however they expressed concern over the attitudes of older more traditional educators as mentioned above. It was also noted in the study of Thomas and Vaughan (2004) that teachers lacked the confidence in supporting these students with SpLDs. This was not evident through the present study as teachers were willing if not already supporting students with SpLDs in their class but more so they struggled with time pressure which will be discussed further down.

4.2 Main Theme: Labels

"cause he was wearing his dyslexia like a Badge of Honor. He couldn't do this because he was dyslexic, he couldn't do that 'cause he's dyslexic, you know. So saying to him, you don't let it define you" (Participant F).

For the most part participants attitudes were positive towards future developments for the FE sector with regards to SpLDs. However the attitudes' and beliefs made towards more traditional teachers was negative and believed that there was a danger that students were being labelled before class behaviours were observed. As mentioned above Woodcock (2013) states the attitudes of these traditional teachers may result in a reduction of learning opportunities for the student. Having a label on a student can change a teachers perception. Winter (2006) argues that in order for inclusion to be successfully implemented a teacher must possess a positive attitude toward SEN. According to Cooney et al., (2006) students with SpLDs typically demonstrate social comparisons with their peers. This was evident from one particular interview with participant E where they told a story from their experience. A student who was too embarrassed to tell her friends that she was in Further Education than a Higher Education college. This participant also mentioned that from personal experience "having spoken to students that they have to consistently validate themselves". Participant A also referred back on their personal experience when they were asking a student to partake in a class activity and the students anger developed further as they could not complete the task and the interviewee said they were "trying to hide their own abilities because of their dyslexia". This seemed to highlight the positive role that teachers perceptions can play in a student's learning experience. It was evident throughout all the interviews that the educators were concerned of the lack of self-confidence and esteem in students but for inclusion to be successfully implemented teachers must possess a positive attitude Winter (2006).

4.3 Main Theme: Change Over Time

"I don't think dyslexia holds people back anymore (Participant A)"

This theme explores the challenges and areas for improvement. The main areas that were discussed were learning support and how it has developed over the last number of years with regards to additional support to be made available for all students funded and non-funded. All interviewees mentioned some facet of this theme in their interview and how this area in the sector could be developed. Two of the further education teachers interviewed, participant A and F had an in depth insight into this area and stated that the supports that are in place in the current college of employment are sufficient but could always use improvement especially for non-funded students. It was argued that the level of policy for students in the FE sector with regards to an inclusive environment lacked the support it needed. This was evident throughout the literature and the interviews. However two of the interviewees had strong opinions in this area, as participant E noted there should be "more in house policy", whereas participant C mentioned that a "more united approach across the college" would benefit the entire cohort of students and staff. Participant A who is based in the area of learning support mentioned

It is strange because at the end of the day every teacher probably has somebody with a learning disability in their classes somewhere and in a sense, they're kind of just sent to support, their names are passed on to me and you in support. It's not really dealing with it you know (Participant A).

This also coincides with participant D who is a subject teacher and newly qualified they said "my kind of protocol was to go and get them additional help". Similarly Participant F argued that the support that is made available for funded students is fantastic but for non-funded students SpLDs they are left behind "just such a pity there is really not a structured learning support available in FE bar for funded students".

"I think we just need to understand that not necessarily the model of delivery is wrong, but it's the model of

assessments and we can change that" (Participant E)

Participants were asked if there were any future improvements they would like to see implemented into the further education sector and if there were any self-improvements they could act upon themselves in order to support these students with SpLDs. Certain areas were identified as challenges and barriers for educators such as

training and resources, time pressure and flaws in the system which effects the full implementation of inclusivity for students with SpLDs. Many issues arose with when it came to teacher education and resources. Every participant expressed concerns with the age and experience of teachers who refuse to upskill.

4.3.1 Subtheme: Training and Resources

During the initial stages of the interviews it was quite noticeable that teacher training seemed to be an overall concern however; this was not the general consensus. There was very mixed views from participants when it came to upskilling in the area of learning support. The more experienced educators in learning support believed that there is sufficient training made available to all teachers but may not be fully aware that it is there and that the attitudes of teachers plays a main factor in the uptake of these courses. Compared to that of subject teachers, they believed that there needs to be more teacher education. A compelling insight was made by participant A where they believed that the courses are there for teachers but rather they may not have the time to complete them "We have to train our teachers but time has to be set aside to actually upskill teachers. I don't think there's enough of that going on in further ed". Nonetheless this participant also argues this point "I've never done a hdip. I've never done a teaching course. Learner centered is the way you know". This was a striking acumen as this refers back to John Deweys (1997) theory of pragmatism. People learn through doing. Participant E also made the argument of time and training but from the opposite perspective of participant A. They had said "I'm also upskilling I'm also managing a household I also I'm managing a family... So if the excuse was I don't have time, I'm not buying it. In any other industry you have to upscale".

Again this falls in line with the data gathered in the subtheme of 'teacher perceptions and attitudes' where it was argued that teachers who hold a more traditional approach to teaching will fall behind in the industry. It was noted by all participants that teacher education and upskilling should be made mandatory across all levels of education.

For a teacher that's been teaching for 10 years, that hasn't upskilled in 10 years, I'm sorry any other industry in the world and you'd be getting your cards and you'd be on your bike so. I think it's really important, because how can you bring new concepts? How can you deliver new methods to your students? If you don't understand them yourself (Participant E).

Another main challenge teachers found this year was actually supporting students in an online environment "I'm consistently checking up on students wondering what exactly your level of vulnerability is right now and that makes me probably too thin skinned that I worry about my students as much as I do, but that's me" (Participant E). It was expressed that nobody ever stops learning no matter what education you have.

I learn stuff off my students all at the time. You know, a student is talking and I'm like hold on, wait, wait, wait, say that again, let me write that down because I didn't know how to do that. But I'm open to learning more. Always open to learning if people are not open to learning. How are they open to teaching? (Participant E)

This was an interesting insight as it also lends itself to the subtheme of teachers and attitudes. Participant F highlighted the fact that there is only a certain amount of teachers that are available to provide learning support alongside their subject hours. They mentioned that "Every bit has a domino effect" if a teacher is absent they may not have a replacement which means a student is not getting learning support. In general it was found in the study that teachers felt that that more training in the area of SEN would benefit them in their classrooms. However after all the data was gathered and analysed it was evident that teacher education is made available to all faculty but perhaps they are not aware the opportunity is there. Participant D reflected on their own learning experience during their Hdip in recent years and mentioned that "the course isn't set up in a way to actually target specific learning difficulties or additional needs".

Barber (1996) argues that although there is challenges and limitations in supporting these students with SEN, educators should take responsibility for their own training and not be reliant on their educational bodies to provide this.

4.3.2 Subtheme: Time Pressure

It was evident in the interviews that teachers have attempted to provide extra time and support for students in their class that have SpLDs but do not always have sufficient time due to other classes and work that has to be put into making class notes, presentation etc outside of class time. This was a general issue not only evident in the present study but through other research and case studies. This agrees with the survey conducted by Hastings and Logan (2013) where 52 percent of teachers strongly agreed that they had insufficient time to teach these students. However, an intriguing comment was made during one of the interviews were the participant

agreed that it was time consuming but extra help should be provided by the learning support teacher to guide the subject teacher aswell as the student. The participant also mentioned that either way the student must be supported and that by providing these friendly visual notes is "worth the investment as you can reuse them every year". Lancaster (2021) explores the idea of a flipped classroom which involves blended learning. This was mentioned above in the sub theme of differentiation. The participant was adamant that all teachers across the further and higher education should adopt a student-centered approach. Lancasters (2021) adopts this approach and argues that this allows students independence in their learning journey which refers to the policy and legislation of Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. It was discussed in the interviews that in order to support these students with SEN, educators could provide extra materials such as notes, recorded lecturers and one on one sessions with the student. Allowing the student to learn in their own time and in their own style gives students an active role and responsibility in their learning journey (O'Flaherty and Phillips 2015). This also refers to John Dewey's (1997) idea of pragmatism were you learn through doing.

Hastings and Logan (2013) acknowledged that pressure on both educators and students is the main barrier in all education in Ireland and is therefore not surprising that the participants in the current study labelled time pressure as a major barrier and challenge. From the primary data gathered in the current study and research from the literature review it was recognized that teachers have insufficient time which will therefore effect the ability to be inclusive to all students in their classroom (Hastings and Logan 2013).

It was also noted from participant C who had taught in secondary school aswell as Further Education that there was more emphasis and attention given to student support in secondary than there is in further education. "I found the secondary school system very supportive … there's so many structures and supports in place. The staff meetings would be very much to do with supporting students and helping individualized students". This would support the findings of Ronan Cunninghams (2016) disability study. The data gathered found that communication between members of faculty were quite weak with regards to students with SpLDs and this is a main barrier in the education system across all levels of education.

4.3.3 Subtheme: Flawed System

Many education sectors are operated under many controlling conditions such as structure, discipline, and adherence to the general teaching curriculum. It has also been stated by Travers et al. (2010) that there has been

an over emphasis on academic results across all education levels in Ireland. This can also cause issues to inclusion for students moving from one level to the next in education (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009).

One of the main issues that was acknowledged in a particular interview with participant F was from their own experience with their child. A story was told that they had a suspicion that their son was dyslexic and wanted to get him tested but the school had told them that you do not want to put a label on them too young. Rather the parent wanted to get their son tested so that at least they would know and can get professional help in supporting him. This seems to be a flaw in the system where teachers may not necessarily notice a child who has dyslexia or a SpLD, which can lead to a student being left behind. It was also discussed that some students who were not diagnosed may not receive support whereas those who are diagnosed will be given priority and may receive more supports. Overall this seemed to be an ongoing issue within the education system NCSE (2014). This was highlighted earlier on where McCoy et al., (2014) drew the attention of additional teaching resources to be made available in colleges and schools.

An interesting insight that was expressed during Participant Bs interview was the dependence on support for students.

Ever since starting in learning support I've realised how many students are dependent on learning support and I don't know whether that's because they've had support throughout primary and secondary but they literally want to be spoon-fed and I feel like that's demoralizing a student and they aren't going to learn for themselves (Participant B).

Again this coincides with participant Es comment made in the subtheme of differentiation. They believed that just handing back a student's assignment and not penalizing them for grammar mistakes undervalues the student and that they are not learning anything from that. This was an interesting comment made as participant A also mentioned that students who have dyslexia are very much audio learners and prefer to give feedback verbally rather than written feedback so the student could ask questions "What is this annotation of documents? It's red ink, blood on the page, it's negative crossing things out. I sit down with the students and offer solutions…". The over expressed concern of students being dependant on support was intriguing as this was not an area of concern for the study but all the while allows an understanding as to how dyslexia and students can be perceived when having a SpLD. As stated in the interviews the teachers felt that by not giving the student the opportunity to learn for themselves you are demoralizing them which is the theory of pragmatism from John Dewey (1997), where you

learn through doing. This is also supported by the work made in the area of self-determination through the (AHEAD, 2017) and Task force for dyslexia (2001) and can be effective. Firstly as policy and legislative which focuses on the rights of students and how these students can be supported in an inclusive environment.

According to Konrad et al., (2008) students with SpLDs have a negative attitude toward learning support after secondary school which is evident in the interview conducted with participant F as they mentioned;

Often students don't take it up when they're offered it...As you know sometimes they don't turn on and I don't know why, could be that they never got the support in school and didn't take it seriously and their not in that habit of showing up? (participant F)

Konrads et al., (2008) study proposed that 20 per cent of students are not engaged with work or education after leaving secondary school. This suggests that students who attend higher and further education are not obtaining adequate levels of self-determination. Therefore the opinions suggested in the current study would appear to be relevant and warranted.

4.4 Conclusion

Drawing on the findings and discussions from above, the intricacies and interrelations that were explored during the study suggested some interesting concepts and arguments. Firstly the study acknowledged that the participants interviewed did have a basic understanding of dyslexia albeit more some over others. In terms of policy and legislation it was evident throughout in the study that the interviewees believed that colleges should have more in house policy with regards to supporting students with SEN. However, in order for these students to be supported the participants mentioned that teacher education was a major setback in order to move forward in providing an inclusive environment for all students. Although from my own individual lens it is quite clear that there are opportunities available for teachers for upskilling, but rather there is a lack of communication between the department of education and staff.

However, as a result of teachers having inadequate training in these supports, students will miss out on a fulfilled learning journey. The area of teacher education and inclusion were two of the main themes that emerged from the interviews. I asked teachers to explain in their own words their understanding of dyslexia, the challenges teachers are faced with when supporting these students, implementation for an inclusive environment and future developments that they would like to see implemented into the FE sector with regards to specific learning

difficulties. The participants were reflecting critically on their own experiences and beliefs which is mention within teacher agency above. The participants mentioned that teacher education should be made mandatory which is evident in the Task Force of Dyslexia (2001) findings. The findings also concluded that all the participants held a basic understanding of dyslexia associating it with difficulty in the areas of reading, writing and spelling. Which mirrors the factors of cognitive and behavioural that Frith (2001) discussed in the literature chapter. Initially the study was not expecting the stories that emerged in the interviews to correlate with Friths theoretical framework, it was merrily just to provide the reader with a basic understanding of dyslexia, so it was an interesting find that these stories merged with these factors. From both the modelling framework of Frith (1995) and the primary interviews conducted, the findings suggest that most of the difficulties of dyslexia lie with the person themselves. In can be seen in recent research that knowledge surrounding dyslexia and the importance of the environment including fellow peers is further developing within Ireland (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Poole, 2003).

It must also be acknowledged that some themes are larger than others because some of these themes overlapped hence why some of the themes are larger. It is possible for one code to be placed into more than one theme because one code may contain various interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similarly the above main themes 'change over time' and 'challenges and improvements' would hold similarities such as the learning supports so it was in keeping with a thematic analysis these main themes merged into one but the subthemes discussed different elements to the area of support and challenges. I thought for the research to be valuable to the area it was important that 'labels' had its own main theme. As mentioned in the literature review chapter professionals cannot agree upon on a definition of dyslexia (Tassie, 2010). Labels seemed to have a natural lead on effect from 'teachers perceptions and attitudes' theme because there are various constructions of dyslexia as well as social forces affect how it is understood. Each theme is bridged together by the overall theme of inclusivity.

In relation to the research question, I believe that there needs to be an objective means of communication within the Further Education sector in order to bridge this gap and will also allow for professional development within the teaching cohort. Overall, from previous research and the findings from the current study teachers who possess a positive attitude toward students with SEN provide good teaching and timely intervention to allow students to reach their potential in a world dominated by literacy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Key Findings

5.1 Introduction

Overall the rise in special education provision in Ireland has now changed how education is viewed and how it can be adapted and developed (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). It is evident throughout the findings of the current study that educators appear to hold a basic understanding of dyslexia but may not necessarily understand how to support these students in an inclusive environment. However the barriers that prevent an inclusive environment for these educators appear to be teacher education and time pressure. It is argued that training should be made mandatory for all educators in all fields. This also coincides with the findings of Winter (2006) who found that teachers felt that they had not been given sufficient training in the area of SpLDs. However participants in the interviews argued that there is training made available but educators may not be aware that the training is available, which therefore results in lack of communication in the sector. Furthermore there is no obligation for educators to undertake any sort of teacher education with regards to SEN (Travers et al., 2010). Farrell and O'Neill (2011) found that teachers often lacked confidence in supporting these students with SpLDs in the classroom, however in the current study this seemed to go against these findings. The participants felt that their competency levels were acceptable in the areas of resources and basic understanding of dyslexia but they are not fully aware how to implement new pedagogies and concepts to their classroom to form an inclusive environment. It was also evident that participants could not always form an inclusive environment. They argued that time pressure was a main issue when it came to providing students with an inclusive education. They would not have enough time to give each student individually therefore referring back to the 'no one size fits all' argument stated by Felder and Brent (2005).

5.1 Limitations

This study offers insight into the area SEN and provides valid and contemporary contribution to the ongoing research in the area. The limitations of the study were acknowledged throughout the methodology chapter and will be reiterated. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of this study as this could provide guidance for future research. Firstly the study was conducted on a relatively small sample size of six teachers in the Further Education sector. Although the study is based on narrative analysis which supports a

small sample size it is important for future research to acknowledged this when conducting further study in the area. Through the views expressed in the interviews by this small sample size may not be highly generalisable and representative to the faculty in the wider further education sector. It may also be taken into consideration that 83 percent or five in six of the participants were female. However during the purposive sampling stage there was a balance in numbers between male and female but it was predominantly females that were available to partake in the research paper at the time of data collection. Furthermore Avramidis and Norwich (2002) and Hastings and Logan (2013) conducted a study and their findings produced that teacher variables which include gender did not hold a significant factor with regards to teacher perceptions and attitudes towards students with SpLD and inclusion. If the study had been conducted on gender balance it may yielded different results compared to those produced. However the background of the teachers remained balanced and this was the main factor during the purposive sampling stage. As mentioned above gender was not a main factor when conducting the purposive sampling but again future research may want to take this into account if a gender studies within dyslexia was undertaken. It may also be noted the inexperience of the researcher at a masters level. Although the research produced significant findings in the area of research it was evident during the thematic and narrative analysis stage that interviews that were conducted early on in the study did not produce rich data compared to the interviews conducted later on in the research. This can be associated with the experience and confidence of the researcher. The levels of confidence and comfortableness of the researcher increased towards the end of the interviews. It could also be taken into the account the knowledge and experience that the participants held. Some participants were newly qualified and others had some experience in the area of learning support. As stated in the methodology chapter the backgrounds of these participants were taken into consideration during the sampling stage. Nonetheless this could not have been foreseen in the initial stages of the research but is a notable element worth acknowledging. Conducting both a narrative and thematic analysis provides both positives and negatives. The advantage of narrative analysis is an informant rather than just answering, it follows a structure when interpreting the findings to produce a comprehensible story. The main disadvantage is that there is that blurred line between fantasy and reality.

Insider research was the main method of inquisition in the current study and was taken into consideration during the initial research design phase. As the research was being conducted in the place of employment of the researcher it was an ethical implication. This can be viewed in both a positive and negative form. As discussed

earlier in the methodology chapter insider research can result in high bias but in order to reduce the bias the accuracy and creditability of the study ensured the quality and rigor of the study. In order for quality and rigor of the study to be maintained throughout, the research question(s) were refined through systematic and iterative review of the literature. This defined the foundation for the research topic and questions. Munn et al. (2018) discusses that reflexivity can influence decisions and actions throughout the study, it is argued that this is a critical aspect of rigour. It is often criticised and scrutinised. It is important that the research design establishes 'trustworthiness'. Creswell (2013) states that trustworthiness links the idea of validity, reliability, and objectivity. Taking into consideration insider research, various strategies for recruitments was considered and resulted in purposive sampling. The positive to adopting insider research is that it can benefit the study as the interviewee may have a better rapport with participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The positive of insider research was a factor that was investigated during the research process as it was acknowledged that my own personal world views are central to my research journey (Murphy, 2015).

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

There are many areas that could have been explored and researched in the area of SEN. The research can add to the framework that is presented in the current study. Participants in the study provided rich data for the research question however future research should be conducted on a larger sample scale for generalisability. It should incorporate the views of the Further Education sector as a whole as opposed to one college. It could also be taken into consideration that this study was based from a teachers perspective and perhaps the views of students may support the findings further. For example a triangulation of teachers, students and awarding bodies may provide a much more in depth analysis of the support structures on offer in the further education system and therefore may produce more accurate and reliable data. This was unrealistic for the current study due to time constraints. If future research was completed it would provide intriguing insights to the extension to the current findings. Conducting research of a similar nature in multiple Further Education centres would provide valuable insight in the area of SEN. The current study was based on teachers perceptions and attitudes of dyslexia. Nevertheless Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that the ethos, beliefs and values of a school are central to the interpretation of inclusion. Therefore by conducting a study among multiple samples will be of value to this field of research.

Including students in future research may allow for an extra voice to be heard. According to Tangen, (2009) the voices of students provide a deeper and richer insight into the world of education. With this in mind Whyte (2011) argues that the meaningful voice of students with SpLDs have been absent in research in Ireland. Similar to Avramidis and Norwich (2002), Thomas et al., (1998) argued that younger people need to have an opinion on how their education journey proceeds as it fits in with the principles of inclusion. O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, (2011) state that students who have learning difficulties such as dyslexia are the ones that struggle the most as their opinions and beliefs are disregarded due to possessing a learning difficulty. This refers back to the policy and legislation in the literature review and goes against the Education Act (1998) and EPSEN Act (2004). All of these documents state that students who have SEN must be taught in an inclusive environment and must receive equal opportunity. O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, (2011) also noticed a trend throughout the research of SEN. Students who have SEN, often their opinions are omitted on favour of their parents views. Whyte (2011) states that supporting students with disabilities in Ireland is becoming more challenging but is necessary.

5.3 Learning Process

As discussed in the limitations the confidence and experience began to develop throughout the interviews. This evolved the learning journey and instead of having an anxious and complex experience it allowed for an enjoyable and exhilarating experience. The data collection phase and analysis was most enjoyable as it was evident that the data would provide valuable insight and contribute to the current literature surrounding the topic of SEN. It was also noted that the critical writing element to the study was a journey within itself. The knowledge surrounding critical thinking and writing developed throughout the year and was an achievement as this was a struggling aspect for myself throughout my years of education. Overall the learning journey was an intriguing one yet challenging.

5.4 Closing

In summary, this research has identified the current gap in Irish literature within the Further Education sector with regards to SEN and perceptions of FE teachers. It has explored systemically the perceptions of FE teachers and identified the challenges that they are faced with when supporting these students in an inclusive environment. The findings initially suggest that teachers in the FE sector have a basic understanding of dyslexia but as the findings delve through the interviews it is evident that teachers do not self-reflect on their choices when it

comes to students with SpLDs and what they can do. Teacher agency only developed towards the end of the interviews when asked what they could do to enhance their practice to evolve inclusivity. The main themes that were supported by the participants and other experts in the field through literature were *labels, change over time, teachers' perceptions and attitudes and the overall theme of inclusion.* The underpinning of the participants experiences supported the general overview of the theoretical framework. I found that the some of the subthemes overlapped other main themes, so it was important to acknowledge this within the findings and discussions chapter. One of the main findings in the study was the need for teacher education and how it should be made mandatory. However, this could be a miscommunication with the schools and centres themselves as the staff may not be made aware that there are courses made available to them. This is an area that may be explored in further research to develop theories and pedagogies to guide FE teachers in supporting students with dyslexia.

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APPENDICES

National College of Ireland

Information sheet for research participants

Department: Masters in Educational Practice

Project Title: Perceptions of teachers and Dyslexia

Researcher: Emily Hogan

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

Introduction and Rationale

My name is Emily Hogan. I am a student on the Masters in Educational Practice in The National College of Ireland. As part of my Masters, I am required to undertake a Dissertation project. I have chosen to research What is dyslexia? An exploration of the relationship between teachers' understandings of dyslexia and their training experiences. I wish to explore training, legislation, personal experiences and perceptions of teachers. The interview questions will be provided one to two weeks in advance, to enable each participant time to prepare. If you agree to take part, you will firstly be asked to provide personal written consent followed by a short interview. A transcript of the interview can be forwarded to you if you wish. You will then be given two weeks to make changes or omissions.

What will taking part involve?

Discussion will be based on teachers perceptions of dyslexia and their experiences. The interview will discuss areas of training, experiences and perceptions of dyslexia. The interview will last approximately 20-30 minutes through Zoom and audio and (visual) will be recorded if the participant is happy to do so.

Why you have been invited to take part

Participants have been selected through purposive sampling. Recruitment is based on the experience and background subject.

Participation

Participation is completely voluntary and participants have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality

To protect participants identity and confidentiality all interviews will remain anonymous in the study. Due to circumstances of Covid – 19 all forms will be emailed to participants. By doing so all computer based files will be encrypted. Any documents printed will be stored in a locked a filing cabinet and personal identifiers from study documents will be removed and destroyed as soon as possible. All procedures will be followed by the NCI code of conduct and ethic guidelines.

Data Collection

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on the researchers personal laptop in a password protected folder. The researcher will be the only one with access to the files/data until after the paper has been completed and graded. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further twelve months after this. Under freedom of information legalisation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

Results

Plans for the research only consists in submitting the dissertation for educational purposes.

Contacts

Researcher: Emily Hogan   *Supervisor:* Leo Casey

Affiliation: National College of Ireland   *Affiliation:* National College of Ireland

Contact: x19105584@student.ncirl.ie   *Contact:* Leo.Casey@ncirl.ie

Informed Consent Form

Please read the following and, if you are happy to do so, sign at the bottom to express your informed consent to participation:

1. I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Emily Hogan from the National College of Ireland. I understand that this project is designed to gather information about Dyslexia in Further Education in Ireland.

2. I may withdraw or discontinue participation from this study at any time up until June 1st 2021. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, I will contact the researcher by email: x19105584@student.ncirl.ie

3. If feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

4. The interview may be recorded for analysis purposes and will be destroyed once completed.

5. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. The data will be stored securely at all times. To ensure anonymity, all participants' names will be omitted. Data is available to participants at their discretion and can be accessed at any time through email.

6. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions. If participants wish to view a copy of the final dissertation, they may do so by emailing the researcher at x19105584@student.ncirl.ie

7. Faculty and administrators from my organisation will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

8. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the researcher's supervision team in The National College of Ireland.

9. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

10. If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact: Emily Hogan x19105584@student.ncirl.ie

11. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of Dyslexia?

2. What are some of the challenges you think learners face when dealing with dyslexia?

3. How do you think we should respond to it in the classroom?

4. In your opinion what are some of the challenges FE teachers have when supporting students with SPLD?

5. What future improvements would you like to see implemented to the Further Education sector with regards to SPLD ?

6. Is there anything you would like to improve on in your practice with regards to teaching students with SPLD?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule

PARTICPANTS	DATE	TIME
Participant A	11th March 2021	2pm
Participant B	12th March	3pm
Participant C	29th March	11am
Participant D	30th March	10am
Participant E	30th March	2pm
Participant F	31st March	6pm